

Second Annual CSE Alumni Achievement Awards

CSE honored Anne Condon and Jeremy Jaech during its June 11th graduation ceremony and at a dinner the prior evening. These awards reaffirm to CSE graduates (past, current, and future) that each contributes to a long, successful line with impact far and wide.

Anne Condon (PhD '87)

Computer science theoretician, leader, and mentor

"The Unbounded Power of Randomness" is the intriguing title of a blog article one of Condon's research colleagues wrote about their theoretical work on the power of randomness and nondeterminism in finite state machines. Condon is a computer science theoretician whose research has moved in a purposeful direction from complexity theory to DNA computing and algorithms for biology.



Condon becomes head of the Department of Computer Science at the University of British Columbia on July 1, the next step in a career of nonrandom, unbounded opportunity.

Her journey began in 1978 at University College Cork in Ireland, where she was among a pioneering group of students, about 35 percent women, who double majored in mathematics and computer science. "The women were a strong group academically who could have gone into any field, but we chose a nontraditional path at that time," Condon said.

She says she was "very lucky" to be accepted into the UW CSE doctoral program. "I had no idea where Seattle was until I bought my plane ticket. Then I was blown away by the beauty and the unbelievable mountains. The department was so friendly, and I felt immediately at home." CSE, of course, is equally lucky to count her as an alumna.

Condon had little experience in the applications and systems side of computer science, but was excited by the questions raised and intellectual challenges of tackling problems that are difficult to solve on a computer and then finding a way no one had considered. Her doctoral work, advised by professor Richard Ladner, was recognized in the ACM Doctoral Dissertation Award competition.

After joining the faculty at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, Condon began research on DNA and RNA computing and earned

a National Science Foundation Young Investigator Award. She returned to the Pacific Northwest in 1999 to join the faculty at UBC, where she held a chair endowed by NSERC/General Motors. She has also served the university as associate dean for faculty affairs and strategic initiatives.

Condon's current research uses thermodynamic energy models to predict the secondary structure of nucleic acids from the base sequence, and prediction tools to design biomolecules. She's also collaborating with researchers at the British Columbia Cancer Agency, on alignment of next-generation sequencing data. "I'm really enjoying this research. Our aligners are the first step in an analysis pipeline that is yielding important insights as to how cancer evolves and can lead to new approaches for detection, treatment, and prevention," she said.

Condon's other passion is creating research experiences for undergraduate women so they will become excited about the potential for careers in this arena. The Computing Research Association honored her with the 2010 A. Nico Habermann Award for her "long-standing and impactful service toward the goal of increasing the participation of women in computer science research." In receiving the Habermann Award, she follows in the footsteps of her PhD advisor Richard Ladner, who was honored in 2008.

UW CSE celebrates a star academician rising high in our field.

Jeremy Jaech (MS '80)

Entrepreneur, technology disrupter, paradigm changer

Each year UW CSE spins graduating students out into the world to launch their careers. It's hard to imagine achieving greater success than Jeremy Jaech, who, following his UW CSE Masters degree (advised by Alan Shaw) became a cofounder of three software companies that have earned him status as a serial entrepreneur and leadership in the community as chair the Washington Technology Alliance.

Early career stops were a Boeing computer-aided design research group and Atex, a maker of industry-changing computer systems for newspaper and magazine production.

Jaech has made his greatest impact through graphics software that has "disrupted" the technology status quo. In 1984 Jaech



and four Atex colleagues dove into entrepreneurship by founding Aldus Corporation, which invented desktop publishing (in the form of its PageMaker software) for the new Apple MacIntosh platform, then the most sophisticated graphical interface of any personal computer.

"Good timing and luck play an important role in entrepreneurial success, and I've been very lucky," Jaech said at a talk to CSE students in May. "Apple had just developed a \$7,000 laser printer with a graphical interface, but had no software to attract potential users. When Apple learned about PageMaker, they bundled our \$500 software with \$15,000 worth of hardware and both PageMaker and MacIntosh took off and revolutionized the publishing and printing industry."

"I believe success is all about being disruptive and creating opportunities," Jaech said. "The best new products have no competition because they do things that are not possible with existing technology."

After five years at Aldus, Jaech retired for the first time at age 35, but soon eager for a new challenge, he and two former Aldus colleagues founded Visio in 1990 and scored another spectacular success with paradigm-changing technical drawing, flow chart, and diagramming software that filled a big need in the business world. Microsoft purchased Visio for \$1.3 billion in 2000 and marketed the software worldwide as a stand-alone MS Office application. Jaech entered retirement number two, focusing his energies on service to community organizations and corporate boards.

The pleasure of collaborating with creative people and the entrepreneurial itch led to the founding of Trumba in 2003, a small but successful company that provides web services to organizations promoting events on their websites. Jaech added yet another challenge to his portfolio in late 2008 when he became CEO of Verdiem, a young IT company developing energy-saving power management software for PC networks.

After turning the company around financially, Jaech embarked on "retirement" number three in March, which includes spending time at the UW, the alma mater he admires for its groundbreaking research, friendly culture, and excellent basketball team. CSE has given him a fifth floor office in the Allen Center as a base for exploring the early-stage innovations emerging from CSE labs.

"The UW is such a rich environment, and I enjoy talking with faculty and students about what they are up to. Spending time here is an experiment. I don't have an agenda, but am just opening my mind to whatever may happen next."

If history repeats, that "whatever" is bound to disrupt his retirement and the technological status quo.