

My name is Shaan and I'm a sophomore double majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Computer Science here at Duke. I was born in northern India, in the foothills of the Himalayas, and lived there until I was 8. My parents wanted to give me and my siblings a better education than they ever had access to, and so at 8 years old they sent me to a boarding school in the middle of the British countryside. I continued to study in the UK until I was 18, and a pursuit of a more applicable and innovative research based education led me here, to Duke in the US.

I came into college sort of clueless about what I wanted to do, I pretty much thought I'd like to maybe do research or maybe just get good at software engineering and take a high paying job. I am fortunate enough to have made friends and met inspiring professors who have helped me realize where my motivations lie. I believe that the problem of climate change is the biggest problem society faces today, and we are simply not doing enough about it. I hope to combine my passion for helping the environment with my passion for innovative computation research to help solve the problem of climate change—to whatever extent I can.

The I&E courses tie perfectly in with what I want to learn, as I hope to be working in a field where there is no previous solution, where innovation and risks will need to be taken in order to achieve something. Through I&E I hope to learn how, if I create a startup from my work in research, I can take an idea to something that can have an impact on the world. I feel as if there is a large disconnect between scientific innovation knowledge and how you can apply that knowledge, and that is what I hope to learn from this class. I don't only want to be adept at making new things, I also want to be able to apply them to the real world and people.

I have previously been involved with a lot of hackathons based around building solutions for the UN goals for sustainable development. During those hackathons I worked with friends to build apps such as a fake news detection application (which got merged into the BBC) and an app that can accurately detect melanoma using just iPhone cameras. Throughout this process I truly came to enjoy the process of building solutions using my technical knowledge for big societal problems. Furthermore, I interned for the Council of Entrepreneurial Development last semester, where I interacted with a lot of entrepreneurs in the Research Triangle area. I learnt a lot about the process of being an entrepreneur—and the idea of it became significantly less intimidating throughout the process (while also learning about how many opportunities there are right here next to Duke).

I am also very interested in research, and potentially pursuing graduate school before getting into the world of entrepreneurship, as I would like to build a startup based upon innovative technology that necessitates a stronger knowledge base. Throughout my one and half years at Duke so far, I have been involved as an undergraduate researcher working on building large machine learning models for making rare disease drug discovery significantly more accurate and computationally efficient—with the goal of making rare disease treatment equitable for all.

Outside of classes I quite like to skate, particularly something called aggressive inline skating (imagine some rollerblades that have two wheels each and a groove in the middle that allows you to slide on rails and go on half pipes). I also helped create the Duke Skate club with a few friends, as a way of trying to organize the community of people who skate at Duke. It was one of my biggest activities during freshman year, but has become less prominent now as I have so much other work to do. I also quite enjoy pottery and sketching when I get the chance.