ACM Recharges its Batteries
By: Ashley Duvelius

Students of the School of Electronic and Computing Systems (SECS) and the School of Computing Sciences and Informatics (CSI) are on a mission to bring new energy and focus to the UC Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) student chapter. Leading the campaign are the ACM student chapter president and vice president, Jonah Back and Priya Chawla, respectively.

The College of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS) is a longstanding member of the national organization of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). While the UC ACM student chapter is inclusive of all colleges with computing majors, including Information Systems (Carl H. Lindner College of Business), Information Technology (College of Education Criminal Justice, and Human Services), and Electronic Media (College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning), it’s the CEAS colleges who are working tirelessly to revamp the campus organization. Students of the School of Electronic and Computing Systems (SECS) and the School of Computing Sciences and Informatics (CSI) are on a mission to bring new energy and focus to the ACM chapter. Leading the campaign are the ACM chapter president and vice president, Jonah Back and Priya Chawla, respectively.

ACM is one of the oldest and largest scientific and educational computing societies. As a national organization, ACM sponsors many computing events, such as the International Collegiate Programming Competition, and has sponsored other events like the famous chess match between Garry Kasparov and the IBM supercomputer "Deep Blue". ACM is organized into over 170 local chapters, 35 special interest groups, and over 500 collegiate chapters.

UC’s student chapter is the connection to the National Chapter of ACM and ultimately, the network to professional and academic growth for all computing majors. As an inclusive organization for all computing and technology majors, its mission is to bring together and create a community for computing students, while also showcasing all aspects of computing at UC. The chapter strives to bring quality events related to computing to the University and College. One such event that will be taking place later this year is Innov8 UC, a collaboration event with Student Government. The ACM chapter also serves to provide assistance in any way possible to members of these departments, both faculty and students.

Back says, “Over the last 6 months, the Executive Board has completely revamped the organization. Last year, ACM was all but defunct. This year, we’ve already held several events, such as a Linux Installfest and the ICPC, and are planning many more. We have also been in
talks with Student Government to host a major event called Innov8 UC, which will encompass not only CSI and SECS, but the whole university. With Innov8 UC, we plan to have students voice their ideas for how to improve life at UC in any aspect, and give them a chance to actually implement their idea, should it be chosen at the event. We are expecting to have EDAptive Computing, GE, Google, HP Northrop Grumman, Viable Synergy and other leading computing companies help sponsor the event and serve as judges.”

Chawla adds, “We are proud to introduce the following events to our calendar this year:

- T.G.I.F Collaboration with ALL engineering student group
- Programming preliminary competitions
- State wide sponsored competitions (all Ohio Schools)- November 4th
- Web Development Series
- CEO lecture series
- Professional Development Workshops
- Hackathon Collaboration with IEEE
- Innov8 UC co-hosted with UC Student government- April 7th

All of these events are new this year and have allowed us to restructure ACM’s focus to enhancing computing. Each event and activity is unique in its own way and showcases our mission for this year. This year, we consistently have about 30 members at each event, which is the most in UC’s ACM history.”

In addition to the students’ efforts, Paul Talaga, PhD and School of Computing Sciences and Informatics assistant professor educator, is joining the crusade. The popular professor is actively involved in many of the events in which ACM has hosted this year on-campus. He's also held a Web Development lecture series over the past 6 weeks, which has benefited many students at the university. This series allowed students to expand their skills in the area of web development and the chapter gained valuable information that the board plans to use for the rest of the year. Talaga has also helped the Executive Board of ACM to plan events, and has given advice on project proposals and general programming for the chapter.
“Thanks to everyone’s contributions, ACM has already achieved so much. Yet, there is still much to be achieved. We’re currently working with Student Government to make Innov8 UC the major event of the year. We’re also working with them and UCIT to develop a new polling module for Blackboard that will significantly improve the current polling process. Furthermore, we’re in the process of starting a Mobile Game Development team, headed by one of our freshmen. We’re in the process of planning some programming contests and more lectures as well,” Back remarks.

Back is a sophomore Computer Science major at CEAS, with a focus on cyber-security and software engineering. As a graduate of Covington Latin School, Back graduated high school at the age of 16. He first became interested in Computer Science when he attended a Computer Science/Information Technology summer camp before his senior year of high school at Northern Kentucky University.

Besides ACM, Back is actively involved in CEAS Ambassadors and is a Peer Leader for the Computer Science Learning Community. He is currently awaiting admission into the ACCEND program, in which he plans to earn both his bachelor's and master's degrees in Computer Science. Back hopes to one day join the likes of Google and Apple at the leading edge of computing.

Back advises, “I would tell my fellow students to pursue their passion, never give up, and to never stop learning.”

Chawla is also a sophomore majoring in Computer Science. She graduated from Centerville High School with honors and is currently focusing on the biological and psychological aspects of computing. Chawla learned that Computer Science was not just about writing code, but that it was also about being innovative while, creating solutions to problems in our society, and ultimately making a difference. Choosing Computer Science as her major was the perfect fit. Chawla is already having her research on “Surgical Simulations” published in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers National Aerospace and Electronics Conference (IEEE NAECON) Journal.

Chawla is also heavily involved on campus: she is currently the vice president of the Asian American Association, a Turner Scholar Ambassador and a CEAS Ambassador. She hopes to use her computing skills to make an impact on society and to also help those around her through the art of computing.

Chawla reflects, “I’d like to advise my fellow peers to never give up, no matter how hard it gets because the payoff will be worth it. Our work with ACM is the perfect example of this. ACM has
really appreciated the support, guidance and collaborative efforts of our advisors, other UC organizations, and student government. We hope that everyone will submit an idea for Innov8 UC in order to make a greater difference at the University of Cincinnati between February and March and will attend the competition/conference on April 7th. ACM looks forward to seeing everyone there!”

Thanks to the relentless, Innov8-ive efforts of Back, Chawla, and Talaga, UC’s ACM chapter will soon be one of the front-runner organizations on campus and their Innov8 UC event is destined to be a huge success. Look for more information on Innov8 UC and the ACM student chapter as the spring semester unfolds at http://www.ceas3.uc.edu/acm/about.