

What is a CS MEng?

Graduation Remarks—May 2013

If you are out of breadth (as are the students at this time of year), then the CS MEng is “a lot of learning compressed into a very short time.” If you are into swapping to-do lists with friends in other degree programs, then the CS MEng it is “roughly six courses and a project.” If you are wondering how to promote what you have accomplished during a job interview, then the CS MEng is “the chance to be adventurous and creative through course selection and the design of a project.” But guess what? These one-liners obscure the big picture. The big picture is that the students who are graduating today have thought long and hard about the transition from school to work and have chosen to do something about it, many with critical support from family and friends.

We know that the MEng is a tough sell during hard economic times. After all, you have just spent four years as an undergraduate building a very expensive house. Isn't that good enough? You just moved in as a college graduate and now you want to put on an addition. And you want to re-do the windows. And you want to hire a landscape architect?

You were a CS major who sensed that 4 years was just not enough. That house of yours needs extra rooms given what you want to accomplish and the MEng gives you the opportunity to practically double your formal CS education.

You were an ECE major who recognized that living next door to CS is just not enough. That house of yours needs better views of the street view so that you know just when go outside and play with all the CS kids who seem to be having so much fun.

You were a government major who sensed that your great liberal education was just step one towards something larger. That house of yours will multiply in value if you surround it with the right perennial gardens like databases, systems, machine learning, and of course, matrix computations!

Real estate is 90% location and that is why you couldn't have chosen a better field of study for your Masters than CS. As a computer scientist with an advanced degree you are within walking distance of all the great shops and academic programs that ultimately drive the global economy.

You are the latest in the long line of great students who move on after receiving a Masters from Cornell. Let me tell you about the first: David Starr Jordan. He matriculated in 1869 and graduated with a Masters in 1872. We went on to become President of Indiana University while still in this thirties and from there on to Stanford as its first President in 1891. A pretty good role model except I think that you can do better!.

Thank you for spending the year with us. We need you to stay in touch, especially as we proceed to develop new degree programs down in New York City that are bringing into focus just how we should organize masters-level education. Success will require all hands on deck and that includes you.