From Hacking to Hong Kong: A Computer Science Student Explores Her Possibilities

Interning with Google. Studying in Hong Kong. Mentoring members of the Science Club for Girls. Earning first place honors at the 2013 Comedy Hack Day, an event that pairs coders and comedians to summon the creativity of both groups. These are just a few of the experiences Sarah LaPlante has had since coming to Northeastern.

The College of Computer and Information Science (CCIS) senior chose Northeastern for its computer science and cooperative education programs and initially was interested in cybersecurity. Participating in the National Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition for two years gave her an opportunity to develop her skills and also determine that cybersecurity wasn't the direction she wanted to take her career.

Research Seeks to Beat the Botnets

It’s become regular news: Cyber criminals are taking down company networks, stealing personal data, and holding hard drives hostage to extract ransoms from computer users. They’re activating stealthy botnets and hiding their identities by taking advantage of privacy infrastructures such as Tor. But what if the problem becomes even worse?

According to College of Computer and Information Science (CCIS) Professor Guevara Noubir and PhD student Amirali Sanatinia, this is likely to happen. They believe cyber criminals will develop more sophisticated botnets that are better able to evade detection. Meanwhile, the rise of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin makes it easier to hide financial transactions.

A Problem Solver Shares His Lessons

With the encouragement of faculty and friends, Dan King gained both confidence and a new career direction. Now, by staying involved with his alma mater, the 2013 College of Computer and Information Science (CCIS) graduate wants to help other students also excel.

Today, King is a computer science doctoral student at Harvard University, where he focuses on programming languages. But he never expected to being doing this when he first arrived at Northeastern. King explains, ”I thought I’d get a job in a gaming company and build video games for the rest of my life. I wanted to spend all of my time building and playing video games. I never wanted to do research or go to graduate school.”