ZAIRE HUSBAND: FUTURE CYBER ACTIVIST

For Zaire Husband, choosing a college was about finding a place with a program that best fit her career interests. UA Little Rock was close to home, affordable, and had a Computer Science program that fit her needs.

"I have always loved computers," Zaire, 21, said. "Computer science to me is like learning a language, learning how to tell the computer what to do."

She's an artist too, and carries a doodle pad around with her everywhere she goes.

"Digital art is probably my favorite type of art because you can showcase your art across the world with a single click," she said.

Zaire will graduate in May 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with a minor in information assurance. She has the perfect career in cybersecurity all mapped out.

"I want to be a hacker, security engineer, and architect. Essentially you're working with networks and infrastructure to keep other hackers out – like a cyber vigilante. You try to get into the mind of a criminal and try to break into your own software. It's like being the criminal, the detective, and the police all in one package."

She's also passionate about sharing with other young women the possibilities of a STEM career.

"I'm really passionate about women in computer science, especially women of color," she said. "The UA Little Rock Computer Science division is pretty diverse. I have gained a diverse group of friends from all backgrounds and skin tones. However, the female to male ratio is still lacking, not just in Little Rock, but across the country."
When looking for a role model, Zaire had to look no further than to her parents.

“My parents are big on education,” she said. “They know how hard it is for a young black female. I'm really blessed. I get help from school and my family, and it's helped me be able to do things.”

Husband hopes to herself be a mentor one day for young women.

“I would like to inspire people the same way I’ve been inspired,” she said. “You need support from all directions. Many young people fear that they're not good enough. Many younger people have a fear of math. It's really hard for people in this country because we don’t put as much emphasis on it, and you need a strong foundation.”

During Zaire’s freshman year, she lived on campus and joined the African American Female Initiative, which connected her with others and activities. She was actively involved with the Arkansas Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (ARK-LSAMP) program, which strives to increase the number of minority students in STEM areas.

She’s also gained hands-on skills and networked through internships. Dr. Jim Winter, director of the University Science Scholars and LSAMP, helped Husband get an internship with the Emerging Analytics Center during her freshman year,

“He gave me a sense of direction, and for that I’ll be forever grateful.”

In fall 2017, Husband interned at the Clinton Foundation where she worked in information technology and communications – and even met former President Bill Clinton.

“My internships have helped me know what to expect and helped me network and meet contacts in the industry,” she said.

Zaire also serves an EIT Ambassador, helping freshmen with homework and tutoring. She is involved with Society of Women Engineers, Cyber Security Club, UALR Alliance, and the Anime Club.

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