

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Certificate offered through the College of Arts and Humanities is designed for undergraduates as a value-added skillset to enhance their degree. The certificate is designed to teach students how to be responsible spatial data consumers as well as responsible spatial data analysts. Through the GIS courses students learn how to prepare and effectively communicate data via digital maps, apps, and dashboards. Lab assignments utilize the latest GIS software that is most often asked for and required by employers looking to hire entry level GIS technicians. A service-learning project and an internship are required components of the certificate. To fulfill these requirements, students have had the opportunity to partner with agencies such as the City of St. Charles, The St. Louis Zoo, The St. Louis Food Bank, and The Missouri Botanical Gardens just to name a few.

Victoria Tuli (*Major: Business Administration*) is Lindenwood's first female graduate to earn the GIS Certificate as of May 2021. Victoria began her journey into the realm of GIS as a freshman in the spring semester of 2018. Below is an interview with Victoria highlighting her experiences in the GIS program.

1. What GIS project that you have worked on while at Lindenwood are you most proud?
 - **The project I am proud of the most is our class project we did for the St. Louis Food Bank. This project consisted of our class that was only made up of five or six people. We were presented with an idea to help out our friends at the food bank in order to figure out where they need to add food banks, so it can be more accessible for people in need. As a student who doesn't come from much, this definitely hit home for me. I remember being presented this idea, and our class, instantly, was drawn to the cause and how we could help it.**
 - **So, for weeks we were sorting, analyzing, and understanding the data given to us. This part of the project was [the] hardest part because we were given more than 1,000 entrees (not exact), but with our GIS application, the work got cut in half— which was still amazing to me. Seeing how I could just easily sort, analyze, and understand the data by the tips of my fingers were mind blowing to me because it really demonstrated how far technology came.**
 - **After the "dirty work" was done, we were able to finally put our data into maps and analyze where they needed to add food banks to make it more accessible for the community. We found that the St. Louis Food Bank actually covered mostly areas that were in need; however, we also found out that they needed to add more foodbanks to the Inner city of St. Louis, because this is where the poverty of families was very high, and the closest foodbanks were over 2 miles walking distance and more than a 20-minute drive from home.**
 - **This was a problem we presented to the St. Louis Foodbank team because we want everyone to have accessible food, especially living in poverty. Our maps were also in real time data, and anyone who views it can easily access and guide themselves through our map.**
 - **After giving our data and receiving feedback, it felt amazing to me. Felt like I helped something, or someone have a better life. Yes, it's something small, but knowing we**

were a part of the decision to add more food banks made me feel good inside, knowing more families will be able to eat at night.

2. What was the biggest lesson you learned while studying GIS?

- **The biggest lesson I learned while studying GIS is: never get intimidated when you walk into the room and see a classroom only filled with men or finding yourself as the only colored student in the classroom. Being a Polynesian woman, walking into a field that is male dominant and being the only female / colored person in the classroom is very intimidating. It gave me a sense of doubt in my head saying, "Am I smart enough to be here? Am I worth being here? Is my thought process smart enough to present to the class?" I had so much doubt in my mind, but I couldn't thank professor Vansell for being the woman she is. Professor Vansell made my confidence boost in GIS, and I don't think she even knows how thankful I am for her. Besides myself, she was the other woman in the classroom with me (if there wasn't another girl in the class), and she made me feel comfortable to ask more questions when confused and gave me confidence to say what I was thinking in class without showing how shy / nervous I was. She made her classroom a place where I didn't feel like the only colored woman or only woman in the classroom. I actually felt part of the class as whole and not a minority. To be honest, I didn't even know I was the first woman to receive a GIS certificate until my mom told me a couple weeks ago. Hearing those words made me tear up and reflect because in the 194 years Lindenwood has been open, I am the first woman and first colored woman to receive this certificate on May 3, 2021. My situation just shows any women or minority, to keep going. No matter how hard it is, KEEP GOING. Find something that motivates you and use it to pull forward. New doors are opening, and as person of color, we are going to change things once we apply pressure; we just need confidence within ourselves to flourish what we manifest.**

3. What is your GIS dream job?

- **My GIS dream job is to work for the City of Seattle in the GIS department. There is a need for GIS workers, and I want to apply everything I learned at Lindenwood to help resolve problems within the city using GIS. If it is in God's plan, I would expand into working for contractor companies and use GIS in order to start up my own business as well. **Victoria landed her dream job and is working for the City of Seattle as a Management Systems Analyst Assistant! LU Proud!****

4. What are your plans after graduation?

- **My plan for graduation is to apply and hopefully land a job in the City of Seattle as a GIS analyst and to apply for the GIS master's program for Penn State.**

Congrats to Victoria!