

## Thriving Beyond UWG, the Best Went West!

University of West Georgia thrives on unique students from all backgrounds exhibiting tenacity and excellence both in and outside of the classroom.

Kazerouni brothers Ameen, Ayaan, and Amaan – all UWG alumni - have immersed themselves in career paths that not only demand the knowledge they gained at the College of Science and Mathematics, but that highlight the support and deep commitment of their professors. “The lessons I learned as a residential student in the early-to-college program at the Advanced Academy of Georgia and the knowledge imparted by the brilliant faculty of all departments at the university gave me a foundation I lean on even today in my professional life,” says Ameen, the oldest of the three brothers.



Ameen graduated with a bachelor’s degree in computer science in Spring 2012 and is currently the Lead Data Scientist at Zappos, a

company owned by Amazon. Ameen reflects on his incredible experience in the CS department and the limitless opportunities in the form of guidance, research and resources provided to him by faculty and staff.

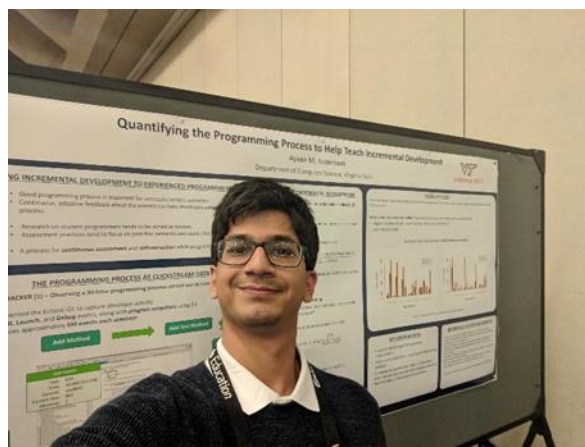
“It’s hard to single out faculty members of the CS department. The fact of the matter is that the passion and determination that every faculty member at the UWG CS department brings to the table is infectious. Thinking back to my days roaming the halls of the TLC, numerous anecdotes come to mind that remind me of how often every faculty member went above and beyond for students at the department. During my time as an undergraduate student I was honored to work in the Robotics Lab at the department and play the role of a TA guiding new students that came to the department. Dr. Abunawass is probably the most approachable chair I have ever come across and took the time out of his days to teach me two



independent studies, both of which resulted in publications before the age of 18. These opportunities helped me grow beyond where the classes got me and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum. Additionally, the independent studies I took with him put me in a position to publish multiple papers in refereed journals as an undergraduate student. All this proved invaluable to me while applying to graduate school.”

Following in the footsteps of Ameen, Ayaan graduated in Spring 2015 with a degree in Computer Science at UWG and is currently a doctoral student at Virginia Institute of Technology. We asked what CS instructor at UWG stood out for him. According to Ayaan,

“I don't think any CS@UWG student can answer that question without singling out Dr. Will Lloyd. He gave me a lot of good advice, especially my senior year, and regular conversations in his office played a big part in helping me choose my current research area in graduate school. I did an independent study with Dr. Lewis Baumstark. In general, I think one can learn a lot from Dr. B's ‘DIY’ approach toward things. Dr. Li Yang was memorable for a similar reason -- for Honors projects in her classes, she let me go off and learn or build things that I found interesting. That kind of independence is key to succeeding in graduate school. Finally, there are very few aspects of my software engineering process that I don't attribute to Dr. Duane Yoder. I would also say that the Program Construction and Software Engineering course sequences taught by Dr. Yoder and Dr. Lloyd continue to be heavily influential in my current research. Finally, Jane Wood and Alex Young are forces of nature and the Department would not be the same without them.”



Ayaan's twin brother, Amaan is fascinated with creating new molecules and exploring the properties of existing compounds. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Chemistry in Spring 2015 from UWG and is now pursuing a doctoral degree in Organic Chemistry at Emory University. Amaan is grateful to the Department of Chemistry for being instrumental in

preparing him for life beyond college, specifically graduate school and says,



“As an undergraduate, I was fortunate enough to take advantage of the high premium that UWG chemistry places on undergraduate research. The time I spent in Dr. Megumi Fujita's lab elucidating the ion-binding capabilities of the macrocyclic antibiotic Valinomycin was one of the highlights of my undergraduate experience. It allowed me to become comfortable in a chemistry laboratory, and taught me a number of lab techniques and skills that have been invaluable to me during my time as a graduate student. Dr. Fujita herself was an incredible mentor and teacher, whose infectious passion and sincerity for the project at hand instilled in me a real appreciation for science. Dr. Partha Ray's course in advanced synthesis was influential in my

decision to study organic chemistry in graduate school. My time as a workshop leader and a

teaching assistant also helped me prepare for my responsibilities as a graduate teaching assistant here at Emory.”

Ameen, Ayaan and Amaan all attribute their success to hard work and a strong ethic, allowing them the opportunity to pursue their own careers. These brothers hope to inspire others to take in every moment, whether big or small, while at UWG and use it to make the most of the resources they are offered.

UWG extends a grateful hand to these brothers for catching up with a place that they can always call home. Indeed, the Best Went West!