

# ANNUS ZULFIQAR

[zulfiqaa@umich.edu](mailto:zulfiqaa@umich.edu) ◇ [linkedin.com/in/annuszulfiqar/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/annuszulfiqar/)

## EDUCATION

---

### University of Michigan

Ph.D. in Computer Science Engineering

Area: *Programmable Networks, Domain-Specific Architectures*

Advisor: Muhammad Shahbaz

Ann Arbor, MI

Jan 2025 - Present

### Purdue University

Ph.D. in Computer Science

Area: *Programmable Networks, Domain-Specific Architectures*

Advisor: Muhammad Shahbaz

West Lafayette, IN

Sep 2021 - Dec 2024

### National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Bachelor of Electrical Engineering (GPA: 3.96/4.00)

Thesis: *End-to-End Forest Cover Detection and Change Estimation*

Advisors: Muhammad Shahzad, Faisal Shafait

Islamabad, PK

Sep 2015 - May 2019

## PUBLICATIONS (\* → Equal Contribution)

---

1. SpliDT: Partitioned Decision Trees for Scalable Stateful Inference at Line Rate  
Murayyiam Parvez\*, Annus Zulfiqar\*, Sylee Beltiukov, Shir Landau Feibish, Arpit Gupta,  
Walter Willinger, Muhammad Shahbaz  
**SIGCOMM 2025** (In Submission)
2. NetSparse: Hardware Acceleration for Distributed Sparse Kernels  
Gerasimos Gerogiannis, Charles Block, Annus Zulfiqar, Muhammad Shahbaz, Josep Torrellas  
**ISCA 2025** (In Submission)
3. Gigaflow: Pipeline-Aware Sub-Traversal Caching for Modern SmartNICs  
Annus Zulfiqar, Ali Imran, Venkat Kunaparaju, Gianni Antichi, Ben Pfaff, Muhammad Shahbaz  
**ASPLOS 2025** [Paper, Artifact]
4. A Smart Cache for a SmartNIC! – Scaling End-host Networking to 400Gbps & Beyond  
Annus Zulfiqar, Ali Imran, Venkat Kunaparaju, Gianni Antichi, Ben Pfaff, Muhammad Shahbaz  
**HotChips 2024** [Poster]
5. The Slow-Path Needs an Accelerator Too!  
Annus Zulfiqar, Gianni Antichi, Ben Pfaff, William Tu, Muhammad Shahbaz  
**SIGCOMM CCR 2023** [Paper]
6. Homunculus: Auto-Generating Efficient Data-Plane ML Pipelines for Datacenter Networks  
Tushar Swamy, Annus Zulfiqar, Muhammad Shahbaz, Luigi Nardi, Kunle Olukotun  
**ACM ASPLOS 2023** (*Distinguished Artifact Award*) [Paper, Artifact]
7. AI-ForestWatch: Semantic Segmentation Based End-to-End Framework for Forest Estimation  
and Change Detection using Multi-Spectral Remote Sensing Imagery  
Annus Zulfiqar, Muhammad M. Ghaffar, Muhammad Shahzad, Christian Weis, Muhammad I. Malik,  
Faisal Shafait, Norbert Wehn  
**SPIE Journal of Applied Remote Sensing 2021** [Paper]

## EXPERIENCE

---

### Next-Generation Architectures Lab, University of Michigan

Graduate Student Research Assistant

Advisor: Muhammad Shahbaz

Ann Arbor, MI

Jan 2025 - Present

- Building advanced caching mechanisms for modern SmartNICs  
**Collaborators:** Ben Pfaff (Feldera/VMware) and team
- Built an architecture search and training framework for partitioned data plane decision trees  
**Collaborators:** Walter Willinger and team

### VMware Research Group

Research Intern

Mentor: Ben Pfaff

May - Aug 2022

Palo Alto, CA

- Characterized the Open vSwitch *slow path* performance bottlenecks and proposed to build an accelerator for the *slow path*

### Next-Generation Architectures Lab, Purdue University

Research Assistant

Advisor: Muhammad Shahbaz

West Lafayette, IN

Aug 2021 - Dec 2024

- Explored architectures for the *slow-path* at the control-plane/data-plane interface in SDN  
**Collaborators:** Ben Pfaff (Feldera/VMware) and team
- Built a Neural Architecture Search framework (Homunculus) for ML-capable data planes  
**Collaborators:** Kunle Olukotun (Stanford) and team

### Pervasive Parallelism Laboratory, Stanford University

Remote Researcher

Mentor: Muhammad Shahbaz

Stanford, CA

Sep 2020 - Jan 2021

- Designed discrete-event network simulations for data center load balancing algorithms

### Center for Advanced Research in Engineering

Design Engineer

Jun 2019 - Jul 2021

Islamabad, PK

- Designed Ethernet/Wi-Fi/LTE-capable PoE-enabled IoT Sensor Networks for industrial machine sensing and telemetry

### Technical University of Kaiserslautern

Research Intern

Kaiserslautern, DE

Jun - Sep 2018

- Worked on multi-temporal forest cover change detection to analyze the largest afforestation drive in Pakistan using remote sensing imagery and deep learning

### TUKL Lab, NUST

Research Intern

Advisors: Faisal Shafait, Muhammad Shahzad

Jun 2017 - May 2019

Islamabad, PK

- Worked on document processing and land cover classification problems using object detection and sequence learning techniques from deep learning

## TUTORIALS

---

- Tutorial: In-Network Machine Learning using Taurus  
Tushar Swamy, Annus Zulfiqar, Alex Rucker, Muhammad Shahbaz, Kunle Olukotun

**ACM SIGCOMM 2022**

**Webpage**, **Artifact**

## TALKS AND DEMOS

---

- Gigaflow: Pipeline-Aware Sub-Traversal Caching for Modern SmartNICs (with Demo) Oct 2024  
SRC JUMP 2.0 – Annual Review Meeting
- Gigaflow: Line-Rate, Pipeline-Aware Caching for Modern SmartNICs (with Demo) May 2024  
SRC JUMP 2.0 – Spring Meeting
- Homunculus: Auto-Generating Efficient Data-Plane ML Pipelines for Datacenter Networks Jul 2023  
SRC JUMP 2.0
- The Slow Path Needs an Accelerator Too! Aug 2022  
VMware Research Group

## TEACHING

---

- CS 38100 – Introduction to the Analysis of Algorithms (Teaching Assistant) Fall 2023

## CERTIFICATIONS

---

- Tofino Native Architecture (TNA) & P4 Feb 2022  
Intel Connectivity Academy – Level 1A/B

## HONORS AND AWARDS

---

- Distinguished Artifact Award for Homunculus (ASPLOS 2023)
- Ross Fellowship recipient at Purdue University
- National P@SHA ICT Awards Winner (with *WiserMachines*, IoT spin-off of CARE)
- Travel award for EECamp at KAIST, South Korea
- Funded internship offer for one year at DFKI, Kaiserslautern, Germany (passed)
- DAAD-funded internship at Technical University of Kaiserslautern (TUK), Germany
- NUST merit scholarship recipient from 2015 - 2019

## REFERENCES

---

1. **Muhammad Shahbaz** [msbaz@umich.edu](mailto:msbaz@umich.edu)  
Assistant Professor of Computer Science, University of Michigan
2. **Gianni Antichi** [gianni.antichi@polimi.it](mailto:gianni.antichi@polimi.it)  
Associate Professor of Computer Science, Politecnico di Milano
3. **Ben Pfaff** [blp@cs.stanford.edu](mailto:blp@cs.stanford.edu)  
Engineer/Co-Founder at Feldera