FAQ - Spring 2021

Updated:  01/20/2021

Q: Which college offers the BACS degree program?

This degree program is in the College of Arts & Letters and includes satisfying the core requirements in Arts & Letters and foundational coursework in Computer Science.

Q: When do I apply?

You will apply in the spring of your first year.

Q: When are applications due?

Applications are due on Friday, March 5th at 5 PM EST.

Q: When will results be known?

Decisions will be conveyed at the end of March to allow for appropriate advising time prior to registration for the fall semester.

Q: Should I meet with my adviser prior to applying?

Yes! We strongly encourage meeting with your First Year Adviser and as appropriate reaching out to the BACS Program Director, Prof. Aaron Striegel via the program e-mail address at bacs@nd.edu.

Q: How many students will be admitted in this cohort?

We expect to admit 10 to 15 students to this cohort (Class of 2024).

Q: Do I have to be a current first year student to apply?

Yes

Q: Can I re-apply next year as a sophomore (rising junior)?

No -- due to space limitations and course prerequisite constraints, you must enter the program by the start of the sophomore year.
Q: Can I be in the gateway (HCC-ND) program?

Yes, gateway students are eligible.

Q: Do I have to be in Arts & Letters now to be considered?

No, this degree program is open to all first year students. The degree is offered by the College of Arts & Letters and your degree will be granted by that College.

Q: What is a cognate area?

A cognate area of study is 15 or more credit hours that comprises a coherent set of courses. Courses in the cognate area must embody an area of knowledge outside of the computing disciplines. Students will be encouraged to explore the places of intellectual contact between the approved cognate area and Computer Science.

The selected cognate area and its courses are approved by the BACS Program Director or designee in consultation with the relevant department(s) using criteria intended to ensure depth of study in the cognate area. Once admitted, students may also submit their own slate of courses for approval.

The cognate requirement may be an approved minor. An approved supplementary major or second major would also fulfill this requirement, as would an approved set of courses proposed by the student with adequate justification. Note that because of the overlap in content, the minors in Computing and Digital Technology or Data Science may not be used to fulfill the cognate requirement.

Q: Do I have to know today what courses I want to take as part of my cognate?

No, that is part of the advising process once you are admitted. You should be able to identify your cognate area though as part of the process.

Q: Do I have to pick only one Cognate / Area of Interest on my application?

No, you may indicate several areas of interest. But the courses chosen to fulfill the cognate requirement must represent a single coherent area of interest that is explored in some depth through that coursework.

Q: What if I don’t know exactly what Cognate or Areas of Interest that I want to pursue?

You should consult as early as possible with your first-year adviser or the BACS Program Director to help identify areas of interest. An ideal application to the BACS program will state
clearly how the BACS program allows you to pursue your academic and / or career goals and how the cognate relates to those goals.

Q. Can I combine the BACS with a degree in another College through the dual degree program?

Because of program size limitations, the BACS program is not eligible for inclusion in a dual degree program (e.g. Reilly Program).

Q: What if I am currently intending to join the Computer Science program (BSCS)? Can I still apply for the BACS?

Yes, provided you are a first year student.

Q: Can I apply if I am a transfer student?

No, not at this time.

Q: Can this be part of a double major?

The BACS program is structured to allow for the potential for a double major within A&L or to enable an A&L minor. Note that certain A&L majors may require having significant amounts of AP credit and / or a willingness to take summer classes to successfully complete the double major.

It is important to note that any second major **must** be within the College of Arts & Letters. For example, it is not possible to do the BACS together with Finance from the College of Business.

Q: Will there be a wait list?

Yes, we will notify all applicants in late March as to their status and if appropriate, their relative position on the wait list.

Q: Is a senior thesis required?

No, but it is strongly recommended. Ideally, the senior thesis should represent work at the interface between computer science and the cognate area.

Q: What is the Arts & Letters core?

Students in the BACS program will be expected to satisfy the Arts & Letters core which can be found [here](#) including the foreign language requirement.
Q: What are the math requirements for the degree?

Students will be required to take Math 10550: Calculus I, Math 10560: Calculus II, CSE 20110: Discrete Mathematics, and six credits of coursework from the following list: Math 20550 (Calculus III), Math 20610 (Linear Algebra), Math 20580 (Linear Algebra with Differential Equations), ACMS 30440 (Probability and Statistics), ACMS 20530 (Introduction to Probability).

Petitions to accept other Math or ACMS courses for this requirement will be considered, but introductory mathematics courses will generally not be approved. Restrictions (e.g., credit cannot be granted for both Math 20610 and Math 20580) will apply.

Q: What if I took Calc A / B instead of Calc I / II?

You will work with your adviser and the BACS Program Director to determine the appropriate coursework to take. Most likely, you would need to take Calc II in order to satisfy the prerequisites for the six credits of additional math coursework.

Q: What if I am taking Elements of Calculus?

You would work with your adviser and the BACS Program Director to determine the appropriate coursework to take.

Q: Do I need to have prior programming experience?

No, but prior programming experience can be helpful in the program. Programming experience will be required prior to taking Fundamentals of Computing (CSE 20311) in the fall semester upon entering the BACS program. The Program Director will work with you to determine the best course of action.

Interested students may take EG 10116 (Introduction to Engineering via Python) in consultation with the lead instructor Dr. Kerry Meyers and the BACS Program Director.

Q: Can I take Fundamentals of Computing in the spring?

If there is space in the course and you have adequate prior programming experience, you may join the wait list for the course. Note that priority for Fundamentals of Computing is given to CSE students. Please reach out to the BACS Program Director for advice.

Q: How will you evaluate students for admission to the BACS program?

Your essay, course performance from the fall semester, and your desired areas of interest will help inform the committee making admission decisions. The key aspect of distinction is
articulating why the BACS program is essential towards achieving your career and academic goals.

**Q: Should I do a BACS or BSCS?**

Please refer to this [comparison chart](#) that can also be found on the BACS website.

**Q: Will doing the BACS restrict the type of jobs that I would be able to pursue?**

No. Students in the BACS program will have a rigorous foundation in Computer Science informed by in-depth study in a cognate of their design. Students should discuss their career goals with their adviser.