

How to attract the right students to computer science?

Summary of speech at SARIT 06

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I realize there is a diversity of understanding what computer science really is. Especially the German word "Informatik" is a general description for a diverse field ranging from support services up to research at universities. In my opinion most people don't know what computer science is all about. This has implications on pupils at secondary school. Unfortunately many gymnasiums still don't have any computer courses at all, so they are not helping to improve the situation. And if there are any courses, they sometimes give a false impression of what computer science is. We should help ourselves by showing pupils at local schools what we are doing at university. I therefore propose to recruit students on a voluntary basis to present their projects at schools. This would not only explain to potential students what computer science is about, but also help to improve the image of computer science in general. I personally prefer students to professors for this task since the dialog between pupils and students can be more relaxed.

In my opinion it is important to tell pupils that we really want them at university. I can imagine that many of them are afraid of our institution and the complexity of computer science. We should try to fill this gap between school and university by communicating and giving them confidence by saying "we want you and you can do it".