



Celebrating our 800th PhD completion for 2016



(<https://ingenium.eng.unimelb.edu.au/files//2016/12/mariaRodriguezPhoto1.jpg>) On Tuesday November 22, 2016, Maria Alejandra Rodriguez Sossa, from the Melbourne School of Engineering's Department of Computing and Information Systems, became the 800th graduate research candidate for the year to complete her PhD. This is a milestone for the University of Melbourne, not having processed as many as 800 completions in a calendar year before.

For her PhD, Maria developed scheduling and resource provisioning algorithms to efficiently deploy scientific applications in cloud computing environments. She was supervised by cloud computing expert Professor Raj Buyya.

Maria's interest in information technology began as an undergraduate, studying a Bachelor of Computer Science and Software Engineering at the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia.

In the early days of her studies, she admits that she didn't know much about computing, not having been exposed to programming in high school.

"Despite my ignorance, I suspected it would be quite fascinating. And I was right; I knew it the moment I took my first programming class."

Maria says that IT suited her in many ways, with much to learn, new problems to solve, things to

improve and opportunities to create.

“The world now relies on technology and IT provides the potential and the ability to revolutionise and improve people’s lives,” she says.

Maria continued her IT studies by undertaking a Master of Engineering in Distributed Computing at the University of Melbourne, followed by her PhD in cloud computing.

She says that she particularly enjoyed the freedom and ability to be creative and innovative within her PhD.

“I enjoy solving problems and overcoming challenges and I definitely had to do this during my PhD.”

In addition to improving her technical and research skills, Maria says that she has improved her writing and presentation skills, learnt how to work independently, and also when to ask for help.

“I am better now at giving constructive criticism and I have also improved the way I deal with and learn from any type of feedback. I have better planning skills and self-discipline and I am confident that I can set my own goals and direction and see a long project to completion,” she says.

For people considering undertaking a PhD, Maria advises that you must be prepared to ride the highs and lows.

“Doing a PhD is hard not only in terms of the actual work that needs to be done but also mentally and emotionally. As long as you understand this, persevere, and believe in yourself during difficult times then you will succeed,” she says.

Currently, Maria is working as a postdoctoral fellow in the CLOUDS Laboratory in the Department of Computing and Information Systems, furthering the work she began in her PhD.

“I hope I can continue to improve my research and teaching abilities in this role so I can become an academic one day.”

1 December 2016

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