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PhD Student-CSE
Summer 2008

Tell us about your grad school experience?
I really like being part of the CSE department. The students, faculty, and staff have all been great. The annual faculty/staff/grad-student picnic is always a blast. I have enjoyed serving as grad-student representative on various departmental committees.

What are you researching?
I belong to the Software Engineering & Network Systems (SENS) laboratory. I am interested in better-understanding and addressing the problems that attend the maintenance of concurrent (esp. multi-threaded shared-memory) systems. Toward these goals, I am working on:
* a model of synchronization for object-oriented languages called Szumo that should support maintenance better than contemporary synchronization mechanisms (e.g., semaphores and monitors),
* developing an empirically-based task model for the maintenance of concurrent systems that will provide a better understanding of how, in practice, developers deal with the challenges that concurrency creates (e.g., nondeterministic scheduling and failure that are difficult-to-impossible to reproduce).

For a more detailed description of my work, see www.cse.msu.edu/~sdf/.

What do you do with your free time?
What is this so-called “free time” you speak of? Seriously, I must grudgingly admit that I like most things targeted at the male 18-34 demographic, although I have an art/ counterculture bent. I’m a bit of a beer aficionado -- gimme the hoppy stuff! Along with beer (seriously, I’m not a lush), I enjoy movies, especially the art-house variety, and music, especially indie rock. To keep fit, I play tennis, jog, and walk (yes, walk; it’s really good for you). I also like experiencing new people, places, and cultures, so when money and time aren’t a problem (which is almost never), I love traveling.

What is the best part of your graduate experience?
One of my favorite parts of academic life is participating in the larger research community. I especially like attending conferences where I can meet firsthand the “big names” in the field and see the latest results presented by the authors.
We all have many reasons for going into engineering, and I think all of us will agree that those reasons are money. Okay, that’s not entirely true, but you have to admit, the money idea makes good sense (insert laughter here). Whatever your reason is for going to engineering grad school, the fact remains that most of us don’t have much money now. We can do without stylish clothes and a new car, but, try as we might, we can’t do without food. So, here are a few tips on how to drop the food budget and eat healthy at the same time.

Rules to Get Through Grad School
1) Don’t eat out. Duh. This one is pretty much a no brainer, but to convince the skeptics, check out these often overlooked facts. A typical fast food meal costs about $6-$7, takes three days off your life and kills a fairy in Neverland. Packing your lunch costs about $1-$3 a meal, is 1,726 times healthier than fast food and saves 2 whales from extinction. It’s a no brainer.

2) Eat less meat. Meat is good. I like meat. Mmmmm meat! Unfortunately, meat is pricey. On average it takes about 20 lbs of grain to make 1 lb of meat from a cow. A large amount of this extra grain passes right through the cow as, well… let’s just say greenhouse gases. So, by adding a few more veggies, some lentils or a bigger potato to your meal you can save money, eat healthier and save the planet all in one step.

3) Make more food than you can eat in one sitting. This is a big one for me and many people over look it. The biggest reason I eat out or unhealthy is because I’m too lazy to cook something. Leftovers are healthy (assuming the pre-leftovers were healthy), cheap and save time in the long run. If eating leftovers doesn’t sound appealing, call them something else.

Friend: “Hey, what are you having for lunch?”
You: “I’m heating up some Shazam! right now”
Friend: “Shazam! That sounds great. All I have are stupid leftovers”
Lunch will never be the same.

Eating healthily and cheaply takes a little time and a bit of emotional support. When I get down on my luck and am not in the mood to cook, but don’t want to drop the cash on crappy food, I just remember the immortal words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Walk softly and carry a cheap meal in every pot”…or something like that.

Cheapastic Recipe of the Month
By: Jon Kiel

½ lb lentils $0.60
14.5 oz can chopped tomatoes $1.00
1 medium onion $0.20
1-3 cloves of garlic $0.10
1 box frozen spinach $1.20
1 cup rice $0.50
TOTAL $3.60

Make lentils according to package
Make rice according to package
Dice onion and sauté on medium heat
Defrost spinach and add to onions
Chop garlic into 3-4 pieces
Add tomatoes, onions, garlic and spinach to lentils
Let simmer for ~20 minutes, season to taste.
Serve over rice.

Makes: ~ 5 servings
Prep Time: ~ 7 min. Start to eat time: ~ 30 min.
Cost per meal : $0.70

Grad News produced by Graduate Students: Laura Grabowski, Bradley Hall, Jon Kiel & Loretta Macklem. Staff: Lynda White.

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