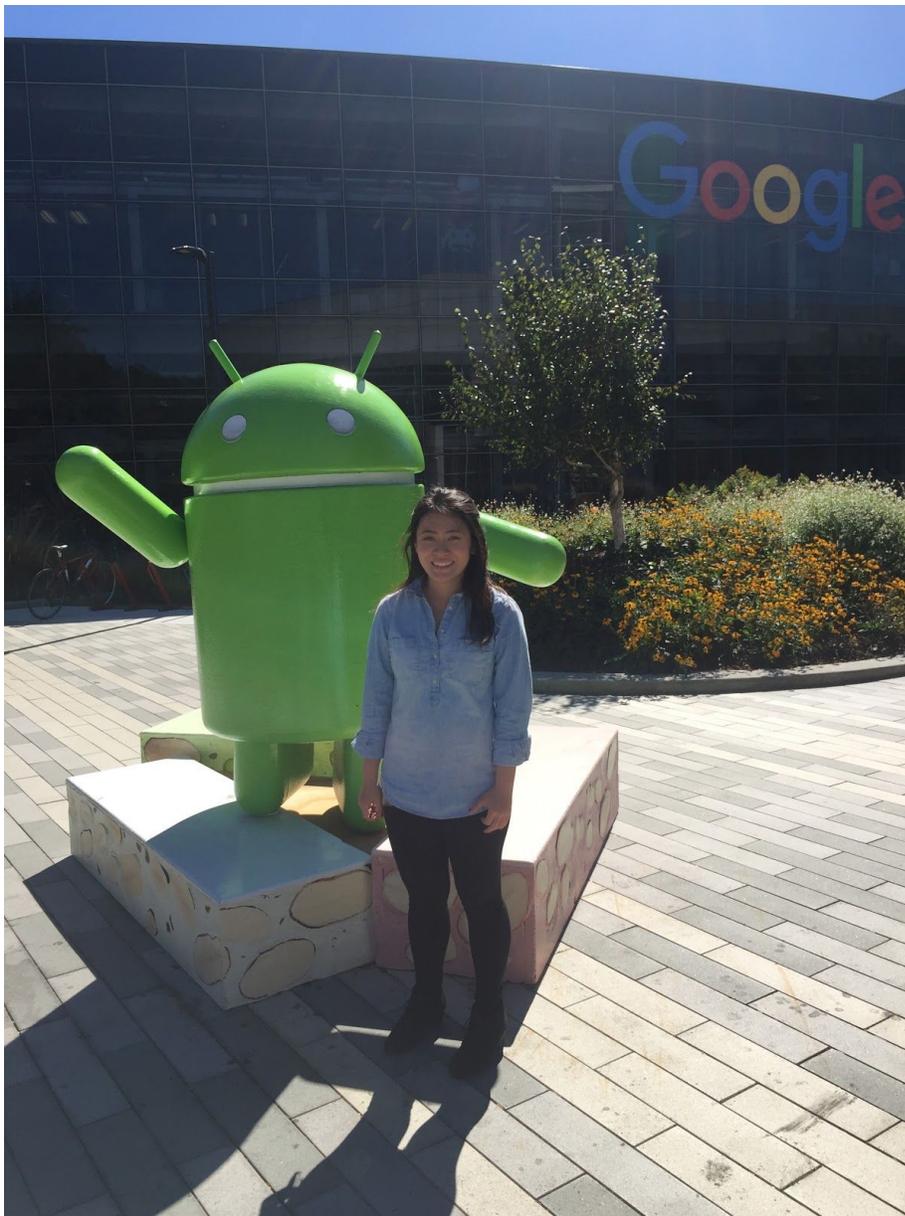


First MAGIC Graduate Now Codes as Google Engineer

Emily To, 21, has a pretty impressive first job. She's a software engineer at Google, which she calls a "great place" to work.

"There are these people who have all this brain power they don't know what to do with, so they are going to use it to teach you stuff," says Emily, who started working at Google in March 2016, just three months after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in computer science.



It's hard to believe that when Emily started college, she had never written a line of code. In high school, she considered a career in the biomedical field – which she knew her dad worked in – but she had a lot of questions. Wanting to learn more from people working in technology, she applied to the **More Active Girls in Computing Program (MAGIC)** and was matched with mentor Susanne Glissmann, a computer scientist at IBM.

Her mentorship worked a little differently than it works today: She and Susanne would Skype every other week, talking about Susanne's career, and answering Emily's questions. "I basically told her, 'Hey I have a hunch that I am interested in bio-engineering, but I am not really sure,'" Emily remembers. "So she set me up talking with bio engineers and different scientists, to see if that was the path I really wanted to pursue. "

Susanne taught her something else, too: About the discrepancy between men and women when it came to jobs in technology. Even today, women only make up about 28 percent of the technology workforce. This gender inequity was something Emily says she really began noticing as a student at Berkeley. "The further along you went in your classes, you noticed the girls disappearing," she remembers.

Emily credits her experience with MAGIC for encouraging her to apply for CS Kickstart, a weeklong program targeting freshman women at Berkeley interested in science, technology, engineering and math. Through this program, she built a network with other women and started coding. She also found the courage to major in computer science, which clicked for her because she loves making things, especially with laser cutters. "With CS, all you need is your computer, some smart peers and you can make something really awesome in probably less than a week," says Emily.

Besides this network, knowing that her mentor and the other professional women she met through MAGIC were working in engineering gave her reassurance to continue, while so many other girls stopped. In the US, fewer than 16 percent of CS graduates are women, but studies show many girls want support to stay in STEM. According to the [National Research Center for College and University Admissions](#), one of five high school girls interested in STEM report wanting to learn more about mentoring and motivational programs so they can be better prepared for their futures.

Now that she is working in the field, what would her advice be to other girls wondering if they should apply to MAGIC? "Just apply," she says. She remembers that when she was applying for jobs, she had a spreadsheet with 30 company names on it – but the only thing that matters is that she got the job at Google. "You really don't know your career path until you try things out," she advises. "Don't shut things down before you try it."

- By Kate Pavao
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