

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE CORNER

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## Communicating and Collaborating with Colleagues Online



**ONE OF THE OBSERVATIONS** identified in the joint ACM/NSF *Report of Findings from the Strategic Summit on the Computing Educa-*

*tion Challenges at Community Colleges* [1] reads as follows:

*“Computing departments at community colleges are distinguished by small numbers of full-time faculty highly specialized curricula, over-reliance on the specialized expertise of part-time faculty, low enrollments in advanced courses, and continuous program and course revision.”*

Even this single observation – albeit one of several points made in the Report detailing the challenges confronting two-year college computing faculty – is sufficient justification for the development and facilitation of effective communications avenues among communities of community college faculty members.

It is, therefore, compelling to take note of two such vehicles currently in place: (1) the “ACM Computing Education in Community Colleges” group forum available via the Ensemble Computing Portal ([www.computingportal.org/acmcec](http://www.computingportal.org/acmcec)); and (2) the ACM Committee for Comput-

ing Education in Community Colleges (CCECC) Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ACMccc](http://www.facebook.com/ACMccc)). Each of these resources provides opportunities for two-year college computing faculty to connect with their colleagues over matters of shared interest. Both are readily available via the “Online Communities” tab on the CCECC website at [www.capspace.org](http://www.capspace.org) [2].

In particular, the Ensemble Computing Portal is a relatively new NSDL Pathway [3] sponsored by the National Science Foundation intending “to establish a national, distributed digital library for

computing education”, whose founders identify as a goal:

*“a distributed portal providing access to a broad range of existing educational resources for computing while preserving the collections and their associated curation processes. We want to encourage contribution, use, reuse, review and evaluation of educational materials at multiple levels of granularity and we seek to support the full range of computing education communities including computer science, computer engineering, software engineering, information science, information systems and information technology as well as other areas often called ‘computing + X’ or ‘X informatics’.”*

In similar fashion, the ACM CCECC Facebook page (ACMccc) provides a venue for the exchange of ideas and commentary by anyone with a Facebook account.

The ACM CCECC is pleased to report that from our homepage one can now seamlessly enter both Facebook at the ACMccc presence and the Ensemble portal at the “ACM Computing Education in Community Colleges” group forum; simply click on the “Online Communities” tab at [www.capspace.org](http://www.capspace.org).



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org and select the desired environment. The various topic areas found in both the Facebook CCECC setting and the Ensemble community college forum are facilitated by Prof. Becky Grasser, an Associate Member of the ACM CCECC and Department Chair and Professor of IT & Computer Science at Lakeland Community College. Anyone familiar with Dr. Grasser knows that she is very active in her field, promotes the diverse and free exchange of ideas, and is always ready with an engaging quip!

Anyone interested in receiving correspondences and news alerts from the AMC CCECC on its initiatives, projects and advocacy efforts is strongly encouraged to become a CCECC Affiliate; simply supply your contact information at [capspace.org/affiliate](http://capspace.org/affiliate). By this quick action you can ensure that you remain familiar with ACM's work in the domain of community college computing education.

Of course it cannot be overlooked that there are many additional opportunities to exchange ideas with colleagues in this manner; the avenues noted above are but a starting point. The most important idea I want to underscore is that as a computing faculty member in a community college, your colleagues are but a click or two away, eager to exchange ideas with you, share curricular resources and pedagogical ideas, and collaborate on efforts to improve the computing education for today's two-year college students. **tr**

#### References

- [1] Hawthorne, E. K., Campbell, R. D., Klee, K. J., Wright, A. M. (2011). Digitally Enhancing America's Community Colleges: Strategic Opportunities for Computing Education. Retrieved from [www.capspace.org/SummitReport](http://www.capspace.org/SummitReport).
- [2] ACM Committee for Computing Education in Community Colleges. (2009). CAP Space - Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy: [www.capspace.org](http://www.capspace.org).
- [3] The National Science Digital Library. (2008). Ensemble Computing Pathway: [www.computingportal.org](http://www.computingportal.org)



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## MATH COUNTS

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# Alan Turing

## Mathematician/Computer Scientist?



Alan Mathison Turing

**THIS ISSUE'S COLUMN** is a tribute to Alan Turing in the year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. I have not read any of his works or books about his life, and basically am familiar with an overview of his life, including his theoretical contributions to the study and limitations of algorithms, contributions to the war effort breaking the Enigma code, the tragic personal aspects leading to his death in 1954, and the recent posthumous apology by the British government. Accordingly, this column will not be a historical perspective, but rather some thoughts based upon what I have gleaned from his work. I will strive to keep this column short and focused. If we could interview Alan Turing today, I think he would be both gratified and a bit horrified by the evolution of the discipline he pioneered.

Ask any computer scientist to name one of the pioneers of our discipline and Alan Turing would probably be identified frequently such as the ACM Turing Award, the Turing Machine, and the Turing Test. Was Turing a computer scientist, a mathematician, or both? In his time, he was considered to be a mathematician, but then the term 'computer science' did not evolve until after his death.<sup>1</sup> The foundations of

our discipline are rooted in mathematics as many of the pioneers of computing were mathematicians. Today, mathematics is still important for the science of computing exploration and innovation, but not used effectively in everyday software development to ensure quality. If we could have a conversation with Alan Turing today I think the latter would be a bit unsettling for him.

For such a conversation to be meaningful, Turing would have much catching up to do. Of particular relevance would be the area of mathematics, specifically discrete mathematics and logic, and their connections to computing. He studied the limitations of algorithms, but I wonder if he had any thoughts regarding the correctness of algorithms? Of course, this would require precise ways to describe the behavior of an algorithm along with tools for arguing their correctness. Here, I intentionally used the word 'argue' instead of

<sup>1</sup> The first use of the term 'computer science' is attributed to Louis Fein in 1959. However, the best known early use of the term is often attributed to George Forsyth in 1961.