

Lloyd Gonzales12th Grade

Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology

Nevada

Computer science is easily one of the most powerful tools we have on Earth. From improving a community's quality of life to simply making people laugh, it is an incredible way to change the world for the better. For me, that has meant many things – leading my school's telemetry team, creating novel projects for my friends, or publishing statistics for tournament players. Whatever the activity, the reason has always been the same: I love the problem solving and improvement behind programming. Technology never stops moving forward; there is always something new to learn, something new to make. Much of my programming journey has involved banging my head against the wall for hours, days, weeks, even months – but I was going to understand what I was doing or die trying.

Throughout high school, I've combined academic rigor with practical experience to prepare myself for a career in computer science. I intend to pursue a bachelor's degree in CS, exploring research, internship, and extracurricular opportunities to take advantage of them to the fullest. By immersing myself in new techniques and technologies, I will find the best way to use my skills as a maker in Nevada's expanding manufacturing sector. While I've become experienced in programming as a hobbyist, a college education will challenge me to explore more complicated issues and develop my own solutions. I hope to secure a job as a software programmer through my credentials and the connections I make during my college education.

But the real value of that education is the chance to give back. Computer science is more than just code and data – it's the chance to bring something new into the world. From connecting students to resources they desperately need to robotic exoskeletons for people with disabilities, computer science can improve people's lives in both novel and amazing ways. It's the ability to wield the collective resources of humanity and form a strange, crazy idea with nothing but a computer and the Internet. Having a degree in computer science doesn't change the fact that the sky's the limit, but it does make it easier to get to the stars – and help other people get there, too!

My journey so far has only been possible with the support of my family. But with my father retired and my mother not too far away from doing the same, it is my turn to be successful. As a pair of immigrants from the Philippines who began as rural farmers who sold food to fund their education, they have fought tooth and nail to make a decent living. I aspire to take full advantage of my university's opportunities without the worry of being a burden to my family, even as living costs continue to rise. After all, they've been paying for my food and shelter for the last 18 years – the least I could do is secure my education and make them proud, following in their footsteps as someone looking for a better life.