

Christopher Johnson from the University of Wisconsin, USA: Semester 1 2019



Christopher and his family enjoying Aotearoa New Zealand

Where have you come from, and what do you teach?

I am on the faculty of computer science at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. I regularly teach courses on programming languages, game development, and web design. At UC, I am teaching a 400-level course on mobile app development. In this course we write software that integrates into daily life. Our apps sense the physical world through various sensors, manage our media, and keep us connected to friends.

What interested you in the Erskine Programme/why did you want to come to UC?

My wife and I have four sons. The oldest is 10 and the youngest is 3. Before they became too entrenched in life back home, we wanted them to see how much larger the world is. A retired colleague of mine is a former Erskine Fellow, and I regularly read the blogs he kept during his several visits. Because of him, applying to be an Erskine Fellow seemed like a natural thing to do.

What have you been doing at UC?

Like many folks on sabbatical, I have been amazed at how I can make even a single course occupy my time and attention. I suppose this is what happens when you enjoy your field. I have also been able to devote some time to several projects designed to facilitate “computational

making.” These projects embed computer science concepts in the context of constructing 3D models or 2D sketches that can be submitted to 3D printers and laser cutters. My hope is use these tools to empower users of makerspaces to fabricate their own objects while learning about math and computer science.

What have you most enjoyed about your time here at UC/Christchurch?

My department has been a very welcoming community. Every day my colleagues congregate in the tea room and share the stuff of life. A small group meets daily at lunch to complete a cryptic crossword. They have taken me under their wing, helping me put R before E and S instead of Z. My family and I have gotten out on the trails as much as possible to soak up the beauty. During term break we made it down to Milford Sounds. On a trip to Hinewai Reserve in Akaroa, we learned that our two youngest sons get carsick. Each Saturday my oldest son and I run Parkrun in North Hagley Park and come home by way of the Riccarton Bush market. We will miss this community.