Personal Report from Grace Hopper Celebration 2023  
By: Mehreen Uzma

Dates of the Conference: **Sept 26 - Sept 29**  
Location of Conference: **Orlando, Florida**

**Day One:**

Today was the first day of the conference. It was a pretty light day as we started off by collecting our badges. This was a drop in session that was open from 8am til 5pm, allowing those who arrive by flight to pick up whenever convenient. The pick up process was quick and easy as all we had to do was enter our email and show ID to the volunteers and from there it would get printed. Once everyone had their badges, we went into a “Connection Zone” where representatives from different companies were casually talking to us. It was really nice, because the only way you can tell they are a company representative was if you were interacting and socialising with people. After a few hours, we went out for lunch and then headed back to our hotel to prepare for the big day tomorrow.

**Day Two:**

This was the start to the conference as we were welcomed graciously in an opening ceremony. We had the founders and organisers of GHC speak and share a few words, and many more inspirational speakers that really empowered us and ensured we made the most of the conference. Then afterwards, we proceeded to the large expo hall. Once you enter the hall, you will be overwhelmed with how many people there are! There were people everywhere, walking in all directions, carrying all kinds of tote bags, portfolios, and often many had printed resumes at the top of their pile. Today, I decided to go to as many booths as I can and just talk. Try to see what they are looking for, try to sell myself with my 60 second elevator pitch, and then proceed to make as many connections as possible. After a few booths, you would realise how exhausting talking really is. After the day, take a mental note of what went well and what could have been better. For example, was it worth visiting as many booths as possible, or do you think staying in line for the larger companies would be more worth it?

**Day Three:**

After the first two days, you kind of get a feel for how to plan your day. Expo hall is open for large parts of the day so you can always drop by anytime. Use this day to also explore some of the workshops they host and hopefully learn something new. I attended a few and was very pleased at how interactive it was. Some of them require laptops to be able to run their program and play around, so be sure to keep your laptop for these cases. An advice I heard prior to GHC was to stay in the Expo Hall if we are close to graduation. Since this case applied to me, I often went back and forth to the expo hall, trying to visit as many booths as possible. The balance between expo hall and learning sessions helped with my exhaustion as I was able to rest between talking and standing.
**Day Four:**

This was the last day. Believe it not, it was one of the chillest days. At least I took it a lot easier than the rest of the days. We had some time before the closing ceremony, so my only goal was to visit two booths (that I did not get a chance to last time) and then stay in the connection zone and hopefully make more connections. By the time I stood in line and finished talking to the booths, it was time for the closing ceremony so I went to that directly. Closing ceremony was alright as they took too long to start and slightly disappointed us by not having a closing performance. Overall, I think the entire conference was uplifting and empowering and would definitely recommend others to attend.

**Overall Experience**

I am extremely honoured to have been selected to attend GHC 2023. It is one of my biggest highlights of the year that has gained me incredible experience. Witnessing and speaking to so many women in Computer Science was very empowering and made me realise that there is a chance for us in this field.

**Advice for Attendees**

1. Prioritise your mental and physical health  
   a. Take breaks when you can.  
   b. Don't stay up too late and ensure you get enough sleep
2. Have your pitch ready  
   a. Don't follow it exactly, like your reading a script, but have a general idea
3. Research the company to make meaningful connections
4. Learn from each day on what went well and what did not  
   a. Take a mental note and improve on them
5. Network with those in line and at your hotel
6. Believe in yourself  
   a. This will gain your confidence and make you a stronger candidate

**Pictures from the Conference**