Engineering student awarded \$1000 scholarship from Upsilon Pi Epsilon

Leslie Geary Friday, September 09, 2011



Laiali Hussein Almazaydeh, who is earning a PhD in computer science and engineering at the University of Bridgeport, has been awarded \$1,000 from Upsilon Pi Epsilon, the international honors society for computing and information sciences.

Almazaydeh, 31, was selected based on her superlative academic record, extracurricular activities, and recommendations from academic advisers.

"We expect and believe you will establish an admirable record for subsequent holders of this award to emulate," UPE Executive Director Orlando Madrigal wrote Almazaydah upon announcing her award.

Almazaydeh, who currently has a 4.0 GPA and expects to graduate in 2013, conducts research at the University's Wireless and Communications Lab, where she is exploring different applications for wireless sensor networks (WSNs), which transmit data via radio waves. WSNs are used for monitoring various physical conditions, for example, air pollution or temperature.

Almazaydeh has coauthored several research papers on the use of WSNs in the peer-reviewed journal, International Journal of Database Management Systems, among other publications. She said she is interested in using WSNs "to contribute to society," and to enhance medical research in particular.

"She is a dedicated researcher in the area of wireless communications," said Engineering professor Khaled Elleithy, who is associate dean of graduate programs at the School of Engineering and one of Almazaydeh's dissertation advisers.

"Her research results in the area of WSNs is innovative and constitutes valuable contributions in ongoing research. She is one of those students who is open and receptive to new ideas; she is not afraid to explore creative ideas and strives to learn and grow continuously from the research challenges they pose."

Almazaydeh's courage as a researcher reflects her personal determination to pursue an education. Raised in Ma'an, Jordan, she was one of seven daughters. But unlike her sisters and mother, all of whom married by age 15, Almazaydeh balked at the thought of becoming someone's wife. "It was not my dream," she said. "I insisted that I complete my education to have a good career."

When suitors asked her parents about marrying her, Almazaydeh cajoled her mother and father into letting her finish high school first. More proposals followed, but she again convinced her parents to let her attend Al Hussein Bin Talal University, where she earned a bachelor's in computer science. Then Almazaydeh lobbied for graduate school, where, at 25, she eventually met her husband, a mechanical engineer, while she earned a master's in computer information systems.

"He promised I could complete my education," said Almazaydeh, who accepted his proposal. They have a daughter, 3, but Almazaydeh left both at home after receiving a scholarship from the Jordanian government to earn her PhD at UB.

She has no regrets. "Computer engineering makes me part of the most important revolution that has changed the world of technology," she says. "At UB, I have found encouragement and support to improve my research skills [using] real-life applications."

Her family, whom she visits each summer, also has encouraged her. "When I left my daughter in [Jordan] this summer, she said, 'Go study, Mommy. I won't cry, I'm old,'" said Almazaydeh, who keeps photos of her ebullient doe-eyed daughter in her bag, along with research papers and her resume. "I am setting an example for her."

And others.

In February 2011, Almazaydeh was invited to the United Nations in Manhattan to lead panels aimed at attracting more women into the field of science and technology. And the American Association of University Women asked her talk about her education and life at a conference held at Housatonic Community College celebrate International Women's Day last March.

"I will set an example for my daughter that women are powerful," she said. "They can do good things in life."