Computer Science Student Researcher, Finalist for National Award, Graduating from Kean

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Kean University senior Oluwatunmise Alabi's work in research earned her both recognition as a finalist for a competitive national computing award and a job offer as a software engineer at Northrop Grumman.

Alabi, of Roselle, who will earn her Bachelor of Science degree in computer science, was selected as one of 55 finalists from 41 institutions for the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) Aspirations in Computing (AiC) Award.

"Being recognized as a woman in tech on such a prestigious level has been a significant achievement for me," Alabi said. "It's a reminder of how far I have come, and to encourage others along my path."

At Kean, Alabi dedicated herself to research, combining her interest in statistics and her earlier fascination with criminology.

Her research project mined data related to COVID-19 and crime in New Jersey to reveal potential correlations between them.
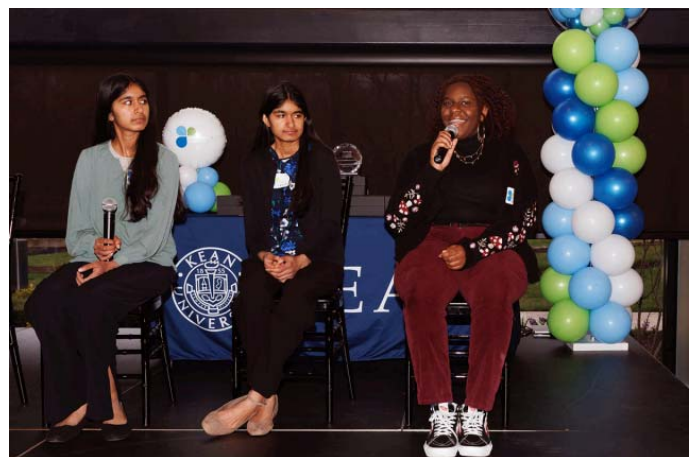
She presented her research poster at the IEEE MIT Undergraduate Research Technology Conference in October. Alabi's research paper was later accepted into the conference. She also shared her findings at the Great Minds in STEM (GMiS) conference in Pasadena, California just a few days later.

"I have a great interest in statistics," Alabi said. "My previous interest in criminology led me to anecdotally view a connection between the two topics. I researched the statistical significance of the connection."

Her academic advisor, Associate Professor Ching-yu Huang, Ph.D., said she "demonstrates intelligence and enthusiasm in her work."

"I provided high-level guidance and direction, while she independently handled the implementation and analysis of her projects," Huang said. "I am filled with pride for her accomplishments."

Alabi (right) spoke alongside two other finalists at the New Jersey Women in Computing Award Ceremony at Kean in April.

Alabi's research presentation caught the attention of employers, as she obtained an internship through networking at the GMiS conference, which led to a full-time job offer.

In August, she will start as an aeronautics systems engineer and scenario developer with Northrop Grumman, an aerospace and defense technology company and one of the world's largest military technology providers. In the future, she plans to return to school to earn her graduate degree in data science. She hopes to potentially continue finding a connection between crimes in the U.S. and prominent social and economic issues.

The NCWIT AiC award, for which Alabi is a finalist, honors "technical contributions to projects that demonstrate a high level of innovation and potential impact" in areas such as software and app development, big data, cybersecurity and more.

If Alabi is chosen as a winner she is eligible to win public recognition, computing resources and up to $10,000.

Previously, Alabi was recognized as the New Jersey affiliate winner and received a national honorable mention two years consecutively for the AiC High School Award. She notes that the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (CASHI) program at Kean sparked her interest in undergraduate research.

In April, she spoke alongside two other finalists at the New Jersey Women in Computing Award Ceremony at Kean. On the panel, she touched upon her experience of being a woman in a male-dominated field.

"I find solace knowing I am not the first woman to go through these challenges, but I am doing everything in my power to be the last," said Alabi. "I strive to ensure others will not face the same obstacles I did."

Alabi hopes to inspire, support and advocate for women in technology.

"It feels surreal to be recognized at the collegiate level because I was directly competing with other women in the United States, including those at schools like MIT," Alabi said.

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