# WiTS

## Welcome to Our Society

# Welcome to our WiTS newsletter!

First off, thank you for taking the time to read our revitalized newsletter! As WiTS grows, we hope to use it to promote our society and provide a larger platform for our members to share their ideas. This newsletter is our way of saying, "Hello!" and showing you a bit of what we are all about.

## What is WiTS?

WiTS (the Women in Technology Society) is a multi-faceted society that's focused on providing support, networking and outreach opportunities to female-identifying individuals and helping embrace diversity in the technology community. Essentially, we want to foster a community of like-minded people that have some connection to tech. Our meetings do not consist of talking about the latest tech, but rather discussing our experiences in this field and how we would like to impact it. We accept anyone and everyone who is interested in technology and we provide them with a community. We host social events and networking events to help create connections with the wider tech community. We are also focused on volunteering in the community to share our knowledge draw others to our field. In WiTS, we are extremely proud of our diverse members and want to share our experiences with as many people as possible.

## What's happening next?

We are excited to welcome all the first years to Dal this fall. We'll be at the Society Fair, around the CS building and at faculty events. We're also thrilled to be working with the Faculty to pilot a Peer Mentorship Program. We'd love for all first-year female-identifying students to come join us! Our bi-weekly meetings will also be starting in the fall to discuss our plans for the upcoming semester and to further develop and grow as a society. Our major event for the semester is called "We Talk Tech" and will be held in November. The goal of We Talk Tech is to connect WiTS with the local technology community and help provide our members with new perspectives, connections and opportunities. The theme for this event will be discussed at the first couple of meetings for the semester. We'd love to hear your input for what you'd like to see and be a part of. We're thrilled for the upcoming semester and hope to see you at an event or a meeting!

Also, don't be afraid to connect with us through any of our social media to learn more about what we're about or ask us any questions! Welcome (back, for some of us) to Dal and we hope you have a great semester!

*- Alicia Wong, WiTS President*

# From Grapevines to Binary Trees

Emily Auclair

There's a common misconception surrounding the qualifications needed to successfully pursue a degree in Computer Science. Computer scientists are often perceived as 'nerds' who grew up building computers, but in my case, I grew up growing grapevines.

Before starting my degree, I knew absolutely nothing about computers or coding. I am from a small town, and didn't even have internet at my house until I was well into high school. I was intimidated when I walked into my first class, not knowing who I was going to be up against. Would my peers already be tech geniuses? How many apps have they already developed? Am I already behind? These thoughts were totally dissolved a few weeks into the semester. I found that my courses were filled with people like me.

Now, going into my third year, I have found that many of my peers had felt that same initial intimidation. It makes me wonder how many others felt this, and how many of them did not pursue Computer Science because of it. That's why WiTS exists. We want to represent what it really means to be a computer scientist. Whether your background is in leading canoe trips at a summer camp, growing grapevines or making video games, you have a place in our faculty.


*Henri Guerin via Pexels*


*via NegativeSpace*

# What to Do When School Becomes a Little Too Much

Amy Steels

Let's face it—university can sometimes be really difficult. The stress of labs, quizzes, assignments, midterms, and exams can be overwhelming. Once you add in your social life and other things that are important to you it can feel at times like you're sinking. On top of that, most first years are only 17 or 18 years old and are living away from home for the first time, trying to find a new social circle, in an unfamiliar city. This all seems like a lot, but there is a reason that you were accepted into this program: you are capable and qualified to be here. To help you feel more comfortable with your new workload, here are some tips to help you reduce your stress and avoid burnout.

## If you are struggling in a course, talk to your professor.

Like many students, I was unfamiliar with computer science when I first joined the program. I had particular difficulty with my first year writing course; I understood the concepts but struggled on tests. Confused about where I was going wrong, I went and talked to my professor. She was kind to me and gave me a lot of tips for how to be successful in the course. I ended up succeeding in the course, which I attribute to reaching out to my professor.

## Try to find an outlet outside of school work.

University is a great time to explore new opportunities. Dal has some awesome clubs that can get you out doing things you love. Dal After Dark runs great events on Fridays that are good stress relievers. The Outdoor Society also has exciting field trips if you want to get outside. The DSU also runs surfing trips a couple times a semester, and the Bike Centre always has free bike rentals. Take advantage of your Dalplex membership (the new Dalplex Fitness Centre is gorgeous). Exercise is an amazing stress reliever and a great way to take a break from studying. If you want a more relaxed workout, yoga is offered at the Wellness Room in the Student Union Building and at the Dalplex.

## Find time for your friends.

Hanging out with your friends can help alleviate the stress of school if you are feeling overwhelmed. Watch a movie with them, explore Halifax with them, or just hang out and chat. You'll make amazing memories if you find time for the people that are important to you. Arriving at Dal, I knew no one. Over the past two years I have gained friendships that will last a lifetime because I made time for my friends.

## Take time to take care of yourself.

You may find yourself falling into the student stereotype of late nights of coding, eating pizza, and barely sleeping. It is important to remember that sleep and hygiene are important. With less sleep comes a greater chance of getting sick and burning out. Also, good diet and a good night's sleep can make a huge positive difference in your day and your experience in school.

Another thing to remember is to take time to do nothing. I find sometimes the best thing I can do for myself is take a break. Even an hour can make a huge difference in the rest of my day and can really help my brain reset and help me create better work afterwards.

Finally, if you are dealing with personal issues that are affecting your course work, don't be afraid to talk to your professor. They are your best bet to help you find a solution. Remember that being mentally healthy and not overworking yourself is important.

# Keeping up your art • Being an artist in a STEM field

Mira MacNeill

I've always been an artistic person, whether I'm drawing or making music, but in my grade 12 year I had to choose between art school and studying computer science. I chose CS because I didn't think it would stop me from being creative. Little did I know how hard it would be to juggle my hobbies with school work. I ended up barely making any art in my first year.

University can feel like a place where hobbies die out. It doesn't help that there's not much overlap between STEM and art, and it can be hard to switch between the two. I think a lot of people waste their free time because of this. Instead of making time to do something you love, you watch three hours of a show on Netflix. It's understandably appealing because watching TV doesn't cost any mental energy which can often be at an all-time low in university.

But if I could go back and make my first-year-self create more, I would. I'd tell her to schedule a little bit of time out of her day to create—even if it's just to doodle. I'd tell her that even though it feels like you're wasting less time watching four consecutive episodes of The Office in a row, you're actually wasting more time than it would take to draw one picture, or write one song—and you're not getting anything out of it.

Art inspires good work ethic, brings feelings of accomplishment to your life that homework can't really afford you, and can be therapeutic.


*The Crow — Mira MacNeill*

I think it's crucial to keep up on hobbies throughout school and work. Practice your passions every day, make time for them, and don't fall into the Netflix/YouTube/social media trap every time you're free from school work. Don't let university overpower things that truly make you happy.

# Bagels and StackOverFlow • Uncertainty In First Year CS

Courtney Pick

My first year at Dalhousie was full of uncertainty. I wasn't very confident that Computer Science was the right major for me, mostly because I had zero programming experience. I didn't know if I would be successful in the courses and I didn't know anyone else in my major.

When classes started, I initially felt intimidated by my peers. The first conversations consisted of things like, "Have you programmed before?" or "What programming languages do you know?" or "Wow, you're 18 and already have your own startup?" It seemed like I was behind before the end of the first week.

First semester was a really hard transition for me. It took me a while to get used to the demands of my degree on top of a social life. Initially, I got through it by working really hard the day an assignment was due, but I never really learned the material along the way. I relied on StackOverFlow to be my Hail Mary for any unknown question and I spent hours and hours combing through grainy pictures of code that were taken from across a lecture hall, rather than really listening in class.

After my first set of exams, I felt more confident in my decision to go into CS. I had made some potential friends, succeeded in my classes (despite my study habits not being the best), liked my professors, and enjoyed what I was learning. I felt exhausted, but optimistic for second semester. Plus, I finally found the best bagels near campus (@CoburgSocial).

Although I felt more prepared and confident, second semester hit me with a curve ball when I was absent for 2 months due to illness. While the situation was unfortunate, I learned a lot because I had to rely on my professors and peers for support. I found that the faculty and my professors were extremely accommodating, encouraging, and flexible when I told them about my situation. They helped me during office hours, pointed me towards the right resources, and really cared about my success. With their support, I finally learned how to manage my time, work more effectively, and truly realize what CS has to offer.

From this experience, I feel like my perspective on university has changed. I feel more inclined to reach out to people within the faculty, go to the Dalplex after class to work off some stress, or ask a new person to grab a bagel at Coburg Social. There are so many resources available at Dal; taking advantage of them is an important part of the experience.



*Lukas Blazek via Pexels*

If I could offer a single piece of advice to new students, it would be to never leave assignments until the day they're due. Manage your time properly and pass them in a day, or two days, or even a week before the deadline. The extra time will allow you to thoroughly understand the material, collaborate with others, and avoid the stress of finishing something the night it's due.

With the additional time, you'll realize that there is more to university than just finishing the next assignment. The only way you'll realize what university truly entails is by taking the time and effort to seek it out.

# Your Fall Horoscopes

## Virgo
**23 Aug – 23 Sep**

You have a tendency to be a little overcritical. Take this into account and remember to take the time to foster potentially valuable relationships.

## Pisces
**20 Feb – 20 Mar**

Embrace the opportunities of personal growth and adventure. Use unfamiliar situations as a way to grow and better yourself. Remember to prioritize your happiness over trying to be a person you are not.

## Libra
**24 Sep – 23 Oct**

You are always looking for balance in your life, but this month will make it difficult. You may put your whole soul into your passions, but remember to still take time to recharge.

## Aries
**21 Mar – 20 Apr**

You better watch out this month! I sense a blue screen of death could be coming your way near the end of the month.

## Scorpio
**24 Oct – 22 Nov**

It is in your blood to be competitive. Remember to be mindful of your tendencies and try to resolve the upcoming conflict in a positive manner, but don't hide who you truly are.

## Taurus
**21 Apr – 21 May**

This is going to be a good semester for you! Look forward to new beginnings, especially when the stars align as a new opportunity will arise.

## Sagittarius
**23 Nov – 21 Dec**

You are an optimistic soul. Don't let external pressures cause you to lose that. Take the opportunities given to embrace who you are, empower yourself and make your mark.

## Gemini
**22 May – 21 Jun**

After a relaxing summer, you may not be hyped about coming back to school. The good news is that this month is going to be full of good times and laughter. It'll be one you'll never forget!

## Capricorn
**22 Dec – 20 Jan**

Remember that there are people around you that will support you. However, you can sometimes be very self-conscious. Try your best to work on it and use the support from people around you.

## Cancer
**22 Jun – 22 Jul**

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01101111  00100000  01100010  01100101
00100000  01110010  01100001  01100100
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## Aquarius
**21 Jan – 19 Feb**

You are a very composed and focused individual. This Fall, there will be many challenges, but you will glide through them with elegance. Keep working hard as it will pay off in due time.

## Leo
**23 Jul – 22 Aug**

The lion in you is roaring to come out this month! Be fierce and embrace your star sign. Be confident and embrace all the opportunities. The leader inside of you is waiting to be discovered.

# Keep in touch with WiTS!
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