



JOY BUOLAMWINI

AMBITION AND SCIENCE

Yale, Harvard, and Stanford said yes, but she turned them down for Georgia Tech, which offered scholarships and mentors.

BY ANY MEASURE, I WAS AN AMBITIOUS high-school student. I started my own business, had a perfect GPA while taking nine AP classes, participated in three varsity sports, and became a Pepsi Scholar Athlete of the Year for the greater Memphis area. I even found time to play guitar to maintain my sanity.

That hard work paid off. I got into every school on my dream list, including Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, and Cornell. With choices like that, you might expect to find me on an ivy-covered campus. As great as those schools are, they were not right for me. Money wasn't the only factor, although the academic scholarships offered by the non-Ivies were important. My ultimate choice came down to the flexibility of the curriculum of my intended major, the number of unique opportunities that would truly be available, and the support I would receive to ensure success, especially as a woman in computer science.

I decided to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology as a Stamps Leadership Scholar, the highest merit-based award given to 10 incoming undergraduates each year, because it gave me a great combination of all of the above. I could customize my computer-science degree by choosing two of eight specializations, called threads. Because I didn't have to worry about money, I could fully explore my passions and take advantage of undergraduate research opportunities, study abroad, entrepreneurship development, and a network of accessible alumni.

Above all else, I immediately felt welcomed and encouraged by the President's Scholarship Program and the Honors Program when I visited the campus. My father and I drove to Atlanta for the President's Scholars weekend unsure of what to expect. We were greeted by enthusiastic student leaders. After a day filled with tours and information sessions, I attended a special a cappella concert and found myself humming along to familiar songs and envisioning myself as a Yellow Jacket (the campus mascot).

Two years later, I can confidently say that Georgia Tech has provided me with an incredible college experience that far exceeds anything I imagined for myself at any institution. Because women aren't always encouraged to advance in the sciences, engineering, or computing, I have been thrilled to witness the resources Georgia Tech has specifically for women.

As a computer-science major, I have especially benefited from the support of the student organization Women at the College of Computing (W@CC). During a W@CC-sponsored visit to Google Atlanta, I met a recruiter who initiated a fortunate chain of events that resulted in my participation in a retreat at Google New York and a scholarship.

Before matriculating, I had established a freelance Web-development company. My entrepreneurial spirit was immediately fostered through the InVenture Prize Competition, a student competition with a \$2,000 prize. With my idea Admissions Conquered, a Web-based platform to help parents and students with the college-admissions process, I became one of three finalists, which ultimately enabled me to connect with Startup Chicks, a nonprofit organization for women entrepreneurs, and secure a summer internship with Pro Founder, a small investment company.

At Tech, I joined the Everyday Computing lab, headed by Dr. Elizabeth Mynatt, working on Salud!, a health-data tracking system. I also became an Astronaut Scholar, the highest monetary merit-based award given to undergraduates in the sciences and engineering in the U.S.

To broaden my knowledge of the world and to see firsthand the use of computation in other cultures, I spent the summer

AS A COMPUTER-SCIENCE MAJOR, I HAVE BEEN THRILLED BY THE RESOURCES GEORGIA TECH HAS FOR WOMEN.

of 2010 at a Georgia Tech computer science and architecture program in Barcelona, the place where Columbus returned with news of a new world of opportunity. Thanks to Georgia Tech, I look forward to exploring more golden opportunities of my own.