

Computer Science Careers and AI: Myth vs. Reality

Version of 9/5/2025

As the academic year ramps up, we want to provide you with information regarding employer demand and student demand in Computer Science, given a lot of frankly misleading news articles about the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the tech industry.

Employer demand

There's a lot of alarmist doom and gloom in the news regarding employment for recent Computer Science grads.

It's certainly the case that the job market for Computer Science grads is tighter now than it was a few years ago. However, the alarmist doom and gloom does not match what graduates of the Allen School are experiencing.

More than 120 different companies hired 2024-25 Allen School graduates into software engineering roles. Amazon alone hired more than 100! Google and Meta hired fewer than that, but more than they hired the previous year. Microsoft was down a bit year-over-year, but still hired more than two dozen of our new graduates.

AI is affecting work in a wide range of fields, including Computer Science. However, the impact of AI aids for programming is not the dominant factor driving the tightening of the Computer Science job market. Dominant factors include over-exuberant hiring during Covid, massive expenditures to meet the computational requirements of AI (offset by workforce reductions in order to satisfy Wall Street earnings expectations), and certain tax law changes related to the expensing of R&D. The bottom line is that, at present, AI is helping strong software engineers, much more than it is replacing them. As far as we're concerned, there's no reason for the media's obsessive and exclusive focus on the tech industry, except that it feeds a narrative that attracts clicks.

Curricular innovation in the Allen School

The Allen School has an outstanding and constantly evolving curriculum that educates students who aren't just coders, they are software engineers – critical thinkers who work in teams to identify and solve the world's most challenging problems, harnessing (and also creating) the latest tools. Writing code is not the challenging part of software engineering. The challenging part – the intellectually deep part – is to take a complex problem, understand the human needs behind it, analyze it, modularize it, and figure out exactly how each piece should function and how the pieces should fit together. At that point, delegating to AI the relatively easier task of converting a precise specification into code (code that must be carefully reviewed – “hallucinations” occur in AI-generated code just as they do in ChatGPT responses!) is just a way to build the system faster.

As an analogy, consider architecture. An architect interviews clients to determine their requirements and constraints, explores a range of design alternatives to figure out the best approach to satisfying the requirements under the constraints, iterates a detailed design in consultation with the client, creates construction documents reflecting the final design, resolves

issues that arise during construction, etc. Software engineering has a lot in common with this process. Tools such as AI can assist at different stages to different degrees, but these tools are an augmentation, not a replacement. The industry will continue to need smart, creative software engineers. In addition, a Computer Science education continues to be great preparation for a broad range of fields within and beyond technology, including the natural sciences, finance, medicine and law.

Computer Science is a field that evolves faster than any other. Preparing students for life-long learning and adaptation has always been an Allen School priority. We equip our students to be successful today, tomorrow, and long into the future. Further, the University of Washington is a top research institution, and the Allen School is ranked among the top ten Computer Science programs in the nation. Because Allen School faculty are at the cutting edge of the field, new topics and new approaches are rapidly integrated throughout the curriculum. The Allen School is a world leader in AI, and Allen School students learn how to use AI, how to build AI, how to move the field of AI forward, and how to do all of this through an ethical and societal lens – becoming ideally positioned for a world being transformed by AI.

There is no more exciting field than Computer Science, and there is no better place to study it than the Allen School.

The Allen School offered Direct Admission to 37% of Fall 2025 applicants from Washington high schools!

Applicants to the University of Washington are sometimes reluctant to specify the Allen School (Computer Science or Computer Engineering) as their first choice, because they have heard that Allen School admission is extremely competitive.

True, the Allen School is more competitive than many UW programs. However, for Fall 2025 *we were able to offer Direct Admission to 37% of the Washington high school students who applied*. That's not as high as we would like it to be – we need even greater capacity than our current 2,200+ undergraduate majors – but it is *far* higher than public perception.

We achieve this by heavily favoring applicants from Washington. For Fall 2025 we offered Direct Admission to only 4% of applicants from outside Washington – applicants from other states and from other nations. This is a far lower percentage than other UW programs. We are dedicated to educating as many in-state students as possible.

It's also important to know that the University of Washington offers University admission to a significant number of students who indicate a preference for the Allen School but cannot be offered Direct Admission to the Allen School. These students can choose from a wide variety of other excellent UW majors, a number of which are in adjacent fields.