

Earn a Masters of Computer Science from Georgia Tech - at an Affordable Price

By: Rapid Access International, Inc.

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In today's job market, many industries require advanced degrees from individuals to even be considered hireable. This places a huge emphasis on not only earning a bachelor's degree, but also earning master's or doctorate degrees to compete for job positions. For-Profit universities such as The University of Phoenix and DeVry University offer affordable online courses for their degrees, however their accreditations among the academic communities are not recognized. Highly accredited institutions such as the University of Southern California, Johns Hopkins University, and Carnegie Mellon offer online masters programs for similar costs as their on-campus education - over \$43,000. Georgia Technical Institute – a top 10 school for computer science – is offering the same Computer Science master's degree for nearly 1/8th of the cost - \$7,000. By eliminating all unnecessary costs, they've stripped down their tuition to \$510 per three-credit course – compared to \$5,535 per three-credit-course at USC for a similar course.

How the program works:

Georgia Tech offers a highly sought after computer science program on-campus. Because of this, it is important that their online degree does not diminish the quality of their educational standards. In order for this to work, the online course was designed to give the students as close to the experience of taking class on-campus as possible. The professor renders their lectures into videos which the students stream, and gives out the same homework assignments that would be given their class on-campus. This is not a new concept, however utilizing current technology allows for a more complete immersion into the lectures.

To administer exams, Georgia Tech outsources to a specialized test proctoring company. This company remotely locks down the student's computer, and uses their computer's camera to check for any cases of cheating. To complete the Computer Science master's course, all students must complete the 30 credit hours – the same as the on-campus degree.

A typical Georgia Tech Computer Science masters class on-campus has approximately 300 students, while their online course, which is known as it's Online Masters of Science Computer Science (OMS CS) is extended to 4,000. These students come from all over the US, and are encouraged to form study groups and engage with nearby students that are participating in the same course. There are nearly 3,500 students that are active on Google+ OMS Community. This network of students from different areas allows for a similar experience a student would receive if taking classes on-campus.

How to get into the program:

The basic requirements to enter this program is a bachelor's degree from an accredited university with a at least a 3.0 GPA in Computer Science. International students must also pass a TOEFL exam to enter the program. Approximately 55% of applicants get into the OMS CS program – only 15% of applicants get into their on-campus program. Once admitted into the program, students must pass the first two

core courses with a 3.0 GPA to stay in the program. This is drastically different than other universities where GRE scores, letters of recommendations, and entry essays are all required.

Benefits:

The majority of students who enrolled into the Georgia Tech Computer Science program would not have enrolled into any program had this option not existed. A study released in September 2016 by the Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government has concluded that by "satisfying large, previously unmet demand for mid-career training, this single program will boost annual production of American computer science master's degrees by 8 percent."¹

Dr. Charles Isbell, Georgia Tech senior associate dean at the College of Computing, has recognized the benefits of this method of learning. A common misconception is that online-classes limit the interaction between students and teachers. Dr. Isbell has noted in his personal experience that rarely do students go to his office to ask him questions on-campus. Conversely, the online program has an interface where students can post questions, which Dr. Isbell can access anywhere and help students understand concepts immediately. Dr. Isbell stated in a September interview: "'I spend more time helping them with assignments online than I ever do on campus. The experience for the students and for me is much richer online."²

Georgia Tech has admitted that the OMS CS program will not make money because the tuition covers the bare necessities. However, the hype around an affordable master's degree has created great publicity, and the amount of applicants for the schools on-campus programs have increased 30% in 2014 and 18% in 2015.

In conclusion:

In the US, where student debt is rising exponentially, Georgia Tech is paving a way for people to get affordable degrees from accredited universities. While schools like USC (University of Southern California) continue their online programs with price tags of \$53,000, Georgia Tech's innovative approach to online education is garnering great respect from other institutions. The legitimacy of online master's programs will only increase because of the growing number of students who experience online education even while they live on-campus. Without diminishing the quality of education, Georgia Tech has allowed for students – who normally wouldn't consider an advanced degree – to earn a master's degree and better their future.

Additional sources:

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¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/10/04/after-gaining-legitimacy-can-online-higher-education-replace-traditional-college/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/10/04/after-gaining-legitimacy-can-online-higher-education-replace-traditional-college/>

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