

Computer Science

Seminar Series – Spring 2026

Thriving not surviving: Student support through UW's Allen Scholars and STARS programs.

Monday, March 16th, 2026, 11:00am - 12:00pm PST Time

Room 8-48.

Abstract

At the University of Washington (UW), the number of engineering degrees conferred increased by 44% between 2015 and 2024, while computer science degrees rose by more than 168%. Historically, however, only 25% of low income or first-generation students, as well as those from less well served high schools in Washington State, have successfully earned an engineering or computer science degree. However, with comprehensive and holistic support, the student success rate for these populations rises to 78% or higher. In response to these disparities, the UW College of Engineering (COE) launched the two-year State Academic Redshirt Student (STARS) program in 2013, adding support specifically for students in the Computer Science and Engineering pathway in 2016. In 2017, the Paul G. Allen School for Computer Science & Engineering school (a division of COE) introduced a summer bridge program which expanded to a full one-year support program in 2022. This talk will describe the core support components shared by these programs, which have contributed to the phenomenal gains in student retention and degree completion. It will also invite dialogue with other institutions, to identify the core components of successful models that contribute to student success in a college/university setting. The ultimate goal is to clarify what is required to sustain and scale these efforts as the landscape of computer science and engineering rapidly changes, and funding from national, state, and institutions themselves becomes increasingly uncertain.

Bio

Dr. Lauren Bricker is in her ninth year as an Associate Teaching Professor in the Allen School at the University of Washington. She joined UW after teaching for ten years in middle and high school, and working in industry for many years prior to that. Her academic backgrounds include CS Education, Human Computer Interaction, Computer Graphics and Computational Fabrication. However, her "why" (her job fulfillment) has been providing support for students in the STARS and Allen Scholars programs - holistic first and second year college programs designed for students from first-generation and/or low-income backgrounds, or who are from the less well served schools in Washington state. She received the Allen School Undergraduate Teaching Award in 2025, was recognized as one of three GeekWire STEM Educators of the year in 2021, was featured as Geekwire's "Geek of the Week" in 2012, and was interviewed as part of Code.org's Equity in Computer Science video. She also serves as the College/University representative to the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) board of directors and the past president of the CSTA Washington chapter.



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Hosted by:
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