

## **Grace Hopper Celebration Discussion Summary – V2**

The 2014 Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing was held Wednesday through Friday October 8-10. Two sessions during GHC created a great deal of controversy: a Male Allies Plenary Panel on Wednesday evening featuring Alan Eustace (Google), Blake Irving (GoDaddy), Mike Schroepfer (Facebook), and Tayloe Stansbury (Intuit), and an interview of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella by Harvey Mudd College President (and Microsoft Board of Directors member) Maria Klawe on Thursday morning.

On the evening of Monday October 13, CSE faculty and students (including a number of GHC attendees) met for 2+ hours, using the GHC controversies as a departure point for discussing how to make CSE a more welcoming and supportive environment for members of all under-represented groups. This summary of that discussion – prepared by Ed Lazowska, who moderated the discussion, and reviewed by the attendees – includes a number of action items for CSE.

### **Brief recap of GHC**

To set the stage, we began with a brief recap of the GHC controversies, provided by CSE GHC attendees.

While the issues that were raised through the GHC controversies are significant ones, CSE's GHC attendees felt that to a certain extent the "heat" was due to (a) some unfortunate decisions by GHC organizers, (b) inadequate preparation by certain participants, and (c) the fact that in any large group (there were 8,000 attendees at GHC!) there are likely to be some extremists.

In the case of the Male Allies Plenary Panel, the controversy began via email, twitter, and blog posts several weeks in advance of GHC, due to the inclusion of GoDaddy CEO Blake Irving. Certain women felt that his inclusion in the panel was inappropriate given GoDaddy's long history of sexist advertising – which Irving, a new CEO, is attempting to reverse. A number of attendees skipped the panel; some others arrived in a combative mood (e.g., equipped with "sexism bingo" cards). Some felt that a panel of all men was not appropriate for GHC; male attendees should be in the audience, learning, vs. on the stage (although a panel of male attendees at the end of GHC, describing what they had learned through attending, might be worthwhile). The panel was not structured to allow audience interaction. (To their credit, the panelists, recognizing the desire for interaction, immediately followed the "official" panel with an "unofficial" panel based on audience interaction.)

In the case of the Nadella interview, CSE GHC attendees felt that Klawe's questions were not always well thought out in terms of eliciting informative responses. Nadella seemed evasive at times, but it's more likely that he was trying to answer

the question that he felt *should have been* asked rather than the question that was asked. Overall, though, he didn't say what women wanted to hear: he wasn't negative, but he wasn't positive either. He seemed sort of indifferent. The specific response that generated the controversy – “It's not really about asking for a raise, but knowing and having faith that the system will give you the right raise” – must be viewed in this context: a somewhat indifferent response to a somewhat badly posed question.

## Discussion

The majority of the 2+ hours of discussion concerned the CSE environment. What follows are comments, interspersed with possible action items for CSE stemming from those comments.

A student who was an intern at Amazon this summer said that there were email lists for those interested in issues related to women in tech, blacks in tech, etc. (There are a number of groups in addition to women whose representation is low, and a number of groups that may be disadvantaged in some way. We need to consider gender, race, socioeconomic status, prior tech exposure, etc. Phil Guo's *Silent Technical Privilege* is linked below, along with other references.) She subscribed to the women in tech list and found it hugely educational: lots of interesting posts, lots of thoughtful followup posts, lots of references to great articles, etc. She wished she had subscribed to all the lists.

Action item for CSE: CSE's “women's” email list is mostly used for organizing social events and advertising scholarships. We should preserve that list for that purpose, but we should establish an email list for those interested in “issues” related to the environment for all members of under-represented/disadvantaged groups. It should be open to all department members. Its purpose should be for sharing information, not for discussion or debate – discussion or debate should be carried out face-to-face. *Moving this forward will be a topic of discussion at a CSE women's lunch during the week of October 27.*

There was a sense that the CSE environment is better, and the CSE community is stronger, for faculty, postdocs, and graduate students than for undergraduates. (As an example, for reasons of space, undergraduates were not invited to this discussion, with the exception of those who attended GHC.) Students are not educated regarding inclusiveness, subtle biases, etc. It is not uncommon for issues to arise in undergraduate project teams, for example. We should seek to address this, and more generally to create a better mentoring environment for our undergraduates and to build better bridges between our undergraduate and graduate student populations.

Action item for CSE: How about creating “mentoring pods” for students? Ten freshmen/sophomores and one senior. Ten juniors/seniors and one graduate student. Ten graduate students/postdocs and one faculty member. These pods

would be established prior to the start of each academic year, and would meet at least monthly during the year, in some social setting, but with the goal of discussing experiences and creating a connection between each younger member of the pod and the older member. A list of possible discussion topics could be provided annually, to be used or not, as desired, by the members of the pod.

Action item for CSE: The graduate student organization should have an “undergraduate women’s liaison” position. Some items that could be on the list of planned activities include:

- Close liaison with UW ACMW– which seems live and well this year, fortunately (<http://www.cs.washington.edu/acmw/>).
- A quarterly emailing to all members of the department regarding events such as GHC, to increase awareness.
- Working with UW ACMW to organize sessions for students by female software engineers on topics such as “How to manage your manager,” “How to ask for a raise,” and “How to deal with subtle or extreme bias.” (It was noted that companies would be eager to provide volunteers for this as a recruiting hook.)
- Working with the CSE communications team to ensure that achievements by CSE’s women (and members of other under-represented groups) are highlighted and celebrated – perhaps disproportionately, because we need to transmit the message of how capable these individuals are.
- Working with the CSE outreach and affiliates team to ensure that companies are reminded that recruiting is most successful when the team includes CSE alumni engineers, younger engineers, and woman engineers.

It was noted that individuals from certain backgrounds – from less privileged backgrounds, for example – may have had fewer life experiences that make them sensitive to the issues we’re discussing. These individuals may value guidance, if it’s provided in a respectful way. We must develop a culture of “calling people in” – of *respectful* disagreement and guidance. If an individual is shamed or alienated, s/he is never coming back.

It was suggested that we should have our own UW CSE mini-version of the Grace Hopper Celebration. The format was not determined – for example, would it be open to all interested individuals, or principally CSE’s women? Would there be small-group discussions (breakouts)?

Action item for CSE: *The organization of a UW CSE Hopper Celebration will be a topic of discussion at a CSE women’s lunch during the week of October 27.*

It was observed that much of what had been proposed was “optional”: the individuals who most need to be enlightened are the least likely to participate. Should we require a course on feminism, on oppression, etc., as part of our curriculum? How about one day per quarter per section in which the section is

devoted to a discussion about diversity and inclusiveness? Maybe use a class session vs. a section so that more students will be there?

### **Input received via email following the discussion**

Provision was made for anonymous comments to be submitted prior to the public discussion, but none were received.

The email below was received after the discussion, amplifying a sentiment expressed by this individual (but not by others) during the discussion. The individual did not request anonymity, but since none of the discussion's comments are attributed, I have not identified him either.

Feminists *absolutely* have a right to be angry. Women have been held back from achievement, forced into subservience, devalued, abused, raped, killed and mutilated. They have fought for change for decades and have seen little progress to be happy about compared to the enormous effort they've put in. Sometimes they've had to fight even just to keep the rights they've won from being taken away. After all this, it's easy to see why many feminists sometimes feel utter disgust and lack of hope for humanity, especially when the fight is going particularly poorly.

This is a very serious issue that's heavy in the core of some people's lived experiences and not everyone can be perfectly moderate and calm about it, so I think in future discussions we need to make space for people to express their emotions. It's unhealthy for people to feel like their feelings have to be bottled up inside for fear of public ridicule and being called irrational.

Some readings that might be helpful about why anger is an appropriate emotion for feminists to feel:

- <http://www.shakesville.com/2008/05/feminism-101-on-anger.html>
- <http://jezebel.com/i-am-not-an-angry-feminist-im-a-furious-one-1582748709>
- <http://jezebel.com/5880065/its-still-not-okay-for-ladies-to-get-angry>

## Appendix A: Invitational email, including list of references

As you undoubtedly are aware, Satya Nadella's remarks at the Grace Hopper Conference on Thursday - roughly, that women engineers needn't ask for raises, because the system will take care of them - have stimulated a great deal of discussion. So has a "male allies panel" also held at Hopper.

Most of the discussion - among Hopper attendees, in the press, on Facebook, etc. - has been thoughtful, but some has been heated and polarizing.

It seems to several of us that we should use these events as an opportunity to meet and discuss related issues. What were your reactions to things that happened at the conference that you witnessed or read about? What were your reactions to subsequent articles and online dialog? How can we learn to have this conversation productively? How to be an ally. How to be an ally to allies and listen and communicate effectively from all sides. How to keep an eye out for signs of unconscious bias. What are actionable things people can do to improve the situation?

We're hoping that CSE's Hopper attendees and other interested men and women from the CSE graduate student and faculty community will attend.

We'll meet at 5 p.m. on Monday (tomorrow) in the Gates Commons - it seemed best to do this while memories are fresh.

If you'd like to do a bit of prep, here are some suggestions - thanks to Kathleen Tuite for collecting them:

Links on Allies:

- "White Male 'Allies' Have Surprisingly Little To Say About Fixing Sexist Tech Culture" <http://readwrite.com/2014/10/09/technology-sexism-male-allies-grace-hopper-celebration>
- Julie Pagano's guide for Allies <http://juliepagano.com/blog/tags/allies/>
- "Remembering a geek feminist ally: David Notkin, 1955-2013" <http://geekfeminism.org/2013/05/13/remembering-a-geek-feminist-ally-david-notkin-1955-2013/>

More links:

- The links in the CSE News post about Nadella's remarks at Hopper <https://news.cs.washington.edu/2014/10/09/satya-nadella-suck-it-up-women-trust-the-system/>
- Jocelyn Goldfein: "Tech's Meritocracy Problem" <https://medium.com/@jocelyngoldfein/techs-meritocracy-problem-a6e5e0a56157>
- Other examples of this Bingo Card meme: [http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Bingo\\_card](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Bingo_card)
- #NotAllMen <http://time.com/79357/not-all-men-a-brief-history-of-every-dudes-favorite-argument/>
- Some possible specific discussion points <http://pastebin.com/ekhFU7q2>

Darker topics/how bad it can get when sexism is left unchecked:

- "Trouble at the Koolaid Point" <http://seriouspony.com/trouble-at-the-koolaid-point>
- Pretty much anything about GamerGate, if people want to get into that <http://kotaku.com/another-woman-in-gaming-flees-home-following-death-thre-1645280338>
- #YesAllWomen <http://time.com/114043/yesallwomen-hashtag-santa-barbara-shooting/>

Finally, two of my favorites - oldies but goodies:

- Bill Wulf on why diversity matters <http://www.nae.edu/Publications/Bridge/CompetitiveMaterialsandSolutions/DiversityinEngineering.aspx>
- A 1983 report by MIT LCS woman graduate students (including Jeannette Wing and Deborah Estrin) <http://homes.cs.washington.edu/~lazowska/mit/>

Hope to see you Monday at 5.

### **Additional references added post-discussion**

- Ed Lazowska's article in Crosscut, "Learning from Satya Nadella's comments" <http://crosscut.com/2014/10/12/technology/122276/satya-nadella-problem-microsoft-ed-lazowska/?page=single>
- Philip Guo: "Silent Technical Privilege" <http://pgbovine.net/tech-privilege.htm>
- UW CSE ACMW organization <http://www.cs.washington.edu/acmw/>

## **Appendix B: Email sent to all companies recruiting at Affiliates this year, stimulated by a suggestion made during the discussion**

We're really looking forward to your participation on the UW Computer Science & Engineering Industry Affiliates recruiting fair next week.

A note about several factors that seem to increase recruiting success at UW CSE:

- Where possible, having some UW CSE alumni engineers on the recruiting team helps - alums are great at recruiting soon-to-be alums!
- Having some younger engineers on the recruiting team helps - it helps students imagine where they will be in a few years.
- Having woman engineers on the recruiting team helps - UW CSE graduates 30% women, which while still way too low, is twice the national average for bachelors programs at research universities; having woman engineers on the recruiting team makes it clear to all of our students that they will be part of an inclusive environment.