

ISTA Program Fee Purpose

The School of Information recently removed two ISTA course fees in preparation for this program fee and to eliminate costs for the students. The remaining 3 course fees purpose do not overlap with this request. The request for a program fee for BA in Information Science & Arts, BS in Information Science & Technology and BA in Games & Behavior, is to invest in student support that will aid students in their studies and help them gain the tools they need to achieve high-paying jobs after graduating from our programs. As a newer and rapidly growing School with core technical requirements in undergraduate programs, the iSchool has been unable to provide tutoring support for classes across curriculum, such as ISTA 116 (statistics in r), 130 (python), web design courses (Java C), and game development classes (unity). Coding in these courses is a skill that heavily favors 'over the shoulder' learning, where students can interact with peers and ask questions. From the inception of the School, students have asked for more one-on-one support in these technical courses. As the Computer Science department offers its own tutoring program, the main University tutoring center Think Tank has had little incentive or ability to draw from a pool of tutors to offer coding tutoring; however, iSchool students cannot attend Computer Science tutoring, leaving our students without programming tutoring support from either group. We have wonderful instructors and student section leaders, but this is not sufficient to enable time to sit down and go over, for example, every question in a homework assignment with a student. It's heartbreaking to tell a student looking for tutoring in a core requirement that tutoring simply does not exist for the required core classes or the elective courses that they are struggling with - many are left to seek out, find, and pay their own tutors.

A lack of support can reinforce inequities and underrepresentation that continues to plague the computational workforce and tech sector because the students in most need of support cannot find the resources - tutoring, software packages, hardware, etc. - that they need. According to Code.org, "The fields of software, computing, and computer science are plagued by stark underrepresentation by gender, race, ethnicity, geography, and family income. In U.S. high schools, the Advanced Placement exam in Computer Science has historically (since the beginning of the century) had only 22 percent participation by young women, and only 13 percent participation by students from marginalized racial and ethnic groups (Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders)," <https://code.org/diversity>. Additionally, money from fees can help support a departmental scholarship for undergraduates which does not currently exist, help keep faculty skill level current, and can provide support for an Internship Coordinator that will help place undergraduate students in successful internships, positions that can lead to future employment opportunities. While placing a small upfront financial burden on our majors, we hope that burden will be balanced with more and better opportunities we can provide students in the School, opportunities that will directly and positively contribute to students' retention, academic success, and professional lives.