

Making Robots Make Sense: Kevin Benton's Story



From the nuts and bolts to the final spark that brings it to life, Kevin Benton Jr., an intern in the Computational Science Department under Dr. Balakrishna Gokaraju, is breaking down the art of building a robot so anyone can understand it.

“Basically, if they don’t have any robotics knowledge, they can use the components I’ve built to create the robotics programs they want,” Benton explained. “Not only that, but they can also visualize it in an Augmented Reality (AR) space.”

Benton’s work spans robotics programming, AR, virtual reality, and HAMMER ERC—a hybrid manufacturing research center. This research has allowed him to collaborate with universities such as Northwestern, where he’s helped develop a VR application for the English Wheel manufacturing process.

“This field is going to be ever-evolving and increasingly important,” Benton said. “The way manufacturing is heading, robotics will play a bigger role, and so will our everyday lives.”

Benton earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees at Elizabeth City State University, but the Data Science focus of North Carolina A&T's Computational Science program drew him in.

"There was a professor from the Computational Science and Engineering program who came to my university and told me all about what they were doing," Benton recalled. "I liked it, and with my background, I knew data science was the perfect next step."

Working under Dr. Gokaraju and Dr. Issa has helped Benton expand his expertise.

"Since I have very specific knowledge around robotics and programming from my research, I've been specialized," Benton said. "They've helped me take a more generalized approach and better communicate why my work is important."

After completing the program, Benton plans to take a short break from school but remain deeply involved in research.