

Guidelines for a BS CAP Justification

Fundamentally, a BS cap justification should have the following 3-paragraph format, with the specific titles and specific order listed here:

1. **Area of interest:** The CS topic/area you are interested in.
 - a. Describe independently from your coursework.
 - b. Why is this topic important to you, computer science and society in general?
 - c. Why is it interesting and engaging to you? Be specific, using examples.
2. **Skill set and knowledge:** The skills and knowledge needed to work in your desired topic/area.
 - a. Describe independently from your coursework.
 - b. Why are these skills and knowledge critical for success in your topic/area? Be specific, using examples.
3. **Coursework:** Conclude with the courses you are taking for your BS cap.
 - a. Justify each course by how it satisfies part of the skills and/or knowledge requirements from #2.
 - b. Be specific, explicitly naming the relevant topics and skills for each course.

Note that the courses taken are the logical conclusion, the deduction resulting from the academics-independent needs of pursuing your interests. The point is to show that you have a goal that you are driving towards and that the courses you take are the tools you are using to achieve that goal. Your courses are determined by your goals, not the other way around.

It is very important to be able to articulate your BS cap in a larger context, beyond the bounds of the Rice curriculum. This is actually a very useful thing to be able to do in a job interview, so this is not an empty exercise!

Note that a BS cap can be modified and re-approved at any time before one's last semester. This may be due to courses not being offered and/or simply changing one's mind about one's interests and goals and thus one's course of study. Of course, a new justification will have to be submitted, though generally this simply requires relatively minor tweaks to the existing justification.