2024

Waffle College Entry Course

Impact Report

Introduction

Waffle, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the gender gap in the IT field, launched the "Waffle College Entry Course," an IT beginner program for female and non-binary university and graduate students, on two occasions: from April 26 (Friday) to May 5 (Sunday), 2024, and from July 5 (Friday) to July 15 (Monday), 2024, as part of the community "Waffle College."

Participants shared their experiences, stating, "As a humanities student, I'm proud that I was able to strive to learn programming," "I want to face my future paths by believing in myself without closing off my possibilities," "I want to continue studying programming," and "I want to try developing more advanced applications."

About Waffle College

Waffle College is a program that started in 2022, offering a curriculum for university and graduate students aiming to become IT engineers from a background of no IT experience. The program focuses on cultivating three key areas: "Tech Careers," "Empowerment," and "Leadership." Through a year-long series of activities, it fosters interest in IT and aims for participants to experience a full-fledged programming boot camp, ultimately leading to internship opportunities.

The program is divided into two parts: the Entry Course and the Tech Career Course.

The Entry Course provides programming beginners with opportunities to learn programming, develop career thinking, and meet peers who are also learning programming as their first step toward becoming IT engineers.

For participation in the Tech Career Course, a technical screening is conducted to assess the applicants' skill levels. Students who pass the screening will spend about eight months learning IT skills, aiming to secure internships as engineers upon completion. This program is offered entirely free of charge.

Overview of the Entry Course

- Schedule:
    - First occasion: April 26 (Friday) to May 5 (Sunday), 2024
    - Second occasion: July 5 (Friday) to July 15 (Monday), 2024
- Location: Online
    - Optional networking events were available on-site, with partial travel expenses covered for participants traveling from afar.
- Participation Fee: Free
- Number of Participants: 85
- Eligibility:
    - Female and non-binary individuals currently enrolled in universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, colleges of technology, or vocational schools, both domestically and internationally
    - No restrictions on major or department (humanities students and those without experience are very welcome).

Program Contents of the Entry Course

To cultivate the three key areas of "Tech Careers," "Empowerment," and "Leadership" within the short span of 10 days, we implemented the following four initiatives:

IT Education

Participants learned the fundamentals of programming, such as flowcharts and variables, while using a no-code tool called Thunkable to develop applications. At the end of the program, they formed teams of 3-5 members to collaboratively develop and present an app that addresses a local issue.

Gender Lecture

We held lectures by gender experts to deepen understanding of the challenges women face in building their careers, along with the underlying social structure issues. The content aimed to help participants become more aware of their rights and values, encouraging them to actively reflect on and take action regarding their own careers.

Business Lecture

We invited a female entrepreneur and engineer as an instructor to teach the processes and essential perspectives involved in app development. Participants actively applied the knowledge gained from this course in their final app development project. Specifically, they developed practical skills through user interviews and user-centered UI design.

Role Model Lectures

To enhance interest in the IT field, we hosted a seminar featuring past participants of Waffle College as role models. During the seminar, they shared their experiences from high school and university, how they encountered the IT field, and their current endeavors stemming from their learning at Waffle College. This provided a highly valuable experience for the attendees.

Networking Events

While Waffle College primarily operates as an online program, we value the connections among students and therefore host in-person networking events as part of the program. After the course completion, we organized a networking event where students could gather.

The networking event for May participants was held in both Tokyo and Osaka, allowing nearby students to join. Additionally, there was a role model talk by Waffle College alumni, making it a meaningful experience.

For the July networking event, we were generously hosted by Unity Technologies Japan K.K. at their office in Chuo, Tokyo, where participants enjoyed a company introduction and interactions with employees. To support participants traveling from outside the metropolitan area, we provided partial transportation subsidies for this event.

New Initiatives for the 2024 Entry Course

This year, we introduced new initiatives, including AI education and career workshops, as well as opportunities to reflect on leadership.

In the AI education segment, we provided materials that allow participants to engage with AI, sparking interest in the latest technologies.

The career workshops focused on understanding career concepts and included self-analysis activities. Participants reflected on their past experiences and shared their insights with peers, deepening their understanding of their career paths.

Additionally, we set leadership goals before team development began, allowing participants to explore and improve their leadership skills through reflections with team members at the end of the program.
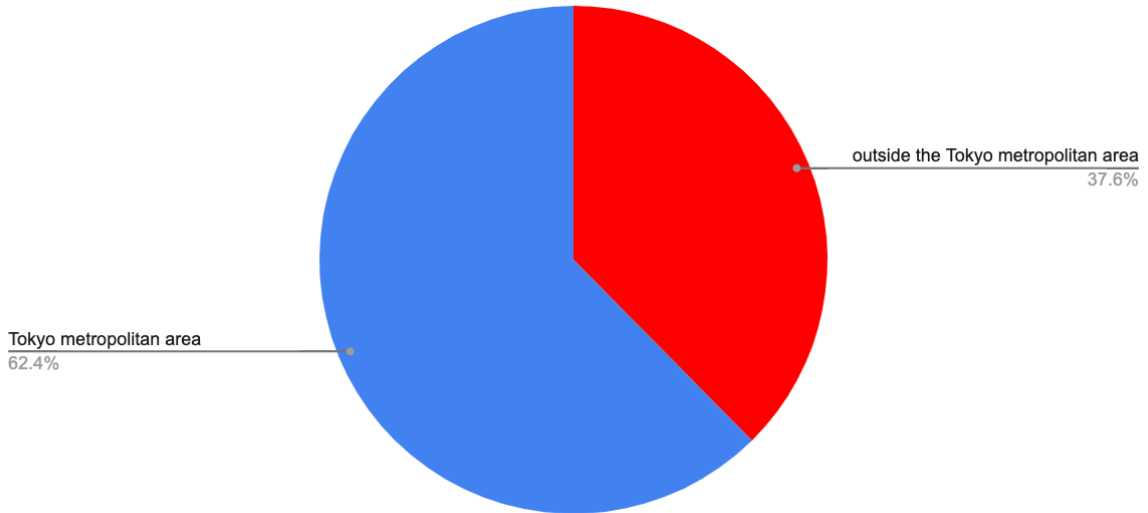
Impact of the 2024 Entry Course

Number of Participants:
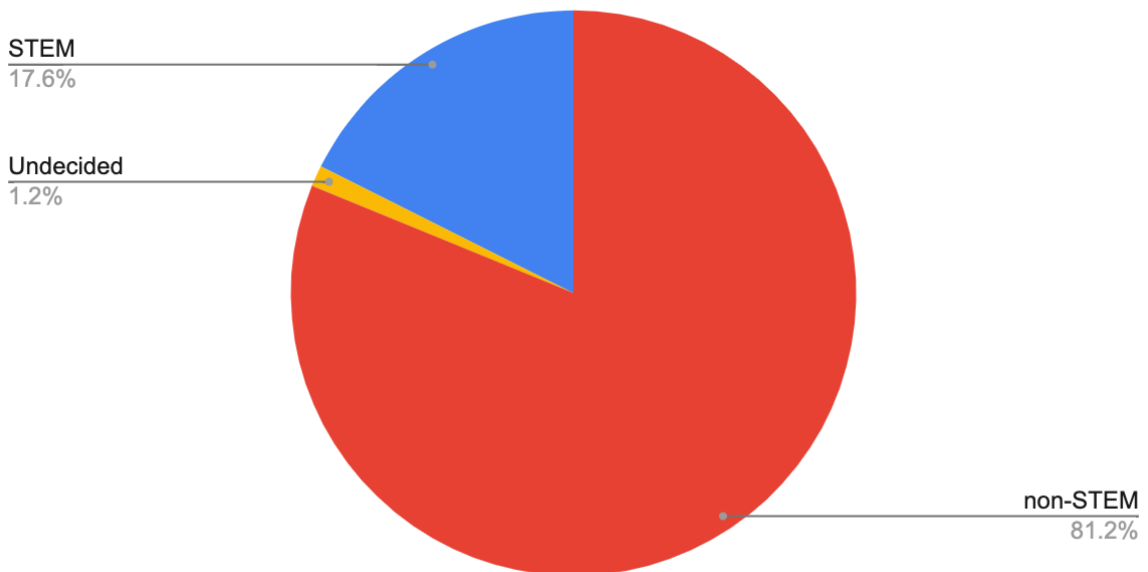
85 students joined the program.

About the Participants:

The locations (prefectures) of the universities attended by Entry Course participants.

outside the Tokyo metropolitan area
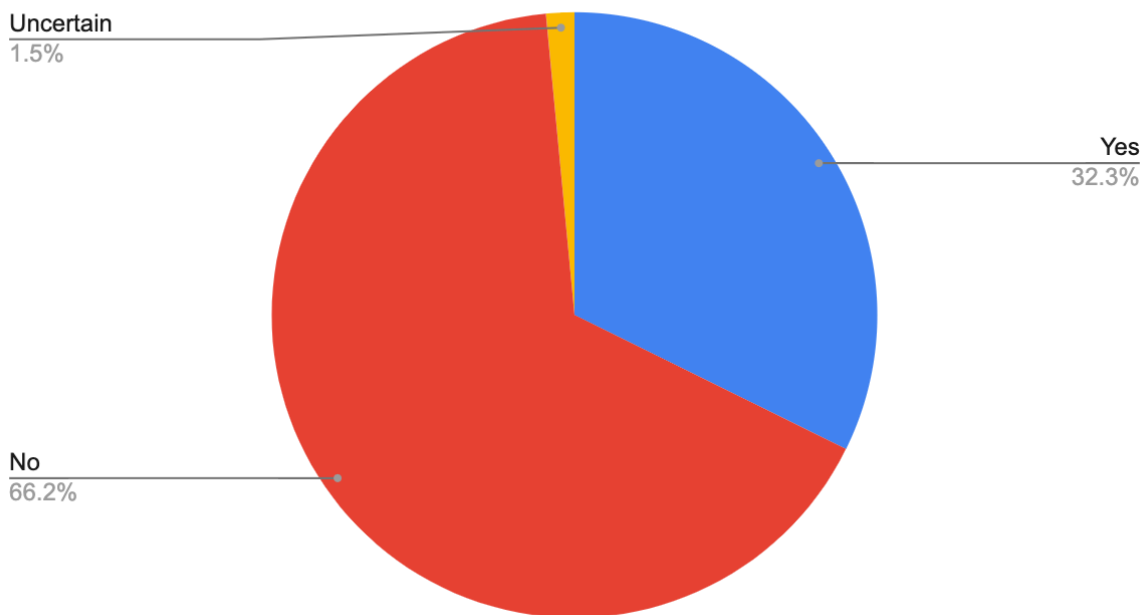37.6%

Tokyo metropolitan area
62.4%

Participants from outside the Tokyo metropolitan area (Tokyo Metropolitan, Kanagawa Prefecture, Chiba Prefecture, and Saitama Prefecture) account for 37.6% (Aichi Prefecture, Toyama Prefecture, Kyoto Prefecture, Osaka Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture, Fukuoka Prefecture, Miyazaki Prefecture, and even overseas).

Faculties of the universities attended by Entry Course participants(STEM or non-STEM)

STEM
17.6%

Undecided
1.2%

non-STEM
81.2%

A large portion of participants came from non-STEM faculties, with 81.2% of participants coming from fields outside of STEM (including the Faculty of Foreign Language, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Literature, Faculty of Policy Studies, and Faculty of Law, among others).
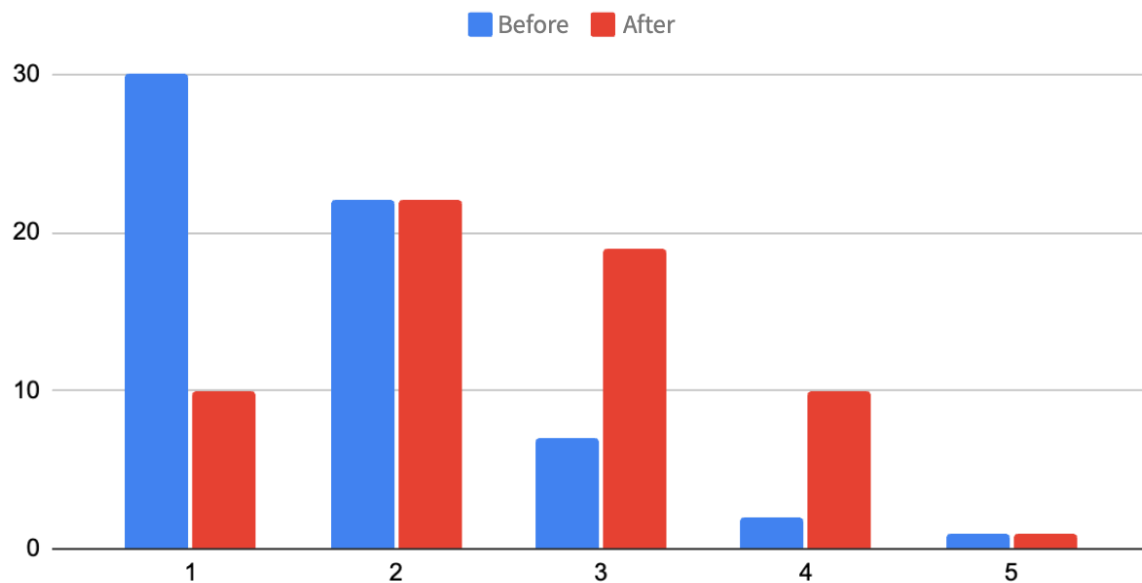
Prior programming experience

Uncertain
1.5%

Yes
32.3%

No
66.2%

66.2% of the participants joined the program with no prior programming experience.

Program Satisfaction

According to responses from 65 participants who completed the post-program survey, the program's Net Promoter Score (NPS) was approximately 62. The breakdown included 42 promoters, 21 neutrals, and 2 detractors, indicating that 64% of participants were satisfied with the program and would strongly recommend it to friends and acquaintances.

Factors contributing to this satisfaction included: "accessible for beginners," "psychologically safe environment," "supportive community," and "a program that offers learning beyond programming (such as gender and career topics)."

Note: NPS stands for Net Promoter Score, a metric used to quantify customer loyalty. It is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors (those scoring 6 or below) from the percentage of promoters (those scoring 9-10).

Word Cloud Based on Participant Comments

環境 講座 コーディング 得意 第一歩 ギャップ waffle ジェンダー
知識 アプリ 期間 初心者 学習
好き 時間 わたし 一緒 仲間 理解
全国 想像 開発 募集 参加
意識 プログラミング 可能 コース
体験 実践 苦手 活動 きっかけ
キャリア 今後 予定 プログラム 成長 内容
発揮 後悔 周り 基礎
課題 勉強 自分 興味 紹介 IT
リーダーシップ 女性 タイト 大変 学生
事前 チーム 無駄 スケジュール おすすめ クリア 技術 自信
講義 経験 文系
コミュニティ Thunkable グループ TA コミュニケーション

Changes in Participants Before and After the Program (1)

Increased Confidence in Programming Skills

Among the participants, 66.2% had no prior programming experience. In a pre-program survey, many indicated a lack of confidence in their programming and coding skills. However, a post-program survey showed that 37 out of 65 participants reported an increase in their confidence.

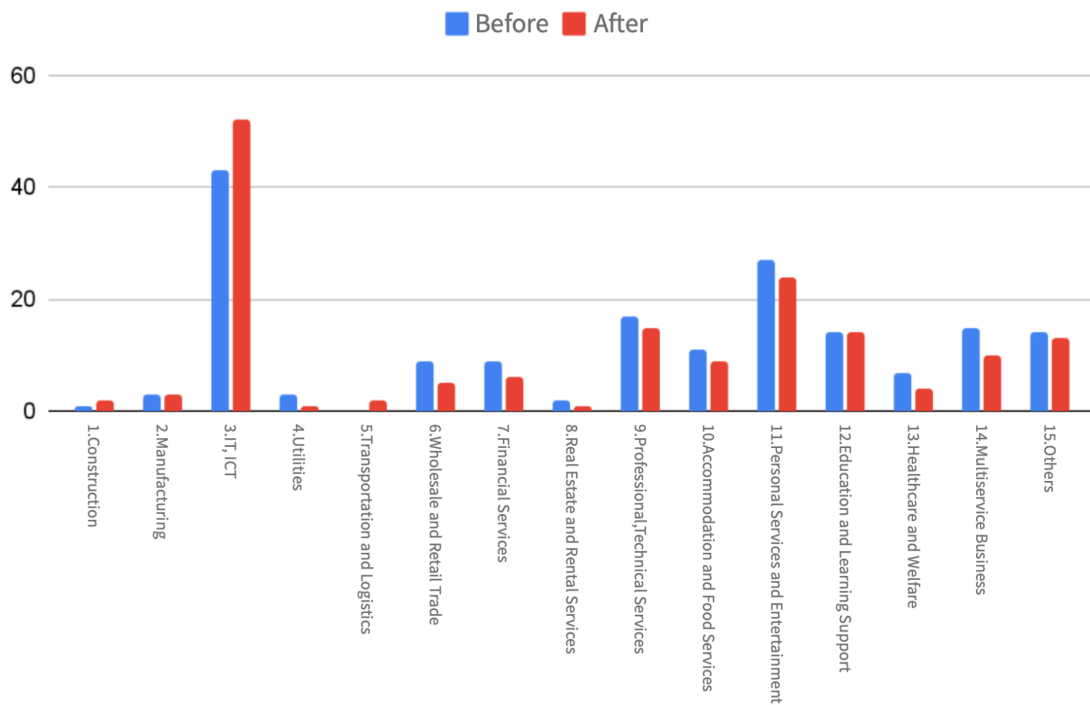# Confidence in programming and coding skills

Changes in Participants Before and After the Program (2)

Increased Motivation to Study and Work in IT

When asked about the fields of study or types of jobs they would like to pursue in the future (multiple-choice, with details provided in the appendix), the number of participants selecting "3. Work related to computer or smartphone services and networks (information and communications, IT)" increased from 43 before the program to 52 after its completion.

What fields of study or work would you like to pursue in the future?

Additionally, out of the 65 respondents to the survey, 64 expressed interest in participating in the Tech Career Course or other tech-related programs, events, or internships, indicating a strong willingness to continue their efforts in learning and working in IT.

Participant Feedback

- Thank you for a truly enjoyable three days. At first, hardly anyone in the group was asking questions or speaking up, but by the third day, many people were sharing their thoughts. I believe this was thanks to the staff, who consistently provided positive encouragement. I would love to participate in the Tech Career Course as well.

- I had many anxieties, but I was able to have an amazing experience that surpassed them, gaining knowledge about IT—my "new, unique asset that cannot be taken away." I'm really happy to have had such enjoyable and fulfilling days in such a short time. Thank you so much!

- Thank you for creating such a wonderful environment. I feel I was able to enhance not only my programming skills but also my personal abilities, leadership skills, and communication skills. I will work hard to pursue what I want to do!
- It was a really fun time. This experience has motivated me to continue studying programming and to try more advanced app development. Thank you!
- It was truly challenging, but I believe I grew a lot in such a short time. I applied with the hope of becoming somewhat proficient in programming, but I found the lessons on my mindset and career choices to be extremely helpful. Thank you!

Sponsors

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the following companies for their support in organizing this program. The entire Waffle staff sincerely appreciates your contributions.

- Google.org
- CyberAgent, Inc.
- Salesforce Japan Co.,Ltd.
- Sony Group Corporation
- The Japan Research Institute, Limited
- MetLife Insurance K.K.

Appendix

Options for the question:

"What fields of study or types of work are you interested in for the future? (Multiple choice)"

1. Work in construction, such as building structures and roads
2. Work in factories that manufacture products

3. Work related to computer or smartphone services and networks (information and communications, IT)
4. Work providing electricity, gas, or water (electricity, gas, thermal supply, and water supply)
5. Work transporting goods by car or airplane, or jobs at post offices (transportation, postal services)
6. Work selling products in bulk or retail (wholesale, retail)
7. Work related to money management and insurance (finance, insurance)
8. Work renting or selling homes, land, or vehicles (real estate, goods rental)
9. Work providing research or specialized services (academic research, professional and technical services)
10. Work in hotels or restaurants (accommodation, food services)
11. Work providing services related to daily life or entertainment (life-related services, entertainment)
12. Work in education or learning support at schools or tutoring centers (education, learning support)
13. Work in healthcare or welfare at hospitals or care facilities (medical, welfare)
14. Work providing multiple services (composite service business)
15. Other