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## FUTURE HOPE FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE DEGREE AT NU

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By Andrew Tate

Photo credit Zach Meyers



With major technology companies like Microsoft and Google just a few minutes away from campus, one may wonder why Northwest University doesn't offer a Computer Science (CS) program. Yet creating any type of program comes with challenges, and CS is no exception.

One challenge NU may have to overcome is finances. Rebecca Aitken, an adjunct professor in the College of Arts and Science, said money is a huge factor in creating such a program.

"The real decision maker for starting any program at any university is money. Money for professors, program staff, technology, etc. A lot of student interest can help push a university towards opening a new program, but the money needs to be there," said Aitken.

The second challenge is finding professors to teach the class. Along with the cost of hiring experienced people, finding people who are willing to work at NU over a tech company could be difficult. Yet Corey Kahler, an adjunct professor for computer science courses at NU, pointed out that people who work full time at tech companies can still teach.

"If you look at UW's Professional Continuing Education or their evening Master's programs, those classes are taught by people who are working full-time, but they can only teach at night and often only once a week in a large three hour chunks," said Kahler.

The third challenge is finding students who are interested in CS. Kahler said that student interest is very important in creating such a program, and without it there could be no CS program.

"Ultimately, for any school, it'll come down to student interest," said Kahler. "[With] enthusiasm and shown desire for computer classes, that bit-by-bit growth can happen."

There is a chance for a CS program at NU. In fall 2017, the university will give students the chance to take the Information Technology major in the College of Business. The IT program is created to supply students with the ability to work at tech companies like Microsoft. Classes such as Introduction to Computer Science and Computer Programming will be offered, which will let students get a sense of what CS is like.

Dr. Teresa Gillespie, Dean of the College of Business, believes that if the IT program does well and the demand is high enough, it could be offered as a graduate program in the MBA. It could also open the doors for a CS degree.

"My hope is that this thing really flies. [If] we get a lot of students, then the university can put resources into computer science," said Gillespie.

