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XSEDE Experience

The XSEDE Conference started off on Sunday with a Student & Student Mentors Dinner. At this dinner, I shared a table with Brad Burkman, a teacher at the Louisiana School for Math, Science and Arts. I also had the opportunity to hear a presentation from a PhD student regarding his dissertation. This was a first time experience for me to hear someone present their dissertation at a conference.

Monday:

In the morning, I attended a tutorial titled: Secure Coding Practices. This tutorial was easy for me to follow along because the material was presented from a beginner’s point of view. The topics covered in this presentation included: understanding how a code can be exploited by a hacker, how to train yourself like a hacker and how to prevent openings where your code can be exploited. I found this presentation useful because it gave me an entry level exposure into how codes are hacked. Although I cannot incorporate the things I learned from this presentation into my research, I hope to use it later on in future. In the afternoon, I attended another tutorial: Efficient Data Analysis with the IPython Notebook. I was looking to attending this tutorial because I was interested to know what was being done with the Python language. This tutorial introduced me to the IPython Notebook. It allows one to code and execute the code in the same document without having to open different applications. It seems very user friendly but might take some time for me to be able to use it frequently.

Tuesday:

The conference officially started with the opening session: Welcome to XSEDE14. I was expecting to hear the main goal or purpose behind XSEDE and how it applied to me as undergraduate but most of the speakers spoke about advanced topics that were difficult to understand or relate to. I dedicated the rest of morning to working on my research project and was able to make a lot of progress on it. I wanted to participate in the Student Modeling and Simulation Challenge but I got a little bit confused with the location and that was why I was not able to attend. In the afternoon, I went to a tech presentation: Benchmarking SSD – based Lustre File System Configurations. This presentation was at an advanced level and I was not able to completely understand what it really was about. I believe it was about faster or better file storage system and why it should be adopted. I met a researcher who has developed a software/application on a tablet to show a 3D image of a picture. By using the tablet, the user could “look around” a house that was printed on a piece of paper. It was very interesting and I wanted to know more about it. I later attended an education outreach training: An introductory Course on Modeling and Simulation. The presenter talked about an introductory course he was teaching at the University of Mary Washington. The introductory course introduces students from all educational backgrounds to designing models and simulations using various tools such as Microsoft Excel, Panther, Vensim and AgentSheet. The students were given projects, homework and had access to in-class videos for later study. Even though the course is designed to accommodate non-science majors, science and computer science majors fared better and had more use of the class. Based on the presentation, I would take this course if it was offered at my home institution as I want to learn about modeling and simulation.

Wednesday
I participated in the BOF: Listening to Underrepresented Students about REUs: A BOF for Advocated of Increasing Participation in the Computational Sciences. I introduced myself, and explained how I found the Visualization Research at Clemson University. I was expecting to answer a lot of questions relating to the topic but few people showed up, I guess because of the early time it was scheduled for. I had lunch with two PhD students and a physicist. I later attended the lightning talks. The only talk that I was able to relate to was: iCER Interns: Engaging Undergraduates in High Performance Computing, I found it interesting because it involved exposing undergraduates to new systems and letting them develop projects with it. I would like to partake in it if selected. Overall I enjoyed the lightning talks because it allowed me to see how to present a research to a large audience in a few minutes while also covering every aspect and making it attractive for people to be interested in it. I later attended the Poster Presentation and Visualization Presentations where I got to see some interesting presentations as well as support my peers. I thought the job fair was not really much of a job fair directed towards undergraduates and there were not a lot companies/businesses.

Overall I enjoyed the conference and learnt new information, but I believe I would have benefitted more if I knew about some of the subjects that were presented or discussed as they seemed to be at an advanced level I have not yet taken classes or courses on. I would recommend this conference to my fellow undergraduates but especially computer science, computer or electrical engineering majors because I believe they would have more to leave the conference with.