

Analyzing Summer Opportunities in Computing

A set of notes and a simple analysis tool by Samuel A. Rebelsky

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Available at <http://rebelsky.cs.grinnell.edu/cs-summer-analysis.pdf> (and .html).

This document supplements <http://rebelsky.cs.grinnell.edu/cs-summer.pdf> (and .html). I recommend that you use the two documents together.

Introduction

As someone interested in summer opportunities in computer science (or at least in summer opportunities in computing), you face two potentially contradictory issues: There may be many opportunities and many different kinds of opportunities; however, most of these opportunities are competitive. To deal with these issues, you need to spend time figuring out which opportunities are right for you and you need to spend time finding ways to make yourself competitive for those opportunities.

There is no magic formula for identifying the right summer opportunity or for obtaining the right opportunity once you have found it. This tool is designed primarily to help you think about what opportunities are right for you.

I will also note that even when you do not end up with the perfect summer option, you will gain much from almost anything you do related to computing, provided you introspect about your work. You may find that you like something you didn't think you'd like. You may find that the parts of a summer program that you like least are the things that you thought you'd like best. And, in any case, you will meet people and have an opportunity to build your network.

A Tool for Getting Started

As our summer opportunities in CS page suggests, you should start by setting your goals for the summer and identifying some potential opportunities. The chart at the end of this document provides a simple way for you to record and explore that information.

I recommend that you put goals in columns. How do you identify goals? You should certainly reflect a bit on your own. But you should also talk to friends, family, and the CLS in making the list of goals.

Next you need to spend some time identifying opportunities. You will need to look things up, contact people (CLS, other Grinnellians, alumni, family, friends, etc.), and reflect on what sounds possible and what sounds interesting. You can write opportunities in separate rows. Then, at the appropriate column, you can note how well or how poorly it meets each goal.

In essence, the table gives you a simple way to think about the relationship between the opportunities you have identified and your goals for the summer. And you may find, as you fill out the table, that there are goals you had not realized you had. That's fine. The main purposes for this tool are that you reflect upon goals and consider more deeply about what opportunities are available.

