Starrissa

Cobb County, GA

**Her Story:**

I have been actively seeking opportunities and employment in IT since I transitioned out of the classroom in 2021 as a Secondary Science and STEM educator. I have not been successful. However, a delay is not denial. I refuse to give up on my goal of obtaining a career of passion and interest because I want to improve the quality of my and my son’s life and pursue a career with numerous opportunities to advance as much as I aspire to climb. I want to thrive and not merely survive and pay the bills. I believe my work ethic and ambition, combined with the certificate program and mentoring, will give me the foundation and tools I need to change the trajectory of our lives. One reason to support my candidacy for this program is that I have demonstrated that I can complete rigorous educational requirements with honors while working full-time and managing various personal challenges that arise as a single mother. Before the classroom, I worked in biomedical research and completed an M.S. degree from Vanderbilt University. I discovered my passion for critical thinking, problem-solving, and detailed oriented data analysis. Furthermore, I learned that I was more passionate about helping people and broadening participation in STEM from traditionally marginalized groups. As a result, I decided to leave the bench to pursue the classroom and use education to make a difference. I entered a teaching fellowship program to complete my certification requirements, and I committed to teaching in Title I schools. During this time, I had my son. Being a mother further motivated me and enhanced my "why." While furthering my education as a learning and development facilitator and leading in organizational roles as a new mom, I managed to maintain a 3.8 GPA, achieved an 82% student pass rate for subject-based state/county assessments, and an 88% student pass rate on national AP assessments. These accomplishments required me to use data to assess risk and implement strategies to resolve weaknesses/challenges, develop qualitative and quantitative reports, and explain complex details/concepts to people ensuring that they understand the material. All in all, my personal and professional experiences demonstrate a strong work ethic, grit, and determination to complete my goals and succeed. My long-term career goal is to become a CISO or security architect with a strong background in cloud security and incident response. The WIT program will give me the competitive foundation and experience I need to get an entry level position and provide resources for me to become more proficient in basic knowledge, skills, and tools used in the field. More importantly to me right now, the program will allow me to build a sisterhood/tribe with the cohort of other single mothers. I know how valuable community is to me at this point in my life- it's a priceless opportunity. Yes, I can learn many in-demand technical and workplace skills through online courses, bootcamps, and self-study. However, those options don't give me the same opportunities to continually network and receive mentoring after completion. In closing, my academic and professional experiences support my ability to be successful in the program and start a new career. They have also taught me the significance of building positive relationships and the value of having a community, which is how I learned about this program.

**For reference:**

**Company Name:** Unemployed

**Work Experience**: Help Desk Specialist I and II, 15 months Customer Solutions Agent, 7 months

**College Degree:** BS, Biology/ Biochemistry; MS, Cell & Developmental Biology

**Education**: Cloud Computing and Security, Web and Multimedia Design Teaching & Learning in a Digital Age Google IT Support Certificate

**Annual Income**- $0

**Observation characteristics from WIT, Emory, Other Providers and Mentors (Outgoing, Quiet/Shy, Leader, Team Contributor, etc.)**

Starrissa contributes to lab discussions verbally and provided answers in chat, answered other classmate's questions.

**Competencies: (Interpersonal Skills, Cooperation and Collaboration, Time Management & Administration, Leadership, Communication Skills, Strategic Thinker, etc.)**

Great Collaboratior

Good Communication