



Congratulations to Allison Yohanan: 2023 Scholarship Winner!

The Indiana Ready Mixed Concrete Association is proud to announce Ms. Allison Yohanan as the 2023 IRMCA Scholarship Recipient. Allison is a Senior at Valparaiso University, studying Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Spanish Language in Valparaiso, Indiana.



During the last two summers, Ms. Yohanan has worked for a Chicago-area general contractor and a Boston-based national design build firm in Boston. Last fall, she organized a field day for the VU ASCE Student Chapter to observe the placement of concrete at a hockey rink in the Chicago suburbs. Allison is very involved in student and community organizations and has competed on VU's Division 1 Golf Team.

It is with great honor that the IRMCA awards this annual recognition to the next generation of Hoosier Concrete and Construction Industry.

2023 Scholarship Winner

Allison Yohanan
Valparaiso University

In the IRMCA's ongoing goal of supporting and building Concrete Culture and Concrete Community, the IRMCA spent time with Ms. Yohanan to better understand her educational journey and future aspirations.

1. **Congratulations on being selected as the 2023 IRMCA Scholarship Winner! What was your first reaction when you heard the news?**

My first reaction was to tell my mom and grandpa! Both of them are my biggest supporters and my biggest inspirations in life. We were all so excited to hear that I received this honor. Thank you again to the IRMCA!



2. **The IRMCA Scholarship recognizes outstanding students in the concrete industry. How did you first learn about this scholarship opportunity, and what motivated you to apply?**

I was sent the scholarship application by the VU College of Engineering Administration. The faculty at Valpo work hard to help students to achieve their dreams. I fully consider everything that they send out because I know they are trustworthy and promising opportunities. I was motivated to apply because I believe I am an outstanding student looking to move forward in the concrete industry through innovation and sustainability.

3. **What do you believe set your application apart from others?**

I believe my involvement and leadership experiences on campus set me apart from other applicants. I have found tremendous learning opportunities while holding leadership positions in multiple organizations. From extensive abroad trip planning to in-depth finances, I feel strongly prepared for my future career. I believe this makes me stand out from other applicants.

4. **Can you tell us a little about yourself and your journey into the world of engineering and concrete?**

I've been around engineering for my entire life, with my grandpa being an industrial engineer and my uncle a civil engineer. Growing up, my grandfather was very much like a father figure to me, and I spent many afternoons after school, in his steel fabrication shop. My grandpa always encouraged me to dream big for my future and he supported me every step of the way. When it came time to pick a major, choosing engineering was an easy decision.

I eventually landed in civil engineering after discovering the diverse number of opportunities. My uncle has found extreme success throughout his career in civil engineering, and he encouraged me to consider civil or environmental. I always took a strong interest in making a difference in the world and the environment; therefore, civil and environmental engineering became the perfect place for me.

5. **What inspired you to pursue a degree in Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Spanish simultaneously?**

Since elementary school, Spanish was always my favorite class. I enjoyed learning another language and culture to communicate with those around me. Being bilingual is a particularly important aspect of my life and it aids me throughout my education in civil and environmental engineering. I chose to do it all because I thoroughly enjoy each of the fields.



6. How has your experience at Valparaiso University shaped your passion for these fields?

Students and faculty at Valparaiso University are incredibly passionate about engineering and innovation. Being surrounded by people who share the same strong interests allows me to delve deeper into topics and theories.

7. Scholarships often reflect a student's dedication, both academically and in extracurricular activities. Can you tell us about some academic achievements and involvements outside the classroom?

I am heavily involved on campus in student organizations and intramural sports:

- President of WAVES [Working Across Vocations Everywhere through Service]
 - WAVES is dedicated to service trips abroad in countries like Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic for solar and water filtration projects.
- Research Assistant with Dr. Jay Grossman & Dr. Zudhi Aljobeh
 - Studied Stormwater Conveyance Capacity using drone surveying techniques.
- Secretary & Social Media Coordinator of ASCE [American Society of Civil Engineers]
 - ASCE focuses on networking and building relationships among civil engineers.
 - We also compete in concrete canoe, concrete cornhole, and steel bridge competitions.
- Public Relations Chair of SWE [Society of Women Engineers]
 - SWE provides a safe space to support women in engineering.
- Peer Mentor with Valparaiso University's Co-E Mentoring Program
 - This program is designed to welcome first year engineering students to college.
- Member of DAB [Dean's Advisory Board]
 - DAB meets with the College of Engineering Dean and all other student organization leaders to foster interdepartmental communication and teamwork.
- Academic Achievements
 - 2023 1st Place Winner – Engineering Oral Presentation Competition
 - Published to Valparaiso University's CORE Hall of Fame
- Volunteer with local service organizations
 - Girls on the Run
 - Project Neighbors
 - Guardians of the Green Mile
 - Indiana Dunes National Park
- Division 1 Athlete at Valparaiso University
 - Competed 2020-2022 on Women's NCAA Division 1 Women's Golf Team.
- Intramural Sports Athlete at Valparaiso University
 - 2023 Champion – Doubles Badminton; 2022 Champion – Singles Ping Pong



8. **Concrete is a versatile and essential material in construction. What aspects of concrete and its applications interest you the most?**

I am most interested in concrete applications that address the environmental impact of the industry. Practices, such as the use of recycled materials as aggregate, and the partial substitution of fly ash or slag for cement, intrigue me immensely. There is so much room to grow in the concrete industry; I look forward to being a part of the current and future innovation.

9. **Sustainability is a crucial aspect of modern engineering. How do you see the intersection between sustainability and the concrete industry evolving?**

Engineering is an ever-changing field; however, the concrete industry lags behind in terms of sustainability. As we all know, concrete production significantly contributes to greenhouse gases. I see the future of the concrete industry shifting to use more sustainable practices such as the use of slag or fly ash to reduce the environmental impact of concrete.

10. **Are there any particular challenges you've encountered while studying these fields, and how did you overcome them?**

The main challenge I have met has been balancing studies with extracurriculars. I love to stay involved in plenty of diverse activities, but it can be challenging setting priorities between studying and participating in outside projects or events. I have overcome this challenge by prioritizing studying and homework during the day; then leaving the night for student organization meetings, intramural sports, or hanging out with friends.

11. **As an aspiring engineer, what advice do you have for students considering a career in Civil Engineering or Environmental Engineering?**

Studying engineering is all about learning and experiencing. Sometimes it may feel like you have no idea what you are doing, and that's okay! Civil and environmental engineering has so much to offer; all you have to do is take the time to listen and digest. Everyone around you is learning as well and seeing new material, you are not alone. Do not be afraid to ask questions to peers, professors, tutors, advisors, and whoever else. In order to learn, you have to ask the question.



12. Are there any specific projects, experiences, or people who have significantly influenced your academic journey?

Professor, Dr. Jay Grossman significantly influenced my academic journey as he has been my professor, academic advisor, organization advisor, research advisor, and overall mentor. He consistently encourages me to pursue civil engineering to the fullest by engaging in additional opportunities such as organization leadership, research, and civic engagement. Dr. Grossman is an exemplary role model who stands for devotion, empathy, and diligence.

13. Beyond your studies, what hobbies or activities do you enjoy in your free time?

Beyond my studies, I love to stay involved on campus, go to the gym, and play golf. I think it is very important to diversify your hobbies and interests; I do so by joining non-engineering organizations, attending campus events, and spending time outdoors.

14. What message would you like to convey to other students, especially gender minorities who may be interested in applying for scholarships or pursuing careers in engineering and concrete-related fields?

I strongly encourage women and other minority students to pursue engineering because the work is incredibly rewarding and should be shared. The construction and concrete industry especially need more women and minorities to continue to shift the work environment to become a more positive and diverse experience. There are many opportunities and resources to help you succeed.