



KEAN

# Kean Senior Wins Top Undergraduate Award at Prestigious GMiS Conference

Oct 17, 2022



A Kean University senior studying computer science won the highest student recognition award at the prestigious Great Minds in STEM (GMiS) Conference in Pasadena this month, the first time a Kean student received the honor.

Xavier Amparo, of Fort Lee, was selected from among more than 800 applicants for the 2022 HENAAC Outstanding Student Leadership Award for Undergraduates in the Sciences.

"I congratulate Xavier and his faculty advisers," said Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D. "As Kean develops as a research institution, we are committed to providing our students with more opportunities to learn through research. This award recognizes how that approach helps students grow as leaders."

The award recognizes Amparo's outstanding record of academics, research, leadership and service to the community.

"Your work exemplifies what Great Minds in STEM seeks in its highest leadership standards as a STEM leader and role model," GMiS Director of Academic Affairs and University Relations Gary Z. Cruz, Ph.D., wrote in congratulating Amparo.

Patricia Morreale, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Computer Science and Technology at Kean, said the award is a tribute to Amparo's effort and dedication.

"We are delighted with Xavier's accomplishment, a result of his effort and work," she said. "Kean students continue to move our program forward nationally in every way. Our faculty take pride in building a program that enables student success at this level."

At Kean, Amparo has been mentored by both Kean Assistant Professor Daehan Kwak, Ph.D., and Associate Professor Ching-Yu (Austin) Huang, Ph.D.



Xavier Amparo spoke at the Great Minds in STEM Conference (GMiS) as he accepted the highest student recognition award.

Amparo has studied and done extensive research in data science, including a study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade. During the Posters on the Hill competition in Washington, D.C., he advocated on Capitol Hill in support of undergraduate research for minority-serving institutions. He also took part in a research conference at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; took third place in the Kean Business Competition as part of a group project; and participated in research initiatives for the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions and other organizations.

"Through these initiatives, I have been able to interact with the STEM community in a way that has caused me to improve upon myself, but also hopefully in a way that has allowed me to contribute to further enrichment and advancement of anybody else," Amparo said in his acceptance speech.

"I also wish to one day do the same as the people who have helped me stand on this stage today. To assist others to get to this point, I want to become a positive example for others, that given the right tools and support by peers and mentors, anyone who wishes to do so can pursue their desired paths in STEM."

Kwak started working with Amparo in his junior year and encouraged him to work with other professors to gain more research experience.

"Xavier benefited from several programs that Kean's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs offered, and he was able to accomplish many things," Kwak said. "He wants to eventually give back to society the support he received and I believe he will do a great job doing so."



Attending a Massachusetts Institute of Technology research conference were (L-R): Kean student Tzu Han-Lin, Xavier Amparo, and Associate Professor Ching-Yu (Austin) Huang, Ph.D.

After graduation, Amparo said he wants to earn his master's degree in computer science at Kean and also looks forward to "being exposed to new ideas and projects" outside the classroom.

Huang, who taught Amparo and mentored him on several research projects, predicted Amparo has a bright future ahead.

"The knowledge, skills and projects he learned in these courses and his research experiences led him to receive this award," Huang said. "He is interested in data science for his career, and I believe Xavier has great potential for success in the field."

Several other Kean students also received recognition awards at the GMiS conference.

- Kean alumni and current graduate students Uko Ebreso, '22 and Jose Serra, '22 were awarded first and second place, respectively, in the Graduate Research Posters – Computing category.
- Senior computer science major Eric Landaverde was named a CAHSI (Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions) Student Scholar
- Senior computer science major Eric Ponte was named a GMiS STEM Scholar.

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