

# SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

Department of Computer and Information Sciences  
Informatics Program  
Indiana University South Bend



A newsletter exploring the lives and dreams of the  
Academic Excellence Award winners for 2020-2021

# Scholarship & Award Opportunities

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## 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

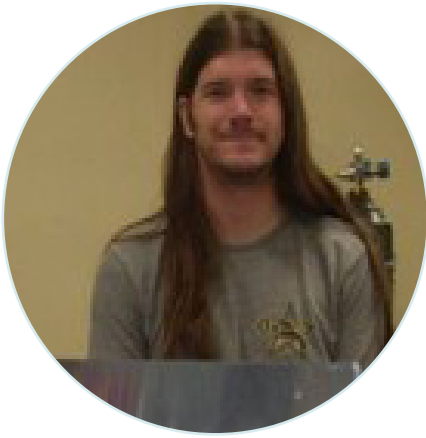
Every year the COIS Awards Committee has the pleasure of selecting the John P. Russo and William J. Knight Scholarship recipients. The basis for these awards is demonstrated potential for academic excellence in Computer Science or Informatics. The COIS faculty congratulate the scholarship recipients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



## Robert Frame

Student Excellence Award in Computer Science 2019-20

### **What is your high school and hometown?**

I graduated from James Whitcomb Riley Highschool class of 2000. My hometown is South Bend, Indiana.

### **Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?**

My decision to attend graduate school at IUSB was self-motivated.

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

My undergraduate degree is in electrical engineering technology. I possessed a solid foundation in hardware programming, and I wanted to develop my software programming skills as well.

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

No I would not.

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

I was not prepared for college after initially graduating high school at 18 years of age. Study skills were lacking from high school. I had to develop those skills. Initially, I was not sure what field I wanted to study. Having a background in music and audio, gradually the need for electrical engineering and computer science knowledge won out. I began to excel at college later in life as an older, nontraditional student.

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

Study something you are passionate about, and self-motivated to learn. Attend office hours with your professors as much as possible. That is the greatest resource for any course.

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

I am 100% self-motivated to achieve excellence at IUSB and hold myself to a high standard. I paid for the courses out of my own pocket, I want to extract every ounce of information and be as successful as possible.

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

In 5-10 years I hope to continue teaching at the college level, and start my own audio electronics business.

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

Communicate with your professors as much as possible, especially under the current circumstances. Become diverse in the programming languages you learn, and develop skills to teach yourself new material in the future.

**What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?**

Graduating Purdue College of Technology with Distinction in 2014 was probably my biggest academic accomplishment so far, until I have completed my Master's degree in AMCS.

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

Outside of school, I am an audio recording engineer and bass/guitar player. I enjoy designing and building guitar FX pedals, analog synthesizers, and other audio related equipment, as well as writing music. From a programming perspective, IUSB has given me the knowledge to write DSP audio plug-ins for recording. In the rest of my spare time, I love to read and listen to vinyl.



## Craig Fruth

Student Excellence Award in Computer Science 2019-20

### **What is your high school and hometown?**

I attended Plymouth High School from 2005-2009 and grew up in Plymouth, which is only about 25 miles away from Indiana University South Bend.

### **Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?**

I believe my mother impacted my decision the most. She was a teacher for students with special needs. My mom worked hard to obtain a master's degree within a field that she really cared about; her drive to have a degree in a field that she loved pushed me towards getting a degree in a field I enjoy.

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

I chose Computer Science because I really wanted to build audio software tools for my own use. I had spent many years as a hobbyist audio engineer. When I wasn't recording music, I was beta testing software for dozens of audio software developers. I became very interested in the learning this craft so I could build my own software tools. Also, in general, I really love to solve puzzles, which is all Computer Science really is: solving many small problems in order to solve larger ones.

### **If you could go back in time, let's say 4 or 5 years ago, would you change your mind about attending college or choose another major?**

I don't think I would choose another college and I would not choose another major. I originally attended a larger university from 2010-2011, but left after one year because the tuition was more than I felt comfortable paying for. I believe Indiana University South Bend adequately equipped me with the knowledge I needed to get a job without "breaking the bank."

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

I struggled with a lot of self doubt after high school. I graduated in 2009 and went to a larger university initially. As previously mentioned, because of the price of tuition, I ended up leaving after only one year. However, price of tuition wasn't the only reason I left: I felt I did not possess the skills required to become a computer scientist. From 2010 to 2015, I worked for a local restaurant. Years passed and I struggled to find the confidence to go back to school. I finally decided it was time for me to give school another chance, so I applied at Indiana University South Bend, hoping I would be able to succeed this time around in a computer science major.

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

My advice to future college students would be: "try your best, but don't beat yourself up too much if you don't get exactly what you want out of a course." Getting a degree is a challenging task, especially for those who work and go to school simultaneously. There really aren't enough hours in the day to get everything absolutely perfect in college, so just do your best.

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

I was 25 years old and working near full time when I went back to school for the second time. Working and taking computer science courses was extremely challenging for me. My daughter was also born my junior year in school, so I was trying my best to be a parent as well. I always had this massive fear that I was going to fail the courses I was currently in; the idea of having to retake any courses while working and raising my daughter motivated me to not waste the time I had and to get things done, as best as I could, the first time.

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

I graduated from Indiana University South Bend in May 2019 and currently work at a company (SYSCON) that is just few minutes away from campus. At SYSCON, I'm a backend Python developer working on an application that helps manage various aspects related to processes within factories. In the next 5-10 years, I hope to either be working in the same sort of field as I am now or working to build my own independent audio software company.



## Joseph McCombs

Student Excellence Award in Computer Science 2019-

### **What is your high school and hometown?**

I went to Saint Joseph High School and my hometown is South Bend, Indiana.

### **Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?**

My family, they made an impact to get me to go to college.

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

I originally started in business but I did not enjoy it as much so I started to look at other majors and job prospects, I saw a lot of opportunities in Computer Science and I have always been fascinated by computers.

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

No, I would not change anything.

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

I never faced any problems, I have always been a pretty strong student so there not any major hurdles when transitioning to college.

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

I would suggest trying to learn things outside of your comfort zone doing things you haven't tried before like creating an app or doing something outside of sports.



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

I derived much of my motivation from my family; they depend on me and I wanted to set a good example. Additionally, I think that being a non-traditional student made me feel like I had something to prove; both to myself and to my professors.

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

I'm hoping to find my way into a career as a software developer; preferably in an academic setting.

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

I found an internship on IUSB's website so I would recommend finding opportunities outside your coursework that challenge you even if you don't have the experience then you eventually gain the experience and you never know that could be your next job.

**What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?**

I did a research project. I learned how to do research primarily on my own with the assistance of a CS professor was a big accomplishment considering that I never had any experience of the things I was working on this summer.

**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 am currently at Notre Dame's Center for Research Computing, I am doing a research there and I am also helping with a non-profit that's being taken place in th Dominican Republic with a lot of health work there. I also play sports like golf and softball in the summer and hockey in the winter, I like to stay active.



## James Kweku Amo

Student Excellence Award in Computer Science 2019-20

### **What is your high school and hometown?**

I moved from Brazil to the United State 6 years ago. In Brazil, I attended what is considered a public high school here in the US.

### **Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?**

My family

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

I choose Computer Science due to my passion for Computers and Technology. When I was little, one of my hobbies was to dismantle things for curiosity.

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

No, the more I learn over Computers and Technology, the more I know that is the field I like to be in.

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

It was hard! My biggest challenge in high school was Mathematics, however, I was able to overcome by going to tutors alongside taking some courses in Mathematics as major requirement.

### **6. What would be your advice to current high school students based on your experience?**

My advice to current high school students is to not give up on the first try specially for high school students seeking to go to college.

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

The challenge.

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

This is a tough question. If I could go back in time and say to myself that I would be where I am now, I would not believe it. However, I can say in the next 5 -10 years I would like to be working as a Data Scientist in a good company doing things to help others. Furthermore, I would like to put it back to the society what I have learned through all those years of college. For now, what I have planned after graduation is to further my education as a graduate student in Electrical and Computer Engineering.

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

My advice is to not rely only on what you learn in school, try to learn a program language or a career field outside of the course core. Moreover, get to know your faculty.

**What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?**

My biggest academic accomplishment so far is to be here in the United States and soon to obtain my college degree. IUSB opened so many doors to me that I will be forever grateful.

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

**Outside of school I try to balance my CS life with some small random projects and fun activities around the house such as redoing a house's foundation, remodeling a boat, cutting down trees,...**

**With my family, we never know what the weekend will bring.**



**Leendert (Lee) G Westerink**

Student Excellence Award in Computer Science 2019-20

**How did you hear about the scholarship?**

I was browsing for scholarships during high school, and found that local ones are easier to get, so I checked out IUSB's scholarships, and here we are.

**What is your high school and hometown?**

Clay High School; South Bend, Indiana

**Who made an impact in your decision to attend college?**

My parents and teachers always mentioned college, but my parents did it first, and my drive to get here was due to their encouragement.

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

I chose Informatics because I've been a big nerd for the longest time and I've liked medical stuff, so the cognate "Health Informatics" appealed to me. And nobody really inspired me to pick this; I just searched around for days on end for different majors and found one that I think I'd enjoy.

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

My transition went smoothly, thankfully. I don't have to move into a dorm since I live 13 minutes away from school, and the scholarship covers my expenses, so I would say that I'm luckier than most. I guess one problem would be figuring out my schedule, but that's pretty trivial.

**What would be your advice to current high school students who want to pursue CS/Informatics?**

Don't get too frustrated when you can't figure out a problem. It happens to me more often than I want to, but I try to take a break, come back, and then discover that I made a very dumb mistake and it fixes everything. Just take things one at a time, it's okay.

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

The prospect of a good paying job. I put in a lot of work into my studies so that when I get my own place, I won't have to struggle, especially with today's climate. My goal is to live comfortably, and to give back to those who weren't as fortunate as I was.

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

Currently, I see myself working at some kind of company or hospital, helping code medical stuff. After graduation, I want to live in a house or apartment with my girlfriend and get a well-paying career.

**What has been your biggest academic accomplishment so far?**

This scholarship, however generic it may seem. I always thought myself to be that average guy who would do well but just not see any reward for it. So I was definitely surprised to see that I won this, and I am very thankful for it.

**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 admit, I've never done anything CS related, but I can use computers to most of their potential and I can type well. For fun things, I usually play a variety of video games, read, or, recently, make different EDM songs in FL Studio.

**How has been your experience at IUSB so far?**

My experience has been great. I never knew how much calmer college is compared to high school, and how \*most\* people are logical and don't disrupt anything. The scholarship also definitely alleviates a lot of stress I could've had, so I'm glad to be here.



**Yazan Faham**

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Ting Wang

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

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