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Samir Acharya

Howard University

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John Harris, III

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Meet Rojal Sapkota: Howard University's Rising Tech Star

Rojal Sapkota, a standout Computer Science major at Howard University, has quickly made a name for himself in the tech world. With two successful STEP internships at Google and a return offer for Summer 2025, Rojal's journey exemplifies hard work, resilience, and an unwavering passion for technology.

From Nepal to Howard University

Rojal's journey began in Lalitpur, Nepal, where his fascination with technology took root at a young age. He attended high school in India, where he developed a strong foundation in computer science. In August 2022, he enrolled at Howard University, eager to push himself further in one of the world's most competitive fields. Balancing rigorous coursework, including classes like Data Structures and Algorithms, and his work as a tutor, Rojal has maintained an impressive 3.53 GPA.

When asked about his academic experiences, Rojal said, "Howard has provided me with the opportunities and resources I needed to grow, both technically and personally. It's been challenging but rewarding."

Interning at Google – Twice!

In 2023, Rojal secured his first STEP internship at Google in Kirkland, Washington, working with the Disaster Recovery Team. There, he contributed to developing a comprehensive "dry run" feature for Google's disaster recovery systems, ensuring smooth operations in critical situations. He collaborated with senior engineers and learned valuable lessons in asynchronous programming and unit testing.

During his second STEP internship in Boulder, Colorado, in 2024, Rojal worked with Google Drive's Backend team. His project involved implementing SHA-256 coverage for photo storage within Google Drive, a significant enhancement to data security. "I was excited to take on this challenge because it aligned with my interest in backend systems and cybersecurity," Rojal said.

By the end of the internship, his contributions had proven so valuable that Google extended him a return offer for Summer 2025 as a Software Engineering Intern.

What's Next for Rojal?

Rojal is preparing to return to Google next summer, where he will continue working on large-scale backend projects. He's looking forward to deepening his expertise in technologies like SpringBoot, RESTful APIs, gRPC, and Protocol Buffers. "Each internship has taught me how crucial scalability and efficiency are in a company as large as Google," he said. "I'm eager to dive deeper into backend systems next year."

Rojal is also focused on maintaining his academic performance, as he plans to graduate in May 2026. He remains humble about his success, attributing much of his growth to mentors, friends, and the opportunities provided by Howard University.

Dynamic Projects and Community Involvement

Outside of his internships, Rojal has been actively involved in various technical projects. One of his notable contributions is the **Dynamic Quiz Generator App**, a web application that generates quizzes using SpringBoot and JPA, providing seamless user authentication and quiz generation features. He integrated Hibernate to enhance database interaction and used Postman for HTTP request testing.

Beyond his academic projects, Rojal worked on a data analysis project titled "Investigating Netflix Movies and Guest Stars," using Python and Pandas to analyze trends. His results revealed that the duration of Netflix movies has been gradually decreasing over time, sparking discussions in his data science club.

Rojal's involvement in clubs like **HU Robotics**, **inSTEM Community**, and **Tech for Change** reflects his passion for both learning and giving back. These clubs have allowed him to sharpen his technical skills while contributing to the larger tech community on campus.

Advice for Aspiring Engineers

For students aspiring to reach similar heights, Rojal emphasizes persistence and curiosity. "Opportunities won't always come easily," he said. "But if you stay curious and keep pushing through challenges, the right opportunities will come your way."

He also stresses the importance of building relationships with peers and mentors, noting, "My internships and experiences at Google wouldn't have been possible without the support of the people around me."

As Rojal looks toward the future, he remains focused on contributing to the tech industry while inspiring others to follow their passions, wherever they may lead.