



FALL 2020

**DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER & INFORMATION SCIENCES
INFORMATICS PROGRAM
INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND**



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SOUTH BEND

A NEWSLETTER EXPLORING THE LIVES AND
DREAMS OF THE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
AWARD WINNERS FOR 2020-2021 &
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR 2020-2021

Scholarship & Award Opportunities

Computer Science and Informatics Excellence Awards

Every year the Computer and Information Sciences (COIS) and Informatics faculty has the pleasure of selecting the excellence award winners in our programs. The criteria for selection of award winners is primarily based on academic achievement, however, it is not the only criteria. Our award winners are typically students with junior or senior standing with excellent Computer Science or Informatics, as well as overall academic achievements. During their studies at IU South Bend, much has been expected of these students, and they have been consistent in their efforts to excel.

John P. Russo and William J. Knight Computer Science Scholarships

Every year the COIS Awards Committee has the pleasure of selecting the John P. Russo and William J. Knight Scholarship recipients. The basis for these awards is demonstrated potential for academic excellence in Computer Science or Informatics. The COIS faculty congratulate the scholarship recipients and applaud their achievements.

Informatics Scholarship

Every year the Informatics Awards Committee has the pleasure of selecting the Informatics Scholarship recipients. The Informatics scholarship has been established to provide high achieving incoming high school students majoring in Informatics at IU South Bend with financial assistance in completing their degrees. The Informatics faculty congratulate the scholarship recipients and applaud their achievements.

Computer Science is a high-demand field that emphasizes knowledge and innovation; its impact is felt in every aspect of our lives. Our faculty and students are poised at the cutting edge of computing, ready for an ever changing world. We prepare our students for imagining, designing, and creating the technology of the future. Our program adopts a comprehensive approach spanning the continuum of computer science from the mathematical foundations all the way to the practical development of future technology. With the skills that they obtain while studying at Indiana University, our graduates are in high demand in Indiana as well as nationally.

Informatics provides you technology education to solve real world problems. It gives you a structural path to a bright future in information technology careers while also providing the flexibility you need to study what you love. As an informatics student, you won't just study information technology. You will model how technology impacts the academic disciplines that interest you most. Informatics is the understanding of information technology, its impact on society, and its applications to various fields such as biology, health care, chemistry, arts, business, music, philosophy, and psychology. Informatics is also one of the fastest growing fields in technology, and the demand is high in Indiana and nationwide.



Hannah Gotha

John P. Russo Fund for Academic Excellence Winner 2020-21

What is your high school and hometown?

Originally, I attended a highschool in Greer, South Carolina called Blue Ridge. We moved to Indiana for my junior and senior year and I graduated from Penn highschool in 2018. My hometown is Osceola, IN.

Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?

My parents have made a huge impact on my decision, my mom is the first in her family to get a bachelor's degree and my dad works in factories without a college degree. Comparing both of their different incomes and the impact their jobs have on themselves made me realize that going to college would benefit me in the long run.

Why did you choose Computer Science or Informatics? What or who inspired you?

I have always been interested in software development and love interacting with technology. I took a webpage design class in highschool and did fantastic in it. I enjoyed learning about HTML code and Dreamweaver. At first when I started my freshman year at college, my major was undetermined because I did not think I would be good enough to excel in this degree. But after the first semester passed, I took an Intro. to Informatics course in the Spring of 2019, which was all about learning JavaScript and creating our own programmable games. This course made me realize that I enjoyed working on writing code and that Computer Science was the right major for me.

If you could go back in time, let's say 4 or 5 years ago, would you change attending college or choosing the major?

I would not change attending college or choosing my major, I really enjoy what I am doing in my CSCI classes, even if it is a bit challenging sometimes. In a way, the challenge makes it fun, I like feeling satisfied once I create solutions for the lines of code I have been struggling with in my projects. I also would not change my college, it is affordable since it is local, and the professors I have had are well informed and love interacting with their students. The tutor center is great too, I like that I can reach out for help from students who have already taken the classes I need help with.

What would be your advice to current high school students based on your experience? I had a great transition, since I have already transferred schools multiple times in my life, I did not have any huge issues. There were maps everywhere to tell me where I needed to go and I love that IUSB is a small campus so I know which buildings to go to. They have a lot of classes to choose from so your schedule does not clash together, and my advisor, Liqiang Zhang, has been a great help with choosing which classes I need to take to graduate. The only problems I had in the beginning was managing my time, since I am a fulltime student and working a part time job too.

How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems?

You can accomplish anything if you are dedicated enough! Do not doubt yourself and stay motivated for the future you want to achieve! Do not push back assignments last minute, poor work returns poor grades.

What would be your advice to current high school students based on your experience?

You can accomplish anything if you are dedicated enough! Do not doubt yourself and stay motivated for the future you want to achieve! Do not push back assignments last minute, poor work returns poor grades.

What motivates you to achieve excellence in your academic coursework at IUSB?

My parents are a great support system, they have motivated me to get good grades since I was young. If I struggled in something, they would work hard with me until I understood how to do it on my own. I think this benefitted me a lot, they cannot help me now with the math and coding that I have to work on, so it really helps that they have set me up to work independently and to try my absolute best. My classmates are also a great help and have motivated me. Benson Jengela, who has also won this scholarship, and I have a lot of math and computer science classes together. We like to keep each other updated on our assignments so we do not miss anything. We also help each other out by comparing our homework and code assignments. We both have the same mindset on trying to get the best grades for each assignment, so it is nice to work with someone as dedicated to their schoolwork as I am.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5- 10 years? What do you want to do after graduation?

In the next five to ten years, I see myself in a work setting with amazing staff who work well as a team. I am really excited about starting my career when I graduate because I would like to be a part of something that creates software that can benefit society, whether it be involved with technology in health, communications, entertainment, etc. Recently, I actually have been interested in getting a Master's degree in cybersecurity, but first I want to graduate and find an entry level position for my degree to get myself adjusted after graduation.

What advice would you give to your peers in CS/Informatics regarding achieving their dreams, successful course work, etc.?

Finish your projects early so if you struggle with debugging your code, you can reach out to someone who can help you! Set yourself up for success!

What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?

I think my biggest academic accomplishment so far is maintaining my GPA to be able to get on the Dean's list. I check my grades and canvas frequently so I make sure I am not missing any assignments and am caught up for the next week's assignments and learning schedule. I think during the pandemic, since everything is online now, it has been especially hard, since professors and students cannot interact with each other face to face. It was a really hard adjustment last semester for everyone to stay ahead of their schoolwork. So I am proud that my classmates and I continued to stay motivated during last semester. And I am also grateful for the professors I had to figure out ways to teach without being in person and how understanding they were to their students.

Would you like to share things that you do outside of school related to CS/Info (like work, internship, etc.) or other fun activities

I currently work at a pet store called PawMart which is right next to the Martin's in Mishawaka. There are not many people who work at the pet store since it is tiny, so I've picked up a lot of skills from working there such as stocking, customer service, and some information on different care for pets. My coworkers are great to work with and all help out tremendously if ever needed. Some fun activities I like to do are to roller skate and play board games or video games with my friends.



Benson Jengela

William J. Knight Fund for Academic Excellence in Computer and Information Science 2020-21

What is your high school and hometown?

My high school is St. Joseph Cathedral High School and my hometown is Dar is salaam.

Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?

Dedication and hard work from my mother as a single parent to support my education goals and needs has been a drive force and inspiration for me to attend college. Also, my ambitions to achieve at least a bachelor in my education journey contributed to my decision to attend college

Why did you choose Computer Science or Informatics? What or who inspired you?

My dreams and goals before I graduated high school were in aviation, but due to my health condition of poor vision I was told I was not eligible to get into aviation. So, I decided to get into Computer Science field because it could branch and allows me to work in any other sector that I want including aviation. But when I started college as a Computer Science major my passion has fallen into cyber security and I am planning to persue my career in cyber security.

If you could go back in time, let's say 4 or 5 years ago, would you change attending college or choosing the major?

If I could go back in time 4 or 5 years ago, I could build a strong background on Computer Science and related subjects so as I could have been more competent with the structure and knowledge of Computer Science. And yes, I would still attend college.

What would be your advice to current high school students based on your experience?

Based on my experience I would advise high school student to create at least a background level study overview of the major and course they are intending to take once they get into college. Also, I would advise high school students to have a mindset of acceptance on the difference between high school and college structure of learning and to not give up.

How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems?

Well, high school and college are clearly two separate levels with different structures and depth of learning. Keeping that in mind I did not face a lot of challenges to adjust to the college environment and learning structure. I honestly created a mind set of adjustment and working a lot harder than I used to back in high school.

What motivates you to achieve excellence in your academic coursework at IUSB?

The strong and supportive team of staff and faculty at IUSB especially the Department of Computer Science and Informatics, that I have always been going to seek for help on different occasions concerning my academic excellent and they have always helped accordingly. Working and cooperating with my fellow student, engaging in group discussions and use of the tutoring center has helped me achieve excellence as well. Availability of different resources at IUSB such as the labs with all sorts of software and hardware needed for the best learning environment.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5- 10 years? What do you want to do after graduation?

Honestly, I see my self perusing my career programming or working with a cooperate to fight cybercrimes as I am intending.

What advice would you give to your peers in CS/Informatics regarding achieving their dreams, successful course work, etc.?

I would advise my peers in CS to not give up and create a mindset of open-mindedness to learn and master different concepts of programming and Computer Science. Also, to not hesitate to seek for help whenever they feel they need one, from other students, faculty or tutors.

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What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?

My biggest academic accomplishment is being able to maintain a distinction performance in my cumulative college progress. And personally, being able to complete the programming level course along with completing my requirements to be a math minor.

Would you like to share things that you do outside of school related to CS/Info (like work, internship, etc.) or other fun activities

As a junior student I am working and involving myself in different Organizations to bridge the relationship of faculty, students and staff on campus. I am senator in the IUSB Student Government Association, working in Information and Technology committee because it relates with my major and I want to help the development of the sector on campus, also I work in the publications committee, Diversity and Inclusion committee and Funding request committee. I am also an officer for the honors program, and representative of International Students Organization.