

Tabitha Floess

Flyin Ryan Adventure Scholarship

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The Harmony of Motion: Juggling Positive Habits for a Nurtured Future

My name is Tabitha Floess. I am a nontraditional student currently pursuing dual degrees in Computer Programming and Development as well as Engineering at Wake Technical Community College (WTCC). Previously, I studied Biology and German Studies at North Carolina State University (NCSU) before taking a break to prioritize my health. I earned an associate degree in advertising and graphic design at WTCC, exploring designing as a method of communicating information. During my hiatus I have honed my skills in 3D design, contributed to online communities and initiatives, and satisfied curiosities surrounding blockchain and other technologies that spark societal transformation. Five months ago, I decided to re-enroll at my local community college and immediately began attending classes to earn double associate degrees in computer programming and development and in engineering. Now, I am fascinated by the potential of AI and its integration with design to create innovative solutions. My aspiration is to contribute to machine learning to address real-world challenges and enhance user experiences.

In my childhood, I grew up exploring the creeks, ponds, and rivers in my and my friend's neighborhoods. Their serenity provided an escape from the monotony of schoolwork and a remedy for the everyday adolescent stresses. As I matured, I was allowed to navigate more of the primary lake with the family canoe and to jog further into the neighborhood. My experiences exploring nature and trailing alongside creeks formed a foundational interest in hiking and jogging that later in life sparked an interest in yoga and weightlifting. As a young adult, I learned to love paddling around the small lake in my neighborhood. As I matured these activities not

only became a source of physical exercise but also avenues for introspection, shaping a more positive outlook on life and fostering a deeper connection with nature. Jogging, hiking, yoga, weightlifting, and paddling all provide me a continuous opportunity for personal growth and psychological relief, while maintaining my physique.

Aside from physical wellness, I am passionate about the design of user experiences for new technologies. As a child during the dot com boom, as a curious adult during the AI renaissance, and as a dedicated student pursuing multiple degrees in computer programming and engineering, I am ineffably drawn to the transformative nature of digital technology. Even now I pursue opportunities to improve my engineering skills such as NASA's L'SPACE Mission Concept Academy, the Society of Women Engineers, and Starfleet International. These opportunities provide exposure to interdisciplinary minds that challenge my understanding of the world around me and the technology I interact with. The speed at which AI is improved and implemented amazes me. Each month another company implements AI from household appliances such as proximity-aware robot vacuums and fridges, to user experiences such as DJ X with Spotify and Rufus with Amazon. I hope to contribute to the next era of machine learning and to address real-world challenges that improve society.

Finishing my dual degrees in computer programming and engineering at WTCC and returning to NCSU to embark on a journey toward a Computer Science degree with a specialization in Artificial Intelligence (AI) engineering are deeply meaningful current goals to me. Completing these degrees is not only essential for my professional longevity but also for my personal growth, enabling me to contribute to cutting-edge technological advancements that will transform society. The potential of AI to revolutionize both software engineering and our future is immense! Through my coursework I aspire to delve deeper into AI algorithms, machine

learning, and robotics with the goal of developing innovative solutions that serve society by addressing real-world challenges, enhancing user experiences, and challenging traditional roles in society.

The Flyin Ryan Adventure Scholarship will enable me to pursue my scholastic adventure while enhancing my outdoor experiences and future adventures. While I prioritize the longevity of my belongings, I would like to invest in new hiking shoes and acquire a winter outfit suitable for my holiday hikes. Additionally, if possible, I hope to allocate any remaining funds towards purchasing a kayak. My current hiking shoes and winter outfit have faithfully served me throughout the years, but sadly it is nearing time to replace them. This scholarship would help support my wellness while allowing me to prioritize my finances towards my degree and education. A kayak would enrich my outdoor adventures by extending my journeys from land to lake, allowing me to once again explore the waters nearby. My outdoor expeditions contribute to my personal growth and well-being: this scholarship would propel these attributes while improving my personal discipline. Receiving this scholarship is not only a financial relief but also a validation of my commitment to both academic excellence and outdoor exploration. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity provided by the Flyin Ryan Foundation, thank you for taking the time to consider my essay and application!