

Day to Day Journal

I feel very honoured that I was given the opportunity to go on this trip. It helped me to see what I want to do in future. This is my honest opinion and my own experience of the GHC. Your experience may be very different from mine.

A bit of background on me. My name is Shiva and I'm interested in embedded systems. I have done one QA coop in embedded testing for 8 months and I am very close to graduating.

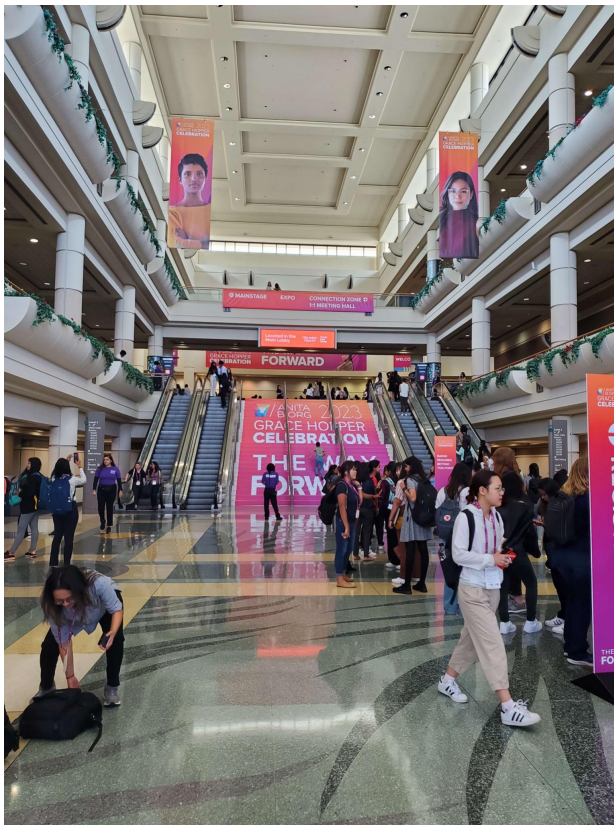
First Day _ September 26th 2023

I woke up excited and nervous, don't know what to expect

Orlando was very humid, we stayed inside the hotel lobby as we waited for the shuttle.

We rode the shuttle to the GHC, we arrived, inside it was super cold and I didn't bring my jacket.

We look around, in awe of everything that we are seeing.



We are supposed to pick up our badge for today. We find the line to pick up the badge, the line moves fast. They have wifi inside. I picked up my badge. We take pictures, we go outside and take pictures with the GHC sign.



We walked to the event centre where there are more GHC signs, and took more pictures.



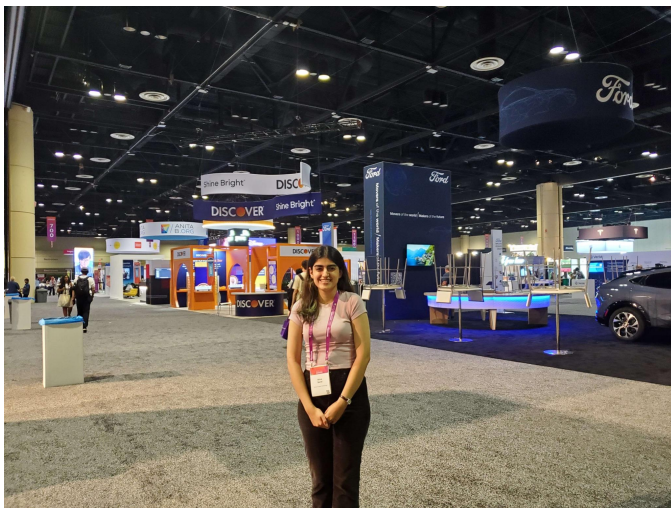
There are a lot of people here, A LOT.

We start noticing that people are gathering in small circles and they are talking to someone. Upon closer look we noticed that there were a couple of company representatives talking to some of the attendees. We join the circles, hop from one circle to the other circle. Some of the attendees try to give out their resumes but the representatives don't really seem to be interested in receiving them. They are mostly there to talk about what they do.

After taking some pictures and listening to some of the representatives, the doors open up to where the company booths are, the expo. I am in awe of the space and the number of booths. The space is massive. I see some company names that I recognized but most of them are new to me.

I follow the SFU girls in between the booths. It was at this moment that I realised how bad I was at pitching myself and making the representatives interested in what I have to offer. I struggled to make small conversations. I had zero ideas of what I should say. I watched some of the other SFU girls be so perfect at introducing themselves and really grab the representatives' attention.

Sometime around the end we started taking pictures around the booths, the expo is pretty empty now. The booth for Bank of America looks the prettiest and that's where we take a lot of our group pictures.



For dinner we headed to a Mexican place. The food was amazing and the server was really nice. There was a bookshelf filled with different art pieces. There was a huge tree at the centre. Colourful ribbons were hanging from its branches as its leaves.



At the hotel, I practised how to introduce myself and I note down some of potential questions i could ask, looked at some of the workshop and event descriptions, then I fell asleep

Second Day _ September 27th 2023

We woke at 7:30 am because Cigna was offering free breakfast and they were also going to talk about who they are and what they do.

I arrived at the event.

I grab my breakfast which has a cupcake, a juice box, and some fruits. I grab a table and quietly take a seat. I don't know anyone at my table. But I think that this would be a good practice to introduce myself and make small talk before the expo opens up.

There is a representative from Cigna sitting at the table and she is the main driving force in conversations.

From what I understood, they do a lot of data science related work.

I struggle to find a gap in the conversations to say something, honestly I have no idea what I should say. I felt overwhelmed and I found it hard to gain any confidence.

After a while I pushed myself and I asked the representative about what she does, how she likes it, and how many offices they have.

By this time a lot of people have left the table.

We talk more. And I will mention about being a Canadian. She tells me about her trip to Canada. Some of the SFU girls join me at the table and they also start asking questions from the representative. I'm really enjoying the conversation. I'm happy that I pushed myself and asked questions. Because that was really hard for me.

The event ends and We head to the expo.

As we enter we see this long line. We soon realised it was for Amazon. We feel overwhelmed. Unsure if we should also line up or come back later. Some of us join the line. Me and a couple others decided to come back later.

Inside the expo there are alot of people. There are alot of people like me, done somewhere from 0 to 2 coops and very close to graduating.

I'm overwhelmed by the crowd, lost. I decided to floor one of the SFU girls as she seemed pretty comfortable talking and pitching herself to the representative. Staying in a group really helps. I learned about how I should introduce myself and what type of questions I should ask. Because here there are thousands of me, we are all finishing the same major, we all have similar projects in our resume and we are all trying to impress the representatives. How can I stand out between all of these people?

There were alot of booths. Some of them had long lines. We decided to go to the backside of the expo where security related companies were located.

The first booth that we go to in the expo was JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory). The representative was really cool and they got me really excited about what they do. I really liked how their everyday work looked like. I saw myself working for them and really enjoying it. One of the girls asked them about hiring Canadian. That was when the representative told us that currently they are only able to hire Americans. I was a bit sad but the representor told us that in future it might change so we shouldn't lose all our hopes. We talked about more and they gave some swags and left for the next booth.

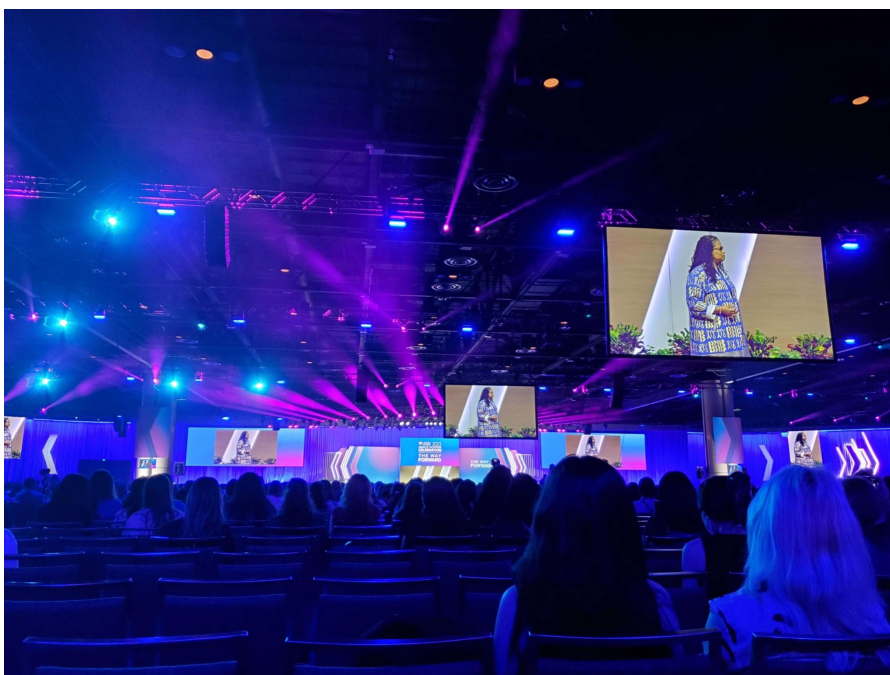
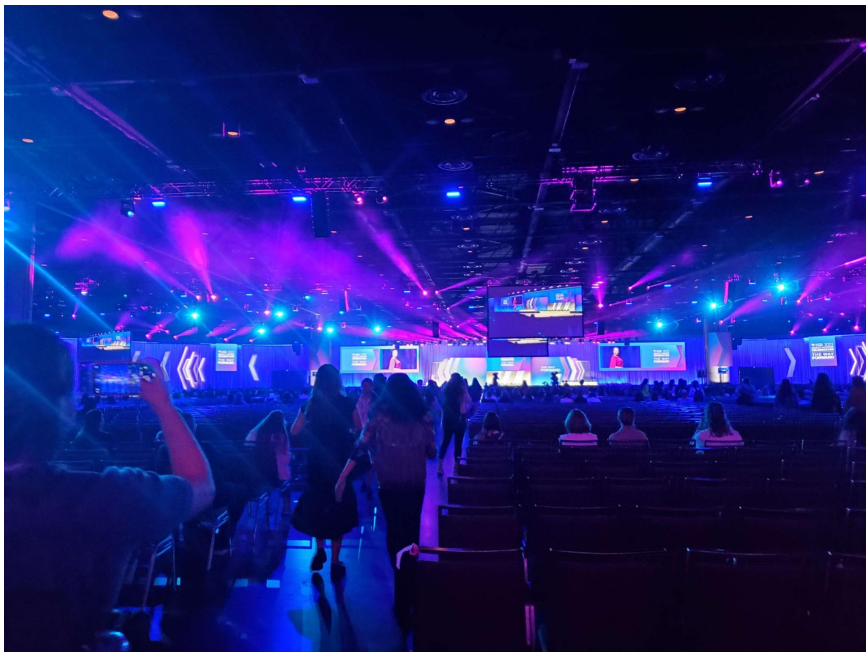


We quickly realised that all the security related jobs or coops they wanted were someone who was American.

We moved from one booth to the other, waiting in lines, introducing ourselves, getting more swags and moving to the next booth.

The opening plenary (opening ceremony) was about to start so we headed over there.

We take a seat somewhere mid sections. I never seen a space as big as this. There are so many TVs. It might even be as big as Rogers arena or more.



I think you should experience the ceremony yourself. But basically you will get a lot of words of encouragement. I felt motivated and eager. I wanted to make a big impact and become someone important. I never felt this empowered by a speech.

After the ceremony we head back to the expo. Visiting more booths, introducing ourselves, getting more swags and moving to the next booth.

I'm happy that my luggage had space because I got a bag full of swags.

From time to time there would be snacks provided by GHC, there usually would be lemonade, yogurt, cookies, cupcakes, bananas or apples.

I have to say the expo was a bit unorganised specially with the way people were lining up. Some of the rows were extremely hard to move in. I had to push a couple of girls to be able to get to the other side.

By the end of the day, Three things became really clear to me. First none of the companies were interested in sponsoring and second very few companies were looking for someone with an interest in embedded systems. Third, there are a lot of men.... Who were standing in the line at the booth, with resume in hands, trying to talk to the recruiters. To be fair, recently a lot of companies had huge layoffs which makes it harder for a fresh graduate to compete with someone who has a couple years of industry experience.

There were a couple of booths that surprised me. I had no idea that they were hiring for software developers. Booths like Starbucks, Lululemon, and even Disney.

There was one booth that I remember clearly for this day, the Bank of America. They had the most beautiful booth.

The booth was decorated with different tropical plants illuminated by a mix of pink, green and blue lights, creating a vibrant and colourful atmosphere throughout the booth. It had tons of different sitting areas from tall chairs to comfy short benches. They also had a set of stairs which led to the second floor with even more sitting areas and tropical plants.





Below the staircase there were mirrors and highlight markers where you could write anything you wanted on the mirrors.



On the side there was a wall with tons of holes. In each hole they placed a small bouquet of roses and anyone passing by could grab one of the roses. I took one of the roses.



Not only their booth was pretty they had really nice swags. They were doing this custom design t-shirt. You could design your t-shirt with the Bank of America logo on it and they would print it in less than 5 minutes for you.

I honestly don't remember how the day ended. I was very tired, a bit defeated, and overwhelmed. I remember texting a close friend telling them about how overwhelmed I was and how hopeless I became in finding a company that accepts a Canadian and two who do related work in an embedded area.

The friend reminded me that the reason that I was sent there was not to find a job or a co-op but to enjoy this experience and gain some soft skills by talking to the representative. The experience wasn't for me to find a job but it was for me to get to know companies and understand their culture and the work they do. So in future if someone mentions them I know exactly the type of work they do.

That night I changed my mind set. I was no longer there to find a job but to explore all the options. I talked to SFU girls and the booths that they went to. They also seemed to have problems with finding companies that do sponsorships. It seems like the moment we tell them that we are from Canada they become very uninterested.

Online I can see some girls posting their GHC pictures and talking about their first day. Some of the posts are way more positive than this journal. We went to the same event but they described their experience with such a positive attitude that it also makes me think about this day with a brighter outlook.

There are also some talks about male attendees. There are mentions of them cutting lines and harassments.

I slept that night. Aiming to hit more booths not with the expectation that i would get a job but to explore.

Third Day _ September 28th 2023

I woke up a bit late on this day, eventually took the bus and headed to the expo.

On the third day you could see that organisers made some attempt at organising the lines and the crowd flow but because there were so many people in this event, the attempts seemed not effectfull.

I checked a couple of booths on my own. Introducing myself and asking them a couple of questions such as how is working in their company or what they like about working there.

I remember I was at the booth for a company, waiting in line. When it was my turn to talk to the representative, a guy just cuts through the line and steps in front of me and starts talking to the representative. I felt really angry at that moment. Anger is understatement. I couldn't tell if I was angry that my turn was taken or the representative didn't do anything about it.

The rest of the day was pretty much the same: wait in line, talk to the representative, tell them you are a Canadian, sorry we don't do sponsorships, that's cool, it was nice talking to you and move on.

For lunch I bought some of the pre-made sandwiches from our hotel, which was the best decision that I made. There are some food options at the event but they are very pricey. The sandwich that I got from the hotel was very filling, tasty and cheaper. Me and SFU girls we sat down and ate our lunches together, showing each other some of the cool swags that we got.

During lunch I think about if I was the right person to come to this event. Maybe if I had co-op experience in security or dev-op, or I was a dual citizen of Canada and America, or if I did some big internships with Microsoft or Amazon, then I would have been a better candidate. It's very easy to lose your self esteem in these types of events.

After lunch we head out and check out more booths.

I could see the exhaustion of yesterday in the eyes of some of the representatives. I could also feel that exhaustion in myself as well.

The day ended and I headed back to the hotel. Some of the SFU girls went to a google event that was happening. I was very proud of myself for going alone through the booths and pitching myself. I went to sleep feeling satisfied with my own personal growth.

Fourth Day _ September 29th 2023

Today was the last day, so my roommates decided to take it easy on this day. Since we have been feeling the exhaustion of the last 2 days.

Upon arrival we noticed a huge line outside the expo. It's a line to get into the expo. I think it's a way that organisers decided to try to control the crowd. I'm very confused about this plan since today is not even a full day. It's only a half day. Frustrated that I couldn't go to the expo, I decided to go to the workshops that were being offered.



One of my biggest regrets about this trip was not attending enough of these workshops. They all have speakers talking about different areas of cs. In some of them you will also get a chance to create cool stuff. So yeah definitely go to the workshops if you feel overwhelmed by the expo.

After the workshop one of the SFU girls let us know that the organisers gave up on the line and now everyone is allowed in. So We head back to the expo.

Since today is half day I decided to only go to the booths that are related to embedded systems. After handing out my resumes to some of the booths and getting rejected from some since they can't sponsor me, I sat down by the Bank of America. There is only less than 20 minutes left until the event is over.

A couple of SFU girls join me and one of them mentions the cool swags that they got from Disney. I really liked the swag. It was a LED mickey mouse ear headband. We headed to the Disney booth.

To get the swags you have to complete challenges in a small booklet that they give you. Some of the challenges are: You have to follow them on instagram, post about them, take pictures with representatives, talk to the representatives, ask them about their favourite

characters and others. I really like what they have set up. It's creative. Honestly it feels very refreshing to get out of the routine of introducing yourself and asking them how they are working in their company and what they do.

I'm trying to finish the booklet as fast as I can because we have less than 15 minutes. Suddenly one of the Disney representatives was standing right beside me and asked, "Are you trying to finish the booklet?" I replied, "Oh.. Yes I am". I see that one of the challenges is talking to representatives. So I take a deep breath and do my usual introduction. "Hi, my name is Shiva, I'm a student at a Canadian university. My area of interest is embedded systems" The representative quickly jumps in and says "oh my god, That's the area that i'm working". She then tells me what she does and I'm too studded to say anything. It never crossed my mind that Disney might have embedded related positions. She asked me if I did any related work in embedded and I told her about my co-op experience. She also mentions that they have an office in Vancouver.

This is the first time that I found a booth where the representative is very interested in what I have done and I'm really interested in what they do. It's embedded systems and there is no problem with me being a canadian. At this point I'm no longer interested in swag. I think we spend about 5 to 10 minutes back and forth talking.

After the talk I feel all the exhaustion getting lifted off my body. I finally found a place where I really see myself working in the future. I really want to work there someday.

After the talk I quickly went back to the challenges which I couldn't complete on time. But one of the SFU girls was very kind and they gave me their own Disney swag. A cool purple heart shaped sunglasses.



The closing ceremony was about to start so we all headed there. I remember we had a couple of speakers for the closing ceremony. For this year Janelle Monáe was supposed to come but she couldn't because of flooding that happened in NYC.



They also addressed the issue with male attendees. A couple weeks after, GHC sent us emails about how they are planning to fix this problem.