



Janiya Peters, Undergraduate Senior in CogSci

For her undergraduate studies, Janiya Peters majored in Cognitive Science with a minor in Economics. Janiya says, *“Declaring my major was a journey.”* She had initially entered college looking to do IT or Computer Science. While she loved the introductory computing courses she’d taken, she found the upper-level courses challenging. Meanwhile, Janiya found herself growing more interested in user interaction with technology along with the relationship between brains and computers and how the two model each other. Cognitive science, and specifically the Mind, Machines, and Computations track, allowed Janiya to explore this unique intersection. She says, *“I’m so grateful I found this discipline my sophomore year, and it’s grown so much since I first entered the major.”*

In terms of what she found most appealing about her chosen field, Janiya loves the range of classes offered by her studies. She’s taken classes in Cognitive Science, Computer Science, Biology, Psychology, and Philosophy, alongside classes in Python exploring language and machine learning, decision-making and bias, and information theory. *“I think most students would be surprised to learn that there is a major that is so interdisciplinary,”* she notes. Janiya also commends a course by Dr. Mary Rigdon, Associate Teaching Professor at RuCCS. *“I really enjoyed Dr. Rigdon’s Cognition and Decision-making course. We learned about rational and irrational agents, and how the level of information in a market can change outcomes. Experimental and behavioral economics have interesting implications for e-commerce.”* She also learned a lot as a research assistant in the Decision and Economic Sciences Lab.

At Rutgers, Janiya became heavily involved in the Rutgers Honors College. She was the Mentor-in-Residence of the Douglass women’s wing and is still involved in the Douglass Honors College Coalition (DHCC). As she completes her senior year, Janiya is currently the graphic designer for Rutgers Women in Information Technology & Informatics (WITI). *“Cognitive Science Club and Rutgers Blueprint are also great organizations with fantastic people!”*

Outside of her major, Janiya’s favorite academic experience was attending the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing in Houston, Texas in 2018 which she attended with the Douglass DIMACS program. She remembers there being hundreds of tech companies and young women interested in coding at the celebration. She enjoyed her time at the event and learned about non-software engineering opportunities in the technology field such as user experience research. Additionally, Janiya is a Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Scholar, a program which helps low-income, first generation, and/or underrepresented students pursue doctoral study. *“I’m so thankful to this program for the many conferences, research, and funding opportunities it gave me at Rutgers.”*

In fall of 2021, Janiya will move on to start her Ph.D. in Information Management and Systems at the University of California-Berkeley. Her goal is to mitigate abusive online patterns and increase user autonomy through research. She is very excited to start this new journey in the 5-6 year program in which she will be a Chancellor’s Fellow and Information School Graduate Scholar—both of which grant her funding to pursue her research interests as well as opportunities for mentorship and growth. *“I owe a ton of thanks to Dr. Rigdon, RuCCS, Rutgers Honors College, Douglass Residential College, Ronald E. McNair Program, and LSAMP Program for aiding me in my journey.”*