Day 7: the weekend begins!

It might be the weekend but there is no rest yet for the students and tutors of NCSS - the program continued instead with lectures and tutorials, as students all move on to their projects and get further into the respective coding they must do to achieve tasks.

Apparently there aren’t quite as many attendees for morning games but in the labs the tiredness is not yet showing - everyone is still really enthusiastic and working hard!

PYTHON GROUP
Lectures were given on web design and databases in the morning. Students have been assigned different modules to work on for their social network, either front-end or back-end, from colour choice to tokenising to live status updating!

EMBEDDED GROUP
Lectures continue, and the challenge for the embedded students has been announced! We hung out in the labs and watched as students quickly programmed their robots to do what they need to do, as well as other cool features.

Cryptography challenge
In the competitive spirit of the previous night’s programming competition, students once again assembled in IT for an evening of encrypting and decrypting - as fast as possible!

After a brief introduction into what cryptography is and some simple forms of ciphers, students were put into groups named after idols such as Ash Ketchum and Dr Horrible (look it up!). They then began two hours of designing ciphers to encode text, figuring out the cipher to crack other teams’ codes and writing chunks of decrypting code in Python.

Teams did excellently at both tasks and came up with some great ciphers! Congratulations to all teams especially Sauron (1st), Superman (2nd) and Voldemort (3rd) - and condolences to the tutor teams Aquaman and Bolt!
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Name: Katrina Tolentino
Age: 24
School: Chatham High (NSW)

What do you do?
I’m in my fourth year of teaching high school students computer science. I did a degree in IT and education, and can also teach math at a junior level.

Why NCSS?
I found out about the program in two ways, actually! I heard about it through a student that came to NCSS and was really positive about it. I also got a letter about NCSS in the mail and thought it sounded fun!

Future plans?
I’m really enjoying teaching at the moment, so I will continue this for a few years and see how it goes. I might also try working in the IT industry at some point.

Picking up teaching style?
Yeah, it’s really enjoyable and I’ve picked up a lot of ideas for group activities, like the team-building exercises, knots and shaking hands at Macquarie - it’s great for encouraging students to get to know each other.

Best bit of NCSS so far?
Meeting other students and hanging out with them has been really fun, I’m a bit of a secret spy at the moment!
NCSS students visit Atlassian

It was warm and sunny in the Sydney CBD as students made their way to the Sydney HQ of Atlassian, a small-business success formed by Scott Farquhar and Mike Cannon-Brookes soon after they finished university.

Scott gave an introductory talk about how Atlassian was formed to the first-time NCSS students, describing the background and how their software has become high-demand by some of the biggest companies in the world.

Next, programmer Charles Miller gave a talk on how to make awesome software. He argued that the key factor distinguishing Atlassian was that they learnt to create software based on what they as a company felt was missing - and hence others find the software useful too!

Returning NCSS students were given a deeper insight into the company separate to the others. Many students identified with the honest, laidback approach championed by Atlassian. After this, the students enjoyed a tour of the building and an excellent barbeque lunch, before assembling outside the front for a photo in their kindly-donated Atlassian NCSS t-shirts!
What’s been happening at NCSS?

Yesterday’s events in a nutshell and what to expect for today

The weekend started but the early mornings continued - students are now working mostly on their respective projects. It is cool to see that each Python group has approached the purpose of their social networks in a different way, from music to file-sharing. And teams are working really well together to meet their deadlines - making decisions as a group!

It looks like the embedded students are also having a lot of fun, with a mix of both achieving their set tasks and programming their robots to do anything cool that they can think of. Tutors say they are being really creative!

WHAT’S COMING UP NEXT?
The weekend will continue with more lectures and project work, and the deadlines for the projects are quickly approaching - presentations on Tuesday!

Students are definitely feeling the weight of such a busy schedule, so the evening’s activities are relatively calm with human simulations and some free time to relax at Women’s College.

Saturday’s schedule (08.01)

Morning
Lectures/tutorials/project

Afternoon
Lunch at Women’s College
Lectures/tutorials/project

Evening
Dinner at Women’s College
Crypto Challenge

Today’s schedule (09.01)

Morning
Lectures/tutorials/project

Afternoon
Lunch at Women’s College
Lectures/tutorials/project

Evening
Dinner at Women’s College
Simulation at Women’s College

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