2019

EVENT REPORT

PREPARED BY

AIHACKS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FIRST
ALL-FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL HACKATHON

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AIHACKS EVENT REPORT

On the weekend of June 15-16, 2019, 100 high school girls gathered at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies in Los Angeles, CA to participate in AIHacks: Southern California's first all-female high school hackathon. Students travelled from all across the state of California for 28 hours of fun, coding, and hacking!

For many students (36%), it was their first time coding, and at the end of the event, they expressed how proud and excited they were to grow closer as a team while learning to build a website in just one day. Participants worked in teams of 2-4 to tackle a problem that they were personally passionate about, and examples of these problems include improving mental wellness in teenagers, identifying and monitoring endangered species, and bridging the education gap.

Above is the USC Institute for Creative Technologies (the venue for AIHacks)

The event was student-run and organized by *Emily Jin* (Founder & Executive Director) and a team of high school students from around the country who are all passionate about bridging the gender gap in tech and empowering their peers to explore the field. The other members were: *Charissa Kim* (Curriculum Director), *Lavanya Sharma* (Marketing Director), *Janice Liu* (Sponsorship Director), *Sam Soto* (Operations Director), *Becky Button* (Sponsorship), *Annelise Eileraas-Liu* (Marketing), and *Anvitha Kachinthaya* (Marketing).
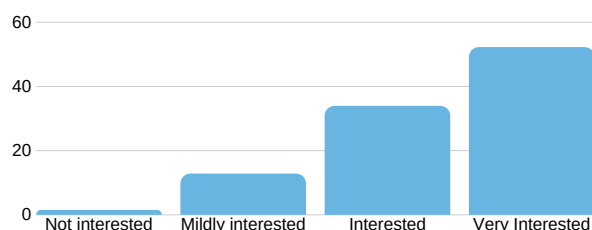
EVENT DATA & STATISTICS

BASIC INFORMATION

- 28-hour hackathon
- 100 participants
- 26 teams
- 34 high schools

Participants were mostly from Southern California, but students from as far North as the Bay Area and as far South as San Diego attended.
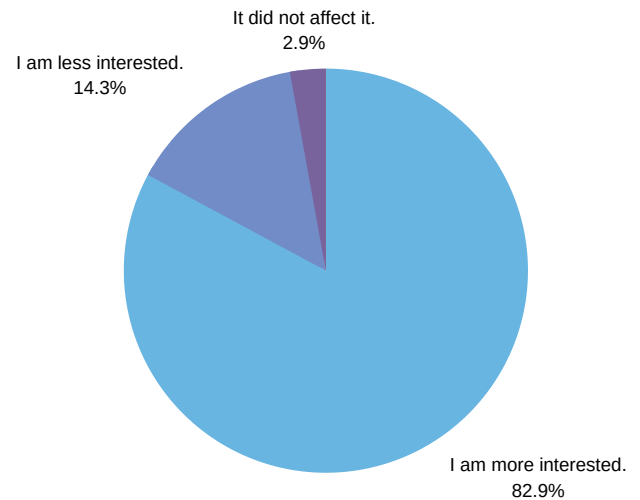
SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

For most of our attendees (90.1%), AIHacks was their first hackathon. They stated that attending AIHacks made them more interested in computer science, and the event helped them establish a meaningful network and community of supportive girls in tech. In the future, we hope that AIHacks will expand its reach as an organization to even more high school girls, forming a network that all women and girls in the area can rely on for guidance, mentorship, inspiration, and encouragement.
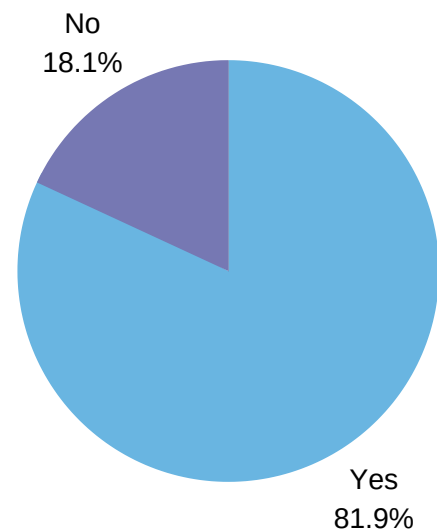
How did AIHacks affect your interest in computer science?

It did not affect it. 2.9%

I am less interested. 14.3%

I am more interested. 82.9%

Do you feel that AIHacks helped you develop a stronger network of females in tech?

No 18.1%

Yes 81.9%

How interested are you in pursuing a computer science career after AIHacks?

Not interested | Mildly interested | Interested | Very Interested

How likely would it be for you to attend another hackathon or coding class?

Impossible | Not likely | Mildly likely | Likely | Very likely
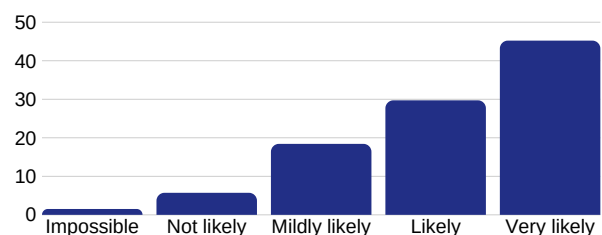
EVENT DAY RUNDOWN

CHECK-IN & OPENING CEREMONY

At around 8 AM on Saturday, participants started to arrive at the venue for check-in. There, they picked up their swag bags, filled with AIHacks goodies and sponsor swag (shirts, pencils, stickers, posters, and more)! As the rest of the participants arrived, the ones who were there early had the chance to bond with one another and create friendships.

At 9 AM, everyone made their way over to the theater for the opening ceremony. To kick off the hackathon, Emily Jin explained the goals & rules of the hackathon, gave a basic overview of the event schedule, announced the prizes, and shouted out some of the events biggest sponsors.

Then, we had our keynote presentation by Dr. Kallirroi Georgila of the USC Institute for Creative Technologies. She taught the girls about her research in natural language processing (NLP) and how it is being used to help war veterans deal with PTSD. This got the participants thinking about what kind of problem they wanted to solve with their app.

After the keynote, the participants split off into their teams, ready to tackle their own real world problem. Then, it was time for the first workshop of the day -- an Introduction to Python Workshop that lasted for until lunch.

Volunteers (*left to right*: Karl Hernandez, Gaby Stanton, Kyle Hernandez, Natalie Rodriguez) are shown working at the swag table.

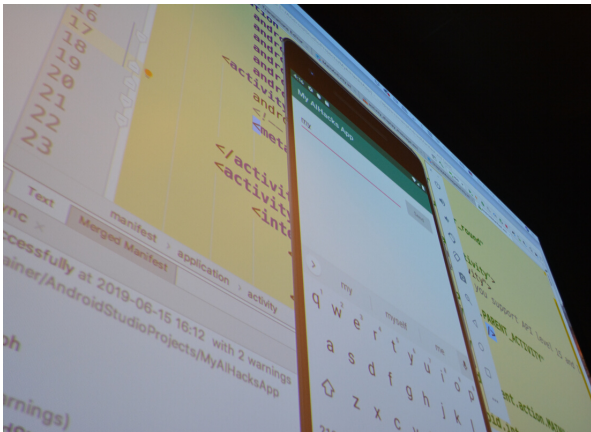Participants are shown heading to the opening ceremony.
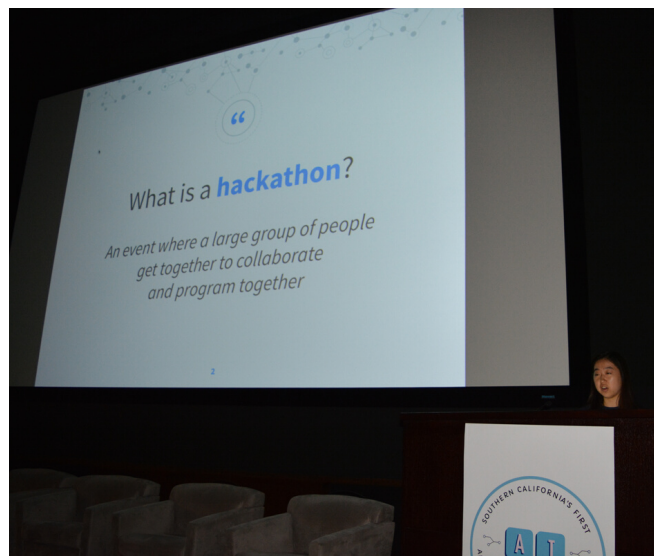
AIHacks Founder and Executive Director, Emily Jin, is shown speaking at the opening ceremony.

WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

As the day progressed, participants swarmed in and out of exciting guest lectures by Dr. Gale Lucas (USC) and Dr. Jonathan May (USC) and workshops on HTML/CSS and Android App Development. The HTML/CSS workshop led by HackerFund, and the Android workshop was led by Jeremy Rossmann (Co-Founder of Make School) who travelled all the way from San Francisco to speak at AIHacks.

Participants learned a lot from these activities, and once the workshops and lectures ended, they only had 16 hours left before they had to submit their apps & websites and pitch them to the judging panel!

Participants are learning the basics of coding in the Introduction to Python Workshop, which was led by a USC researcher.

Dr. Gale Lucas is giving her talk on the benefits of embruing AI with social features/skills, with a focus on the "case study" provided by virtual human clinical interviews (for PTSD).

This is from the Android App Development workshop, led by Jeremy Rossmann (Co-Founder of Make School)

NIGHTTIME CODING AND FUN!

As they coded the night away, the girls also took breaks and hung out in the Recreation Room and Lounge Area.

There were a variety of fun games and snacks, such as pool, table tennis, and Wii. As for the snacks, participants enjoyed chips and drinks courtesy of sponsors including Soylent, Skinny Pop, and Oatmega.

JUDGING DAY

On Sunday, some participants woke up bright and early to finish their code, while others powered through with no sleep at all.

At 9 AM, the participants' final submissions were due, and it was time for their elevator pitches! Each team had 5 minutes to explain the problem they wanted to solve and how their creation helped to do that.

A panel of six distinguished judges -- including the Founder of Feminist.AI, a USC Professor, a software developer, and a VR developer -- listened to their pitches, asked questions, and challenged the girls to think deeper.

THE WOMEN IN TECH PANEL

While the judges deliberated, the girls all headed to the theater for one final activity: the Women in Tech Panel.

The panel was moderated by the Charissa Kim (AIHacks Curriculum Director), and it featured computer science researchers, students, and CEOs.

It was a huge success, and the participants were extremely inspired by the speakers' personal experiences and advice. The entire panel was live-streamed **HERE**.

CLOSING CEREMONY & PRIZES

After the panel, it was time for the closing ceremony, where the winners were announced by Dr. David Traum (USC).

The prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place were Oculus VR Headsets, Amazon Echos, and Polaroids. Below are the winners!

1st Place
- **Project Name:** Alley Alert
- **Team Members:** Michelle Prasouvo, Nayana Vallamkondu, Sarika Pasumarthy
- **Project Description:** A website that provides a network of user-determined safe roads in order to give people a sense of security when walking alone

2nd Place
- **Project Name:** Rose
- **Team Members: Alyssa** Ho, Alexis Tan, Mary Grannis-Vu
- **Project Description:** A website that helps writers overcome writer's block by motivating them with graphics that grow with character count

3rd Place
- **Project Name:** Stray Paws
- **Team Members:** Melissa Ruiz, Angie Vasquez, Selina Arjomand

- **Project Description:** A website that uses AI to search & sort dog matches, making it easier to reunite owners & dogs

Social impact Prize
- **Project Name:** AI for a PORPOISE
- **Team Members:** Alex Lam, Bella Ungar, Thalia Inui, Parishi Kanuga
- **Project Description:** A website that uses AI to protect & identify endangered species by monitoring unusual migration patterns

Best Use of Artificial Intelligence
- **Project Name:** U.S. Outbreak Tracker
- **Team Members:** Mishty Dhekial, Amisha Kumar, Ashmita Kumar
- **Project Description**: An app that informs people of outbreaks in the US by making CDC information easily accessible

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A BIG THANK-YOU
TO THE TEAM & VOLUNTEERS