

Computer science major earns university's top honor for undergraduate research.

A recent Kansas State University graduate who participated in computer science and artificial intelligence research is this year's recipient of the University Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Student in Research.

Kevin Duong, a recent graduate with a degree in computer science, was recognized for excellence in research. Duong was active as an undergraduate researcher from his sophomore through senior year. Duong worked on research with William Hsu, professor of computer science. As a member of Hsu's research team, his main research interests were in reinforcement learning, a branch of machine learning in which an agent learns the optimal behavior by maximizing its obtained reward via interaction with the environment.



Kevin's project in Hsu's Laboratory for Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD) focused on reward discounting and multi-horizon learning for AI agents. Led by Raja Farrukh Ali, a PhD student, the research aimed to create more human-like artificial intelligence systems by studying how humans value rewards differently based on when they receive them. Kevin was a co-author of two papers that were accepted to the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence's 37th annual conference (AAAI 2023) and the Deep Reinforcement Learning Workshop at the 36th conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS 2022).

"Kevin has been an outstanding member of our student community" said Scott DeLoach, professor, and head of the computer science department. "He has consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic, a passion for learning, and a commitment to excellence. I look forward to seeing the impact of Kevin's research in the field. "

William Hsu, professor of computer science and director of the KDD research lab said, "Kevin's ability to navigate complex problems and create novel solutions is exceptional, and being a co-author of a paper accepted to an internationally prestigious research conference as an undergraduate is quite remarkable."

Raja Farrukh Ali, Kevin's supervisor said, "It has been an incredible privilege to mentor and work with Kevin for the last two years. He was able to understand the fundamentals of the field, develop ideas into code and eventually brought innovative ideas to our research project, all while excelling in his academics. The dedication, enthusiasm, and creativity he brings to the team is truly inspiring."