Guided Pathways Student Profile: Mara Williams

Meet Mara. She is a 2nd year student pursuing an AAS in Computer Programming. Mara has a Bachelor's Degree in Medieval Studies from University of California Davis, a Master's Degree in Communications from the University of Wisconsin, and she completed PhD work in Communications from the University of Oregon. During her Doctoral studies, she had an epiphany that she no longer wanted to pursue those studies and went to work for the City of Eugene doing project work. During her tenure at the City, she taught herself basic programming concepts so she could create custom tools to make siloed information more accessible for other City Employees. She realized she enjoyed creating solutions for users' everyday problems from a systems perspective.

After her job ended at the City, she decided to go a completely different direction and enrolled at Lane to study computer programming. During her first year at Lane, she took Math 95 over zoom and "loved it" due to the systematic approach of the instructor Angela Martinek. In her first computer science course 161N with Mari Good, she found a sense of community with other programming students. In fact, this sense of community motivated her to work as a tutor, helping other students along their path. Asked for one piece of advice for Lane students, she replied, "Don't be afraid to explore new things and avoid telling yourself 'I'm not a computer person, or a math person, or a writing person,' give yourself a chance to find out." After she completes her degree she hopes to use her background in communication to create computer systems that help users solve problems in creative and empathetic ways.