

An aerial photograph of the Vanderbilt University campus in Nashville, Tennessee, featuring historic brick buildings, lush green trees, and a prominent clock tower. The word "VINSE" is overlaid in a large, gold-colored serif font. The letter "I" is replaced by a graphic of nine gold dots arranged in a 3x3 grid. The background image is framed by a dark blue sky with light clouds and a gold diagonal stripe in the top-left corner.

VINSE

vinse@vanderbilt.edu



VINSE

UNDERGRADUATE
SUMMER INTERNS

ZOIE DODSON

VINSE REU – JENNINGS GROUP

Hometown: Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

Institution: Lycoming College

Major: Chemistry

Email: dodzoie@lycoming.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I enjoy traveling! In the last year, I visited 2 countries and 4 islands!

What are your favorite activities?

My favorite activities include spending time with family and friends, rock climbing, running, lifting, and traveling.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

This REU will greatly help me with my future aspirations by providing me with a hands-on experience conducting research in green chemistry which I hope to pursue in my future studies. I will also become more prepared for graduate school and advance my scientific writing and presentation skills.



VINSE

MAGGIE FERGUSON

VINSE REU – MACDONALD GROUP

Hometown: Lexington, Kentucky

Institution: University of Virginia

Major: Materials Science and Engineering

Email: jrr9kr@virginia.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

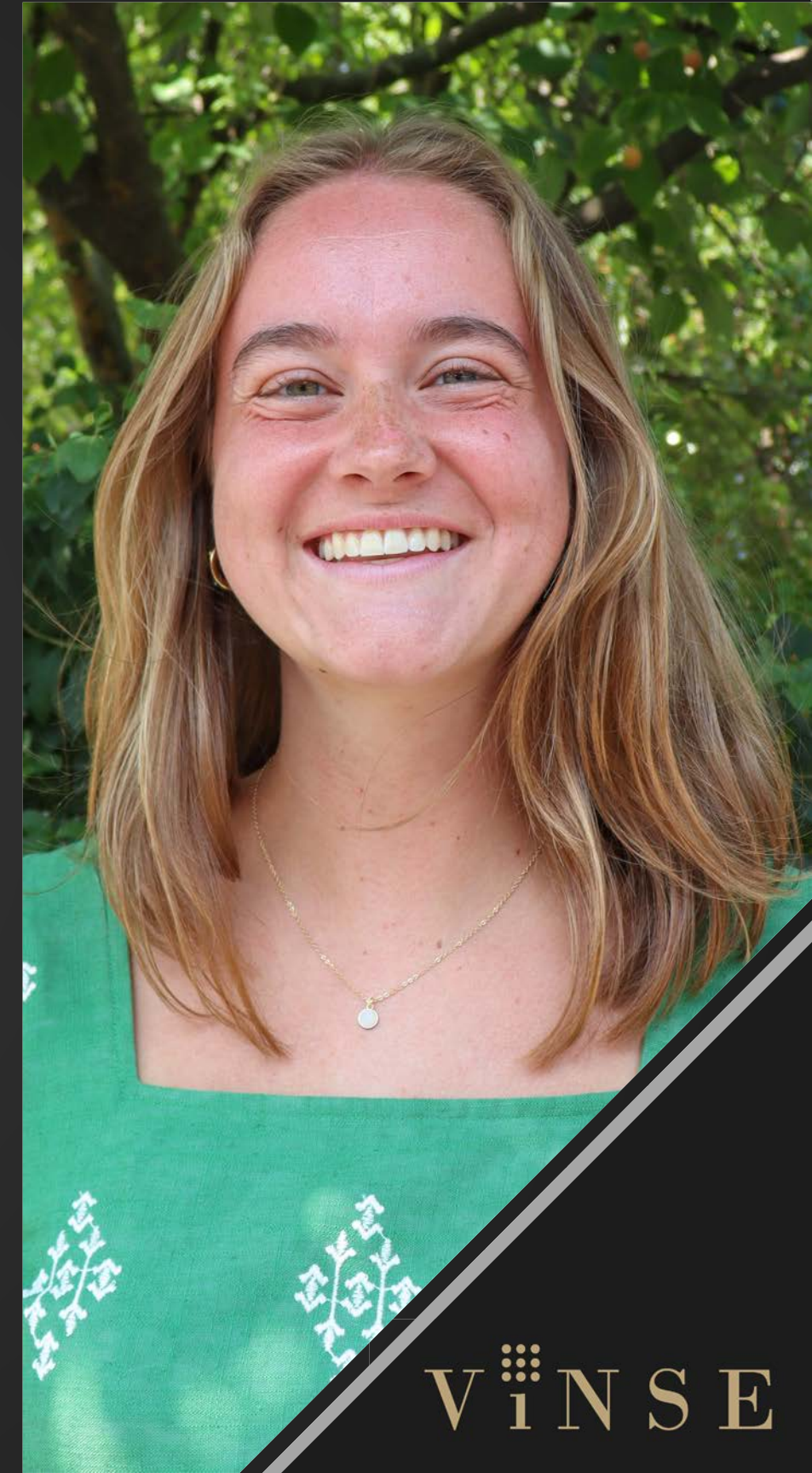
I sang in an Anglican church choir for 11 years growing up, including two tours to the National Cathedral and two tours to England.

What are your favorite activities?

Reading, going on walks, playing and watching sports with friends, long conversations over good coffee, and crafting!

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I'm interested in a career in materials research, so this summer program will help me to figure out what fields I'm curious about pursuing and connect me with passionate students and faculty.



VINSE

MICAELA GONZALEZ MORA

VINSE TECH CREW

Hometown: Asuncion, Paraguay

Institution: Vanderbilt University

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Email: micaela.a.gonzalez.mora@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

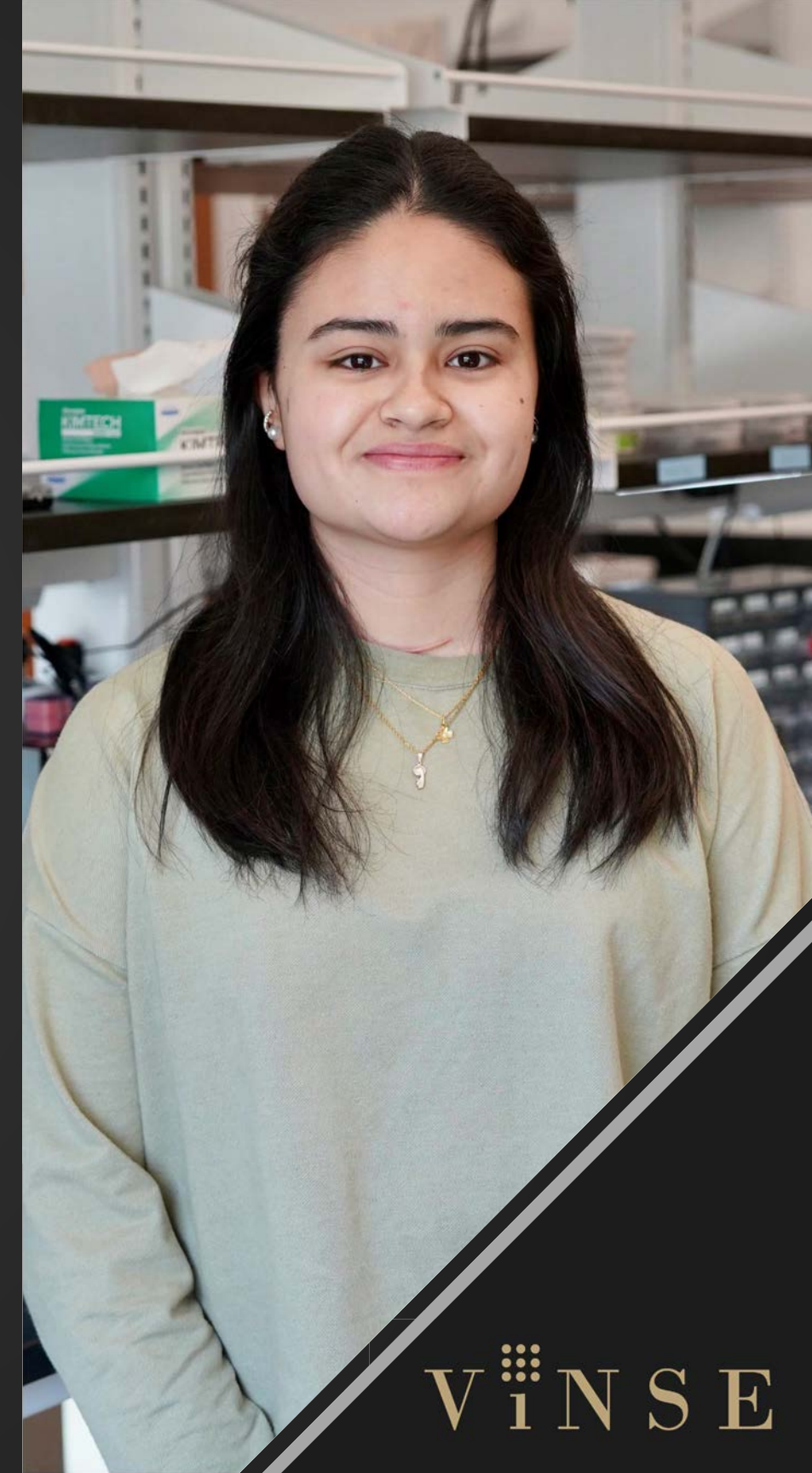
I am an international student from Asunción, Paraguay, and the first time I ever took a flight was when I moved to the U.S. for my freshman year.

What are your favorite activities?

I love outdoor sports, especially biking and hiking. Exploring new trails and spending time in nature is something I always enjoy.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I am deeply interested in research and hope to continue pursuing it in the future. This opportunity will allow me to contribute to innovative projects and develop new technical skills that I can apply to new research projects. Additionally, I plan to pursue a Ph.D. and become a full-time researcher, and exposure to the cleanroom and nanofabrication techniques will help shape my research interests in a more focused direction.



ADRIANA LAVOPA

VINSE REU – CALDWELL GROUP

Hometown: Jacksonville, Florida

Institution: University of Florida

Major: Materials Science and Engineering

Email: paulm@ufl.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

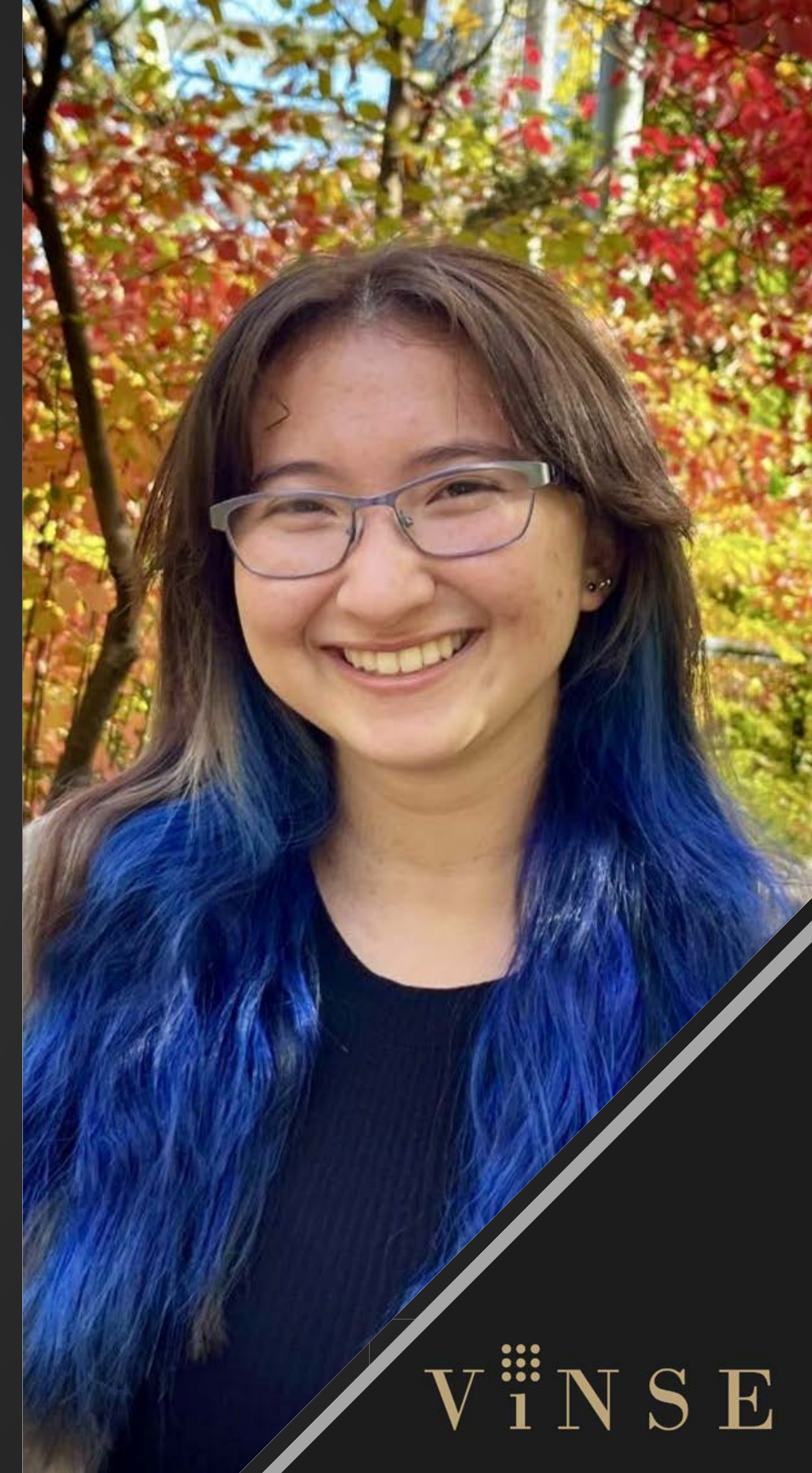
Last summer, I took classes on how to wield a long-sword.

What are your favorite activities?

In my free time, I love making art: painting, drawing, crocheting, pottery. Over the years I've really enjoyed learning new art skills. I also like indoor rock climbing and reading, especially fantasy novels.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I'm planning on earning a PhD in materials science and engineering or a related field, and this REU offers the chance to see another side of this discipline. I've done undergraduate research for the past three years, but I'm not dead set on any single subject of study within materials; I hope to learn more about the exciting research that's happening now and see where might be the best fit for me in the future.



JULIETTE LIPARI

VINSE TECH CREW

Hometown: Glen Ridge, New Jersey

Institution: Vanderbilt University

Major: Computer Science and Mathematics

Email: juliettelipari@gmail.com

What would people be surprised to know about you?

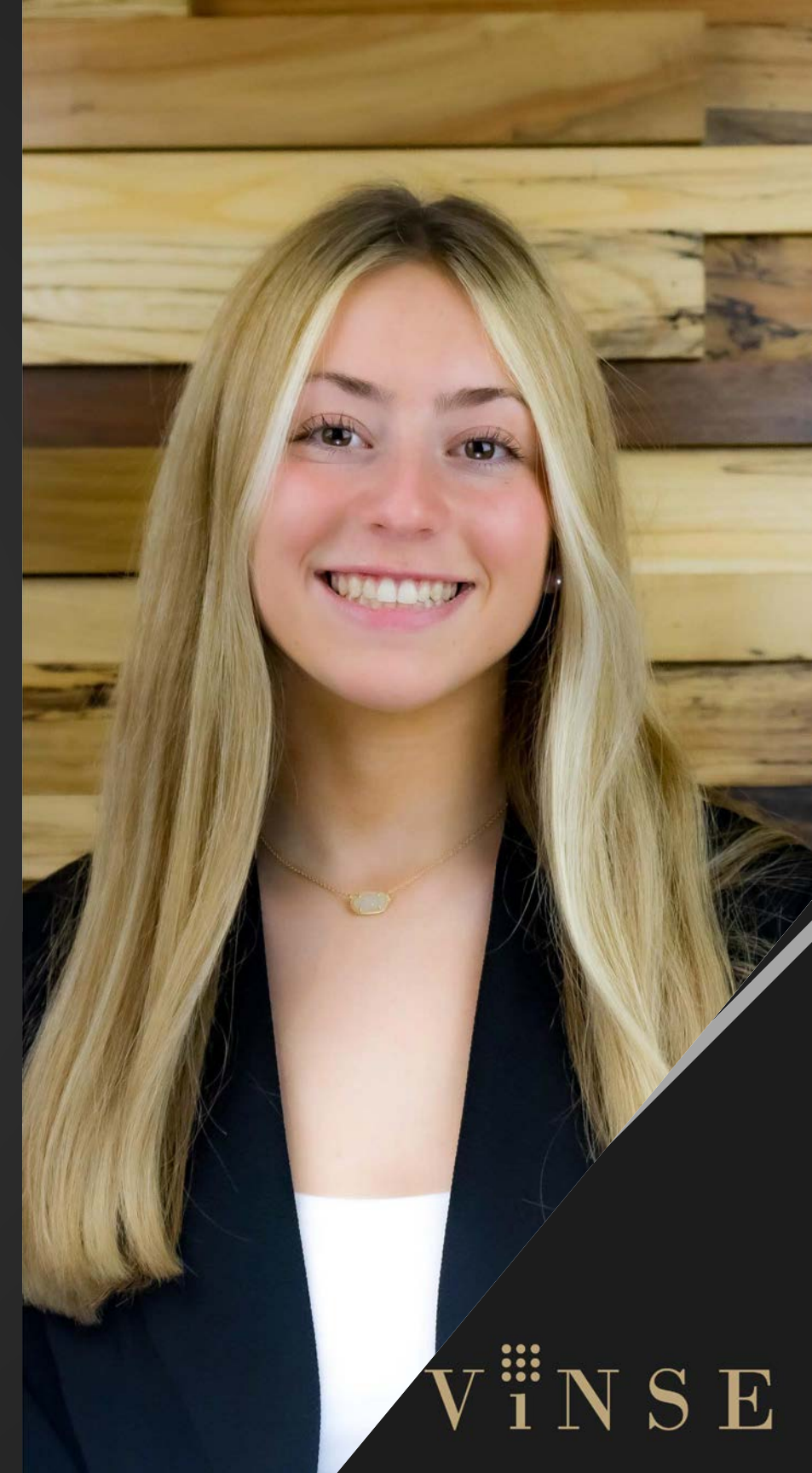
I am a dual citizen!

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

VINSE Tech Crew's professional development sessions and hands-on lab experience will help with my future aspirations in STEM research. The opportunity to gain internship experience and form relationships with other members of the VINSE Tech Crew will help prepare me for future job environments.

What is something you want to do while you're in Nashville?

I would love to go to a concert while I'm in Nashville!



ANNA RUTH MADERA

VINSE REU – LIPPMANN GROUP

Hometown: Macon, Georgia

Institution: Mercer University

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Email: annaruthmadera@gmail.com

What would people be surprised to know about you?

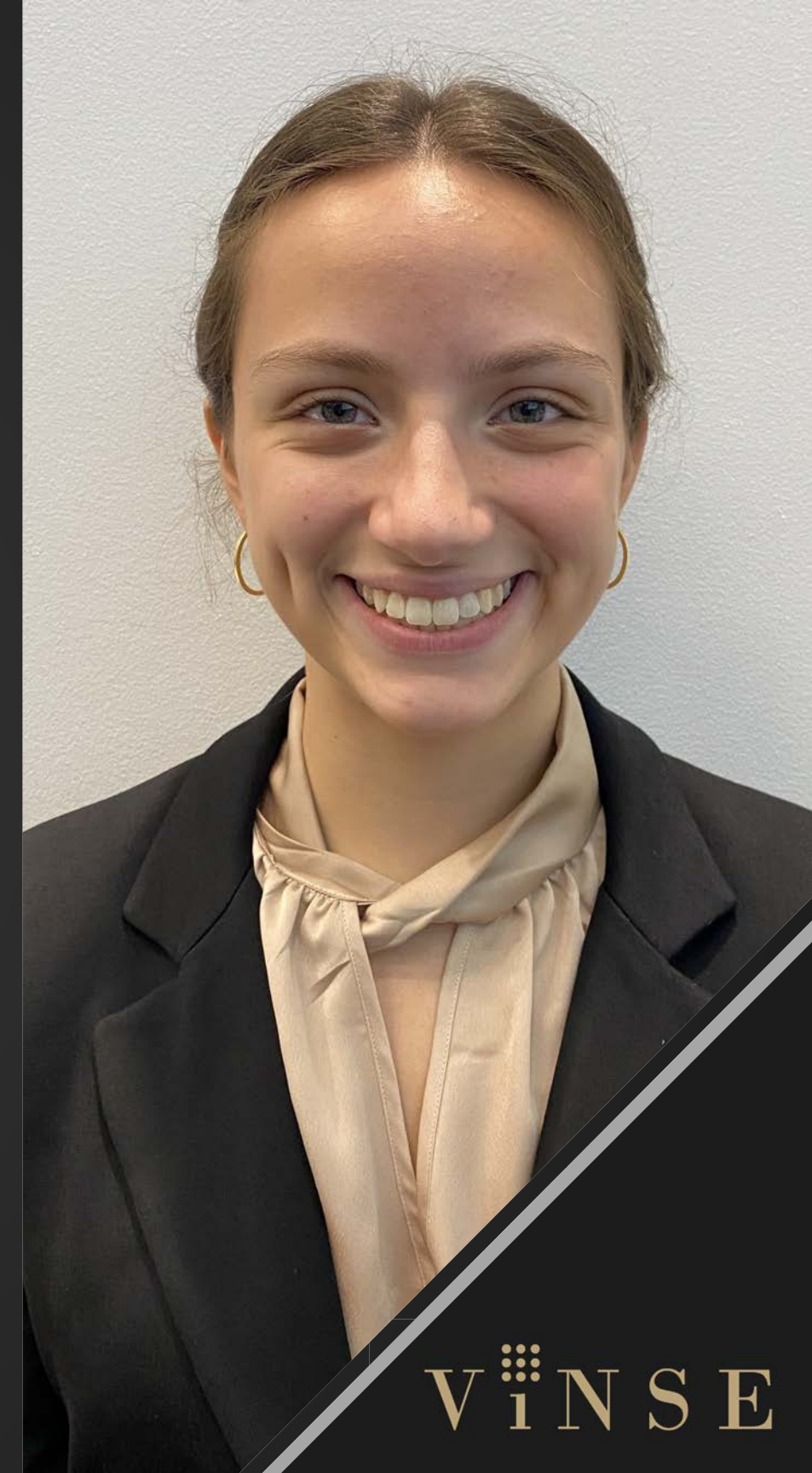
People might be surprised to know that even though I'm passionate about biomedical engineering, I also love creative and adventurous experiences. I enjoy spontaneous road trips, finding the best coffee spots, and exploring new places just as much as I love science and research.

What are your favorite activities?

I love exploring new coffee shops and listening to music (especially Noah Kahan). I also enjoy hiking, trying new restaurants, and watching superhero shows. When I get the chance, I love traveling to new places.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

This REU will help me develop my research skills, gain experience with lab techniques, and refine my understanding of engineering applications.



SEBASTIAN MARTINEZ

VINSE REU – WEISS GROUP

Hometown: Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Institution: Ohio State University

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Email: martinezsebas03@gmail.com

What would people be surprised to know about you?

Something that people would be surprised to know about me is that I play guitar, and I am also passionate about collecting vinyl records. I started collecting vinyl's during my first year of university and the collection includes records from all sorts of genres.

What are your favorite activities?

Some of my favorite activities include going to the movie theater and collecting movies, listening to music, playing guitar, watching sports, and trying out new places to eat.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

A dream of mine is to develop nanostructured biomedical devices that can improve diagnostic and therapeutic work and participating in the VINSE REU program will be instrumental in achieving this goal. It will also prepare me for graduate studies and a career as a biomedical engineer. Being exposed to hands-on lab work and connecting with leading researchers and peers can be an opportunity for me to enhance my technical skills and strengthen my problem solving and communication skills.



VINSE

SAFA MBARKI

VINSE REU – BELLAN GROUP

Hometown: Middletown, New Jersey

Institution: Rutgers University

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Email: safa.mbarki@rutgers.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

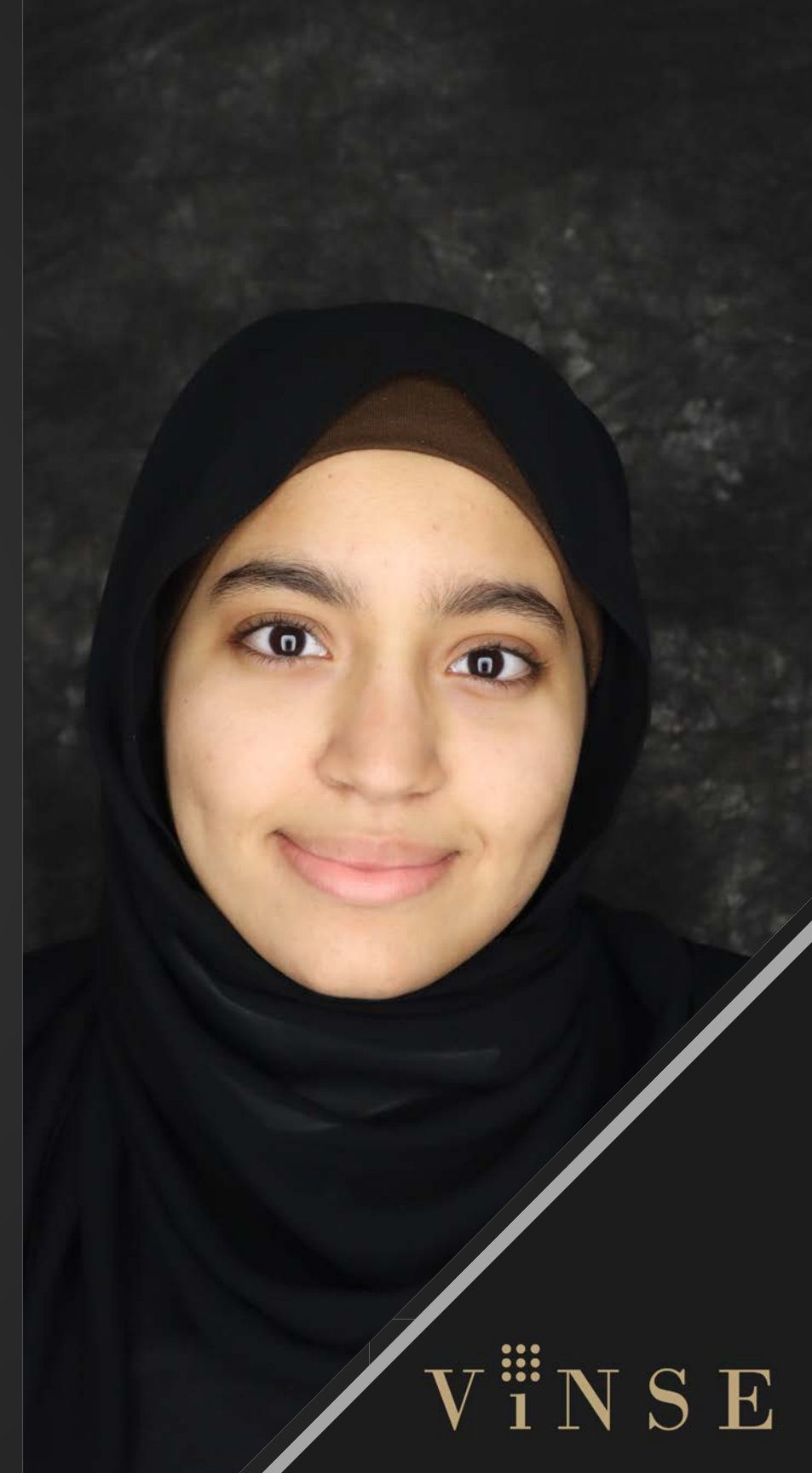
I have never learned how to swim.

What are your favorite activities?

Baking, knitting and crocheting, drawing, reading, and being in nature are some of my favorite things to do.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I believe that the knowledge, hands-on experience, and connections gained through this program will help me to become a better, more well-rounded engineer. I believe this experience will be valuable as well since it will allow me to do research in healthcare engineering, which is the field that I care most about and want to contribute to.



SAHPAR OZER

VINSE TECH CREW

Hometown: Hatay, Turkey

Institution: Vanderbilt University

Major: Mechanical Engineering and Economics

Email: sahpar.n.ozar@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

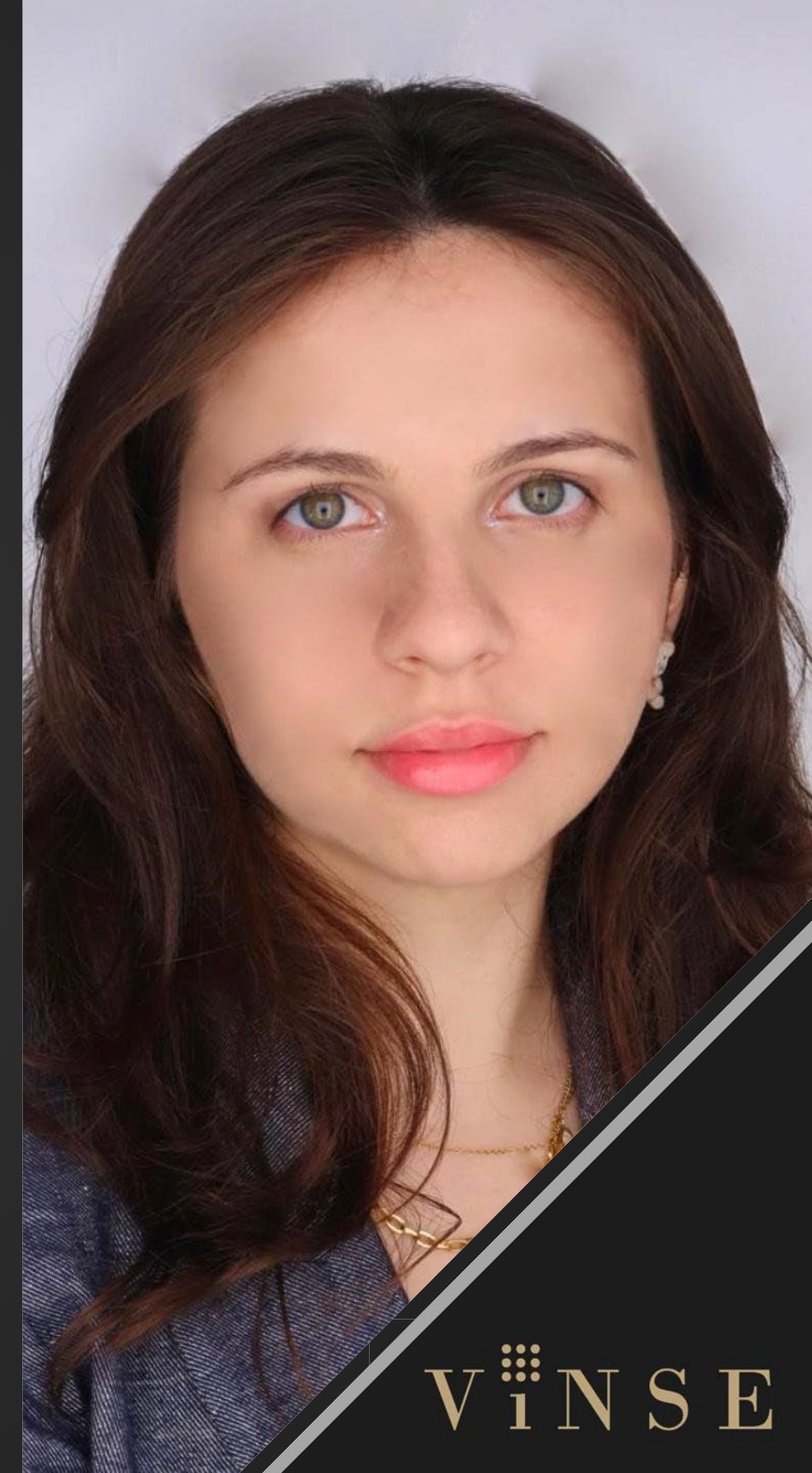
I have over 5,000 songs on my Spotify favorites and over 100,000 photos on my phone.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

My long-term goal is to create a startup that bridges economics & mechanical engineering, this experience will give me invaluable insight into the intersection of innovation, technology, and industry applications. Additionally, by collaborating with researchers and supporting experimental projects, I'll refine my teamwork, problem-solving, and project management abilities, preparing me to lead technical teams in the future.

What is something you want to do while you're in Nashville?

One thing I really want to do is explore the local hiking trails and natural parks around the city. Being outdoors helps me recharge, and I've heard that places like Radnor Lake and Percy Warner Park offer some beautiful views and peaceful trails. I'd also love to dive into Nashville's music scene maybe catch a live show at the Ryman Auditorium or a small jazz or blues gig downtown.



COLE PATTERSON

VINSE TECH CREW

Hometown: Nashville, Tennessee

Institution: Vanderbilt University

Major: Physics

Email: coleman.d.patterson@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

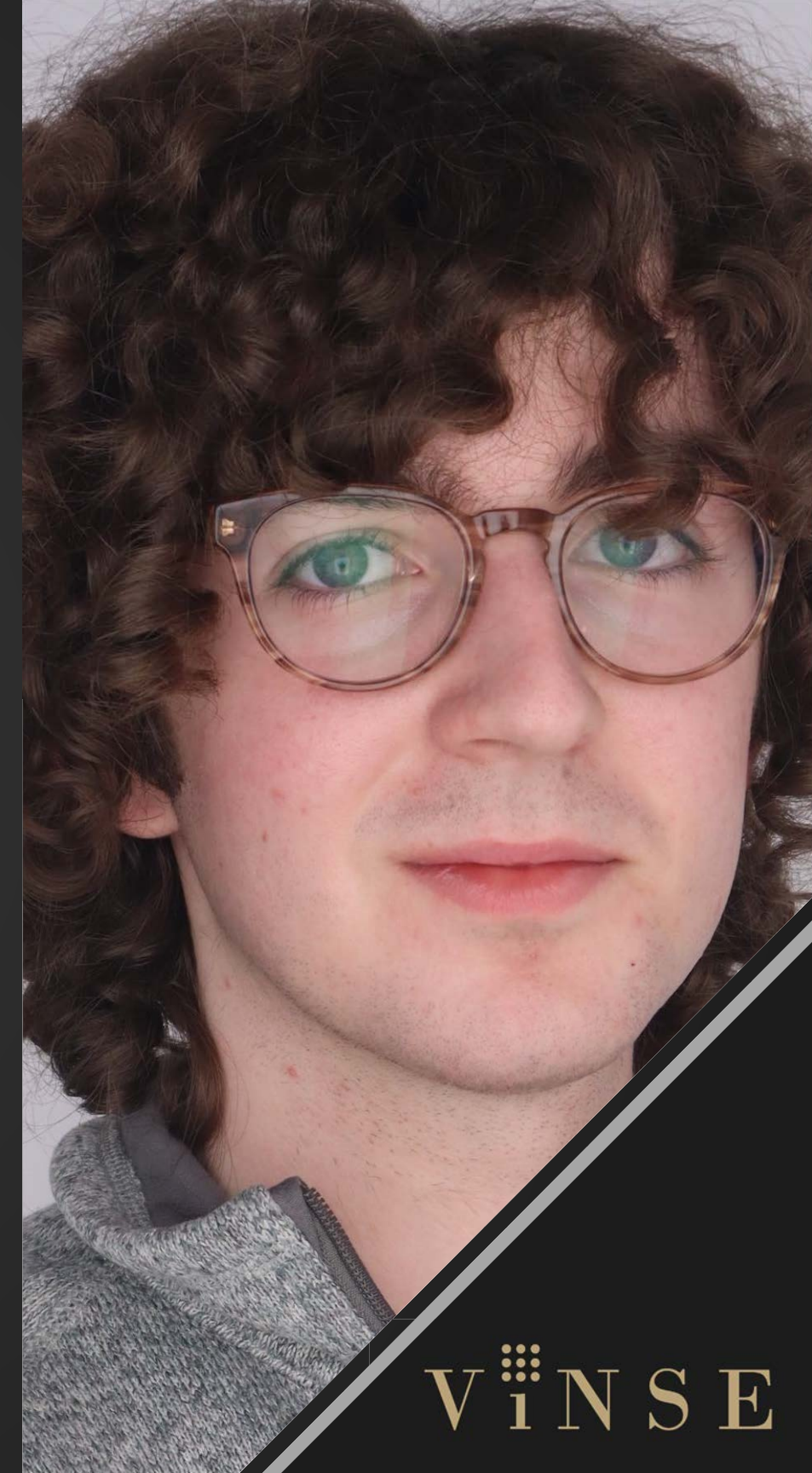
Besides physics, I have a keen interest in ancient language and culture, particularly Latin. One of my hobbies is ancient numismatics, or ancient coin collecting / studying. I love understanding how a coin was made, and where, and by whom, and the politics behind a certain design, etc. Studying a coin is like gathering up a little lost piece of the collective human experience, and I cherish the opportunity.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I would like to be some kind of physicist that does hands-on work, designing, building, perfecting, and VINSE gives me that kind of experience while allowing me to explore many kinds of science done at small scales, from optics to pharmaceutical science.

What is something you want to do while you're in Nashville?

Because I live here, I have seen just about everything there is to see in the city. However, one thing I have not seen is a trilobite pulled by my own hands out of the Ordovician limestones that gird our city like a monumental singing bowl, and I have heard that they are indeed here, but are very very rare. That would be the pleasure of a lifetime. I also want to see Herbie Hancock at the Ryman again.



VINSE

MARISSA PAUL

VINSE REU – RAFAT GROUP

Hometown: Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Institution: Susquehanna University

Major: Biochemistry

Email: paulm@susqu.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

My first time ziplining was in Spain.

What are your favorite activities?

Some of my favorite activities are diamond painting, reading, and hiking.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

I plan to attend graduate school so this experience will give me insight how I feel about more frequent research and longer hours in the lab. Additionally, I'll be able to learn different techniques and information.



NICOLAS POLIAK

VINSE REU – DUVALL GROUP

Hometown: Miami, Florida

Institution: Johns Hopkins University

Major: Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Email: npoliak@icloud.com

What would people be surprised to know about you?

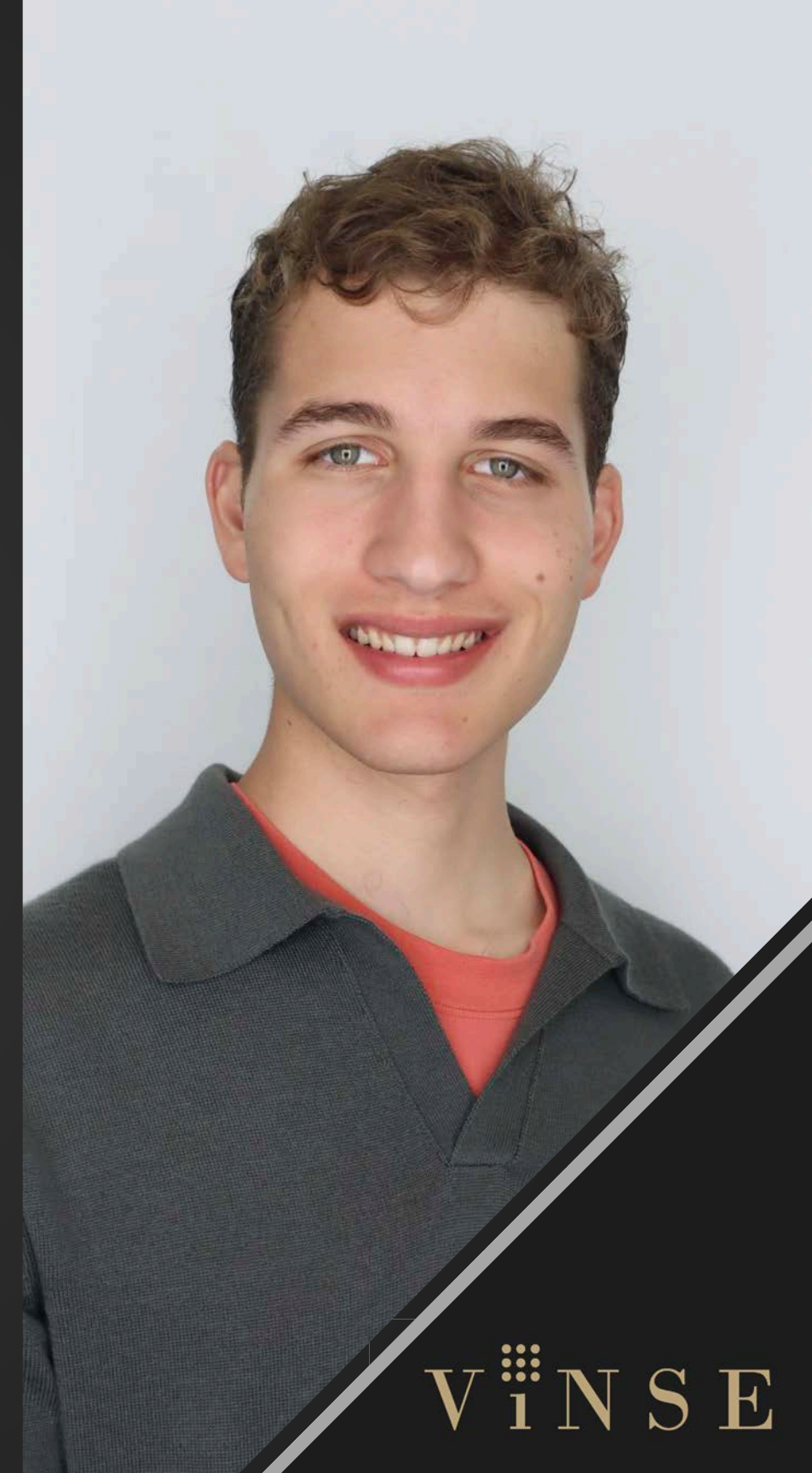
People are often surprised to learn that I'm passionate about watchmaking. I love taking apart intricate mechanical watches, cleaning each piece, and carefully putting it back together. It's a quiet, focused process that helps me slow down and appreciate craftsmanship. In a fast-paced world, working with something so precise and old-fashioned gives me a sense of calm and connection to tradition.

How will this experience help you with your future aspirations?

This experience will help me grow by exposing me to a diverse group of researchers with unique ideas and backgrounds. I want to work in a space where people collaborate across disciplines and challenge each other to think differently. Learning to approach problems from new perspectives is essential to the kind of well-rounded scientist I hope to become.

What is something you want to do while you're in Nashville?

I'd love to explore the city and experience parts of Nashville that feel different from where I've lived before. I want to walk through the parks and natural areas nearby, hike a trail or two, and enjoy the peace that comes with being outside. Whether it's a tucked-away coffee shop or a quiet nature spot, I'm excited to see what I stumble upon.



VINSE



VINSE

GRADUATE STUDENT
MENTORS



GINNY AN

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – WEISS GROUP

Hometown: Mokpo, South Korea

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Incheon National University, South Korea –
Nano-Bioengineering

Graduate Major: Interdisciplinary Material Science

Email: huijin.an@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

Through this mentorship, I hope to improve my communication skills, support students in areas where they may struggle, and grow into a more thoughtful and effective mentor.

What are your ultimate career goals?

Become a faculty member who not only conducts impactful research but also mentors and inspires the next generation of scientist. I'm passionate about solving real-world problems through bio-related research, and I hope to create an inclusive academic environment where diverse ideas and talents can thrive.

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

Vanderbilt has resources & an environment for bio-related research. The IMS program I belong to requires rotations, which really helped choosing a lab.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Centennial Park is where can go out for a change of pace anytime. Broadway is a place to go and play when you want to relieve stress.



DR. DANIEL CHAVARRIA

POSTDOC MENTOR – LIPPMANN GROUP

Hometown: El Paso, Texas, USA / Ciudad Juarez, Chih, Mexico

Undergraduate Institution & Major: University of Texas at El Paso – Biological Sciences

Graduate Institution & Major: University of Texas at Austin – Biomedical Engineering

Email: daniel.chavarria@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

People are surprised to know that I have a twin brother, & we are the complete opposites.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

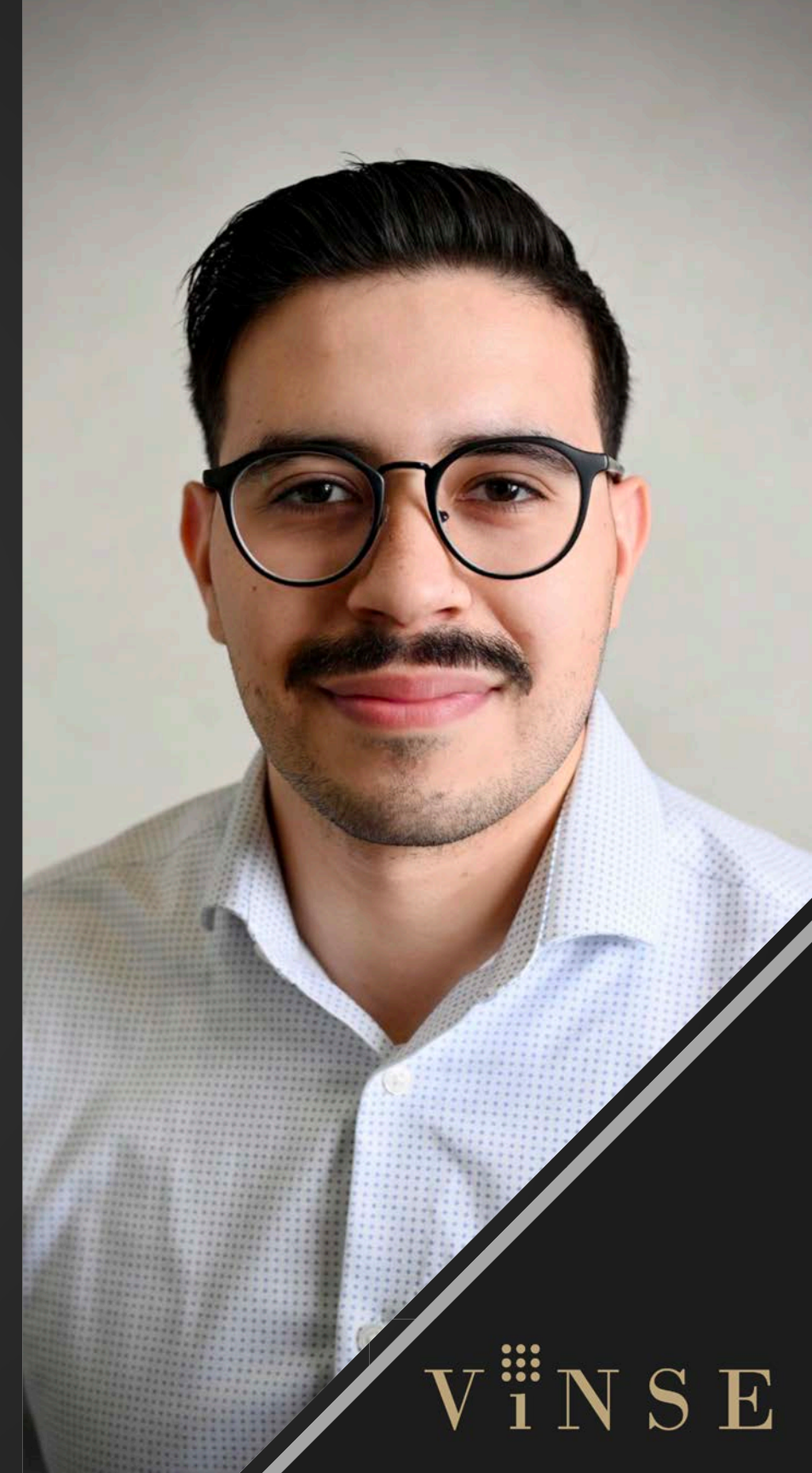
I hope to improve my mentoring skills as well as support young scientists in their early career development.

What are your ultimate career goals?

My ultimate career goal is to become a tenure track professor so I may continue mentoring and teaching the next generation of scientists and engineers.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Don't be afraid to ask questions about anything! We are here to answer all your questions and give you guidance in your future career.



PRAISE EROMOSELE

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – JENNINGS GROUP

Hometown: Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Kazan National Research Technological University, Russia – Chemical Engineering

Graduate Major: Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Email: praise.o.eromosele@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I hope to inspire my mentee to become the best version of themselves and pursue their research interests. I hope to improve my leadership and teamwork skills in the process.

What are your ultimate career goals?

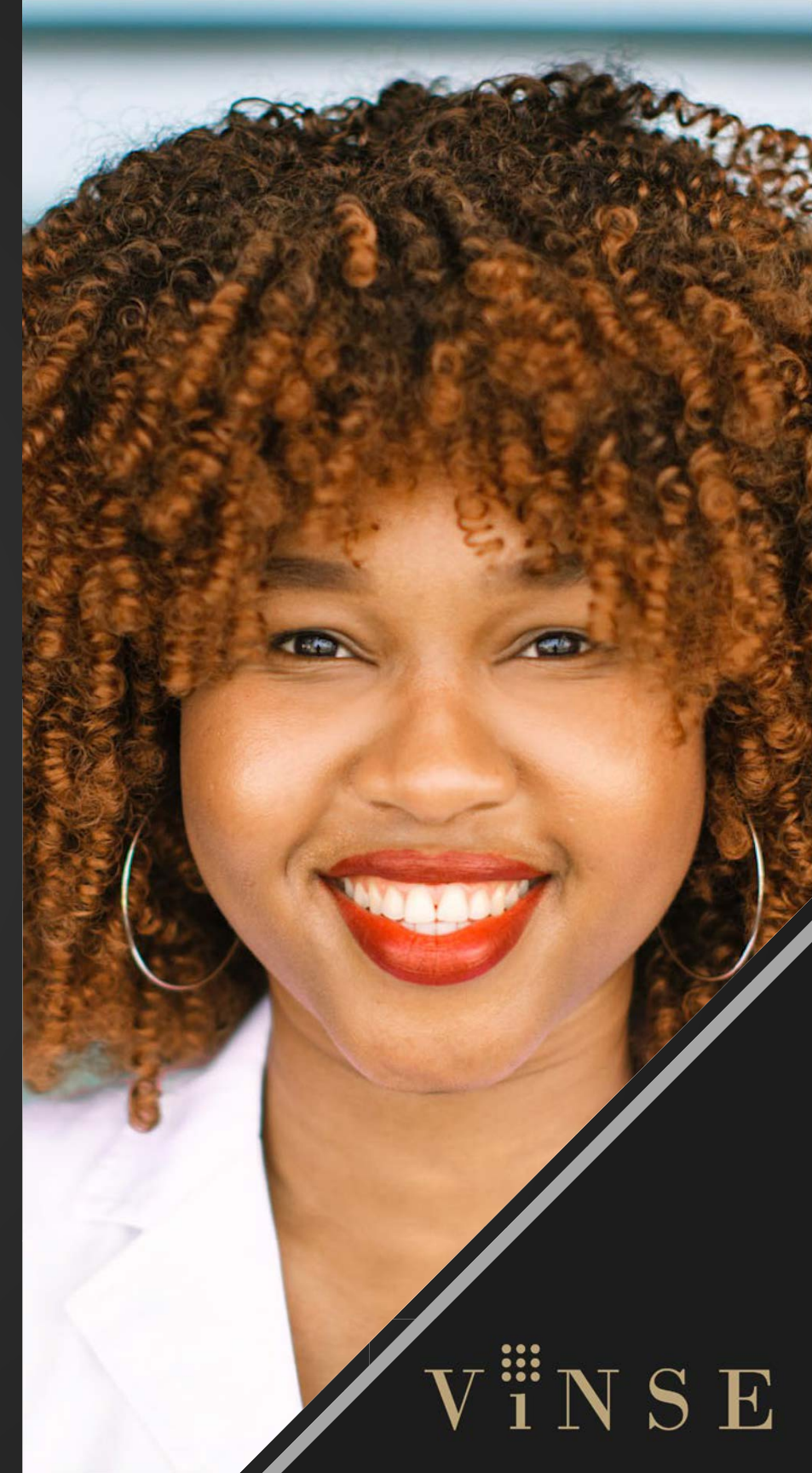
I aim to become a technical consultant or Research and Development team lead and eventually build my own chemical engineering consulting company, primarily serving clients with energy-related needs.

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

Vanderbilt is a world-class university with exceptional faculty and facilities, making it an ideal environment for conducting research.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

I love to take long walks.



ELIZABETH HAYS

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – MACDONALD GROUP

Hometown: Belleville, Illinois

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Murray State University – Biochemistry

Graduate Major: Interdisciplinary Materials Science

Email: elizabeth.mcgrew@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I hope to grow as a teacher and mentor. It's a real skill being able to lead another student in their research, and I would love to be able to grow in that area.

What are your ultimate career goals?

I would love to become a professor at a primarily undergraduate university one day. Going to a small university allowed me to really connect with my professors, who were able to spend a lot of time mentoring and teaching me. I would love to be that professor to students one day!

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

I chose Vanderbilt because of its interdisciplinary focus. Unlike other programs I was looking at, the Interdisciplinary Materials Science program was unique in the way that groups collaborated and communicated across disciplines. This environment has given me the confidence to talk to PI's and other graduate students in different disciplines, expanding the depth of my research.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

I like to try new restaurants and hang out with friends. There is always something to do here, whether it's going to see live music or hiking on a nice day!



YOUNGJI KIM

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – CALDWELL GROUP

Hometown: Seoul, South Korea

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Ewha Woman's University, South Korea – Chemistry

Graduate Major: Physical Chemistry

Email: youngji.kim@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I hope to connect with students, share my experiences navigating research and graduate school, and hopefully provide some encouragement and perspective. I also think I'll learn a lot from hearing their questions and ideas.

What are your ultimate career goals?

My ultimate goal is to continue growing as a researcher and to be in a position where I can collaborate with others, mentor students, and apply science to impactful challenges.

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

I am not a graduate student here, but I chose to come to Vanderbilt because of its strong research environment and the opportunity to work closely with leading researchers in my field. The collaborative atmosphere and access to cutting-edge facilities have made it a great place to continue growing professionally.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

I really enjoy visiting local coffee shops and exploring the live music scene - there's always something interesting going on in the city.



SHANNON MARTELLO

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – RAFAT GROUP

Hometown: Baltimore, Maryland

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Johns Hopkins University – Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Graduate Major: Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Email: shannon.e.martello@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I ran cross country and track as an undergraduate.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

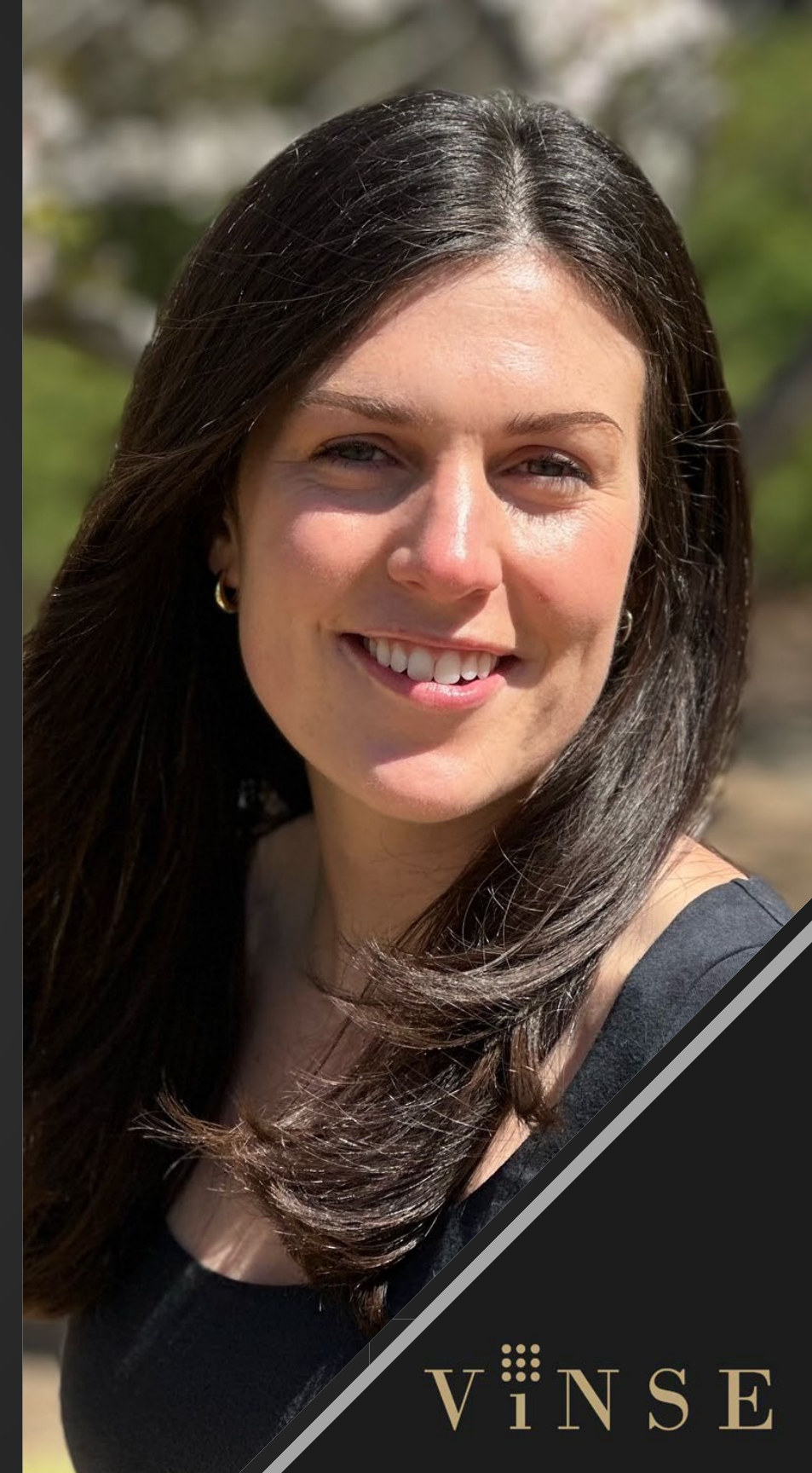
I hope to gain experience mentoring and training.

What are your ultimate career goals?

Research and Development scientist at a biotech company.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Be open to learning new concepts/techniques and don't stress if experiments do not work the first time!



JOJO PEARSON

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – BELLAN GROUP

Hometown: Los Angeles, California

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Case Western Reserve University – Neuroscience and Biochemistry

Graduate Major: Interdisciplinary Material Science

Email: johanna.pearson@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I hope to share the strategies I used to overcome challenges during the early years of my graduate studies to help students under my guidance navigate the transition from undergraduate to graduate student or professional. Through this, I aim to develop effective ways to communicate techniques, knowledge, and leadership as I take on a more senior role in my lab.

What are your ultimate career goals?

Work in Corporate Research and Development.

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

The IMS program and the welcoming community. Also, the mild winters and being part of a young and growing city.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

On Thursdays when the weather is nice, there is a farmers' market on the medical campus that I enjoy going to with my colleagues. It is a nice way to break up the week and spend some time out of the office with people whom I work with.



AVANELLE STOLTZ

GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR – DUVALL GROUP

Hometown: Leawood, Kansas

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Kansas State University – Biological Sys Engineering

Graduate Major: Biomedical Engineering

Email: avanelle.l.stoltz@vanderbilt.edu

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

As an undergrad, the Graduate students I met GREATLY influenced my outlook on what to expect, applications, interviews, & how to find the best fit. I would like to be that for someone else and be a mentor for more than just strictly the experiments.

What are your ultimate career goals?

I would like to run my own lab researching different drug delivery methods to improve care for various diseases in private industry R & D sector or working with the NIH.

Why did you select Vanderbilt for graduate school?

I loved Dr. Craig Duvall and his research, the graduate students' willingness to help, and I loved Nashville. Furthermore, the Vanderbilt BME professors made wonderful impressions on me when I visited for recruitment, and I knew they would all be supportive.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

I love hanging out in Centennial Park and trying the MANY foods spots around Nashville. My current fav spots are H&S bagels, the Finch, and Hawkers!





VINSE

**FACULTY MENTORS &
LEADERSHIP**



DR. LEON BELLAN

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Pasadena, California

Undergraduate Institution & Major: California Institute of Technology – Physics

Graduate Institution & Major: Cornell University – Applied and Engineering Physics

Email: leon.bellon@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I have a fairly extensive knowledge of Disney song lyrics (Gilbert & Sullivan as well). I enjoy building animatronic skeleton Halloween props.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

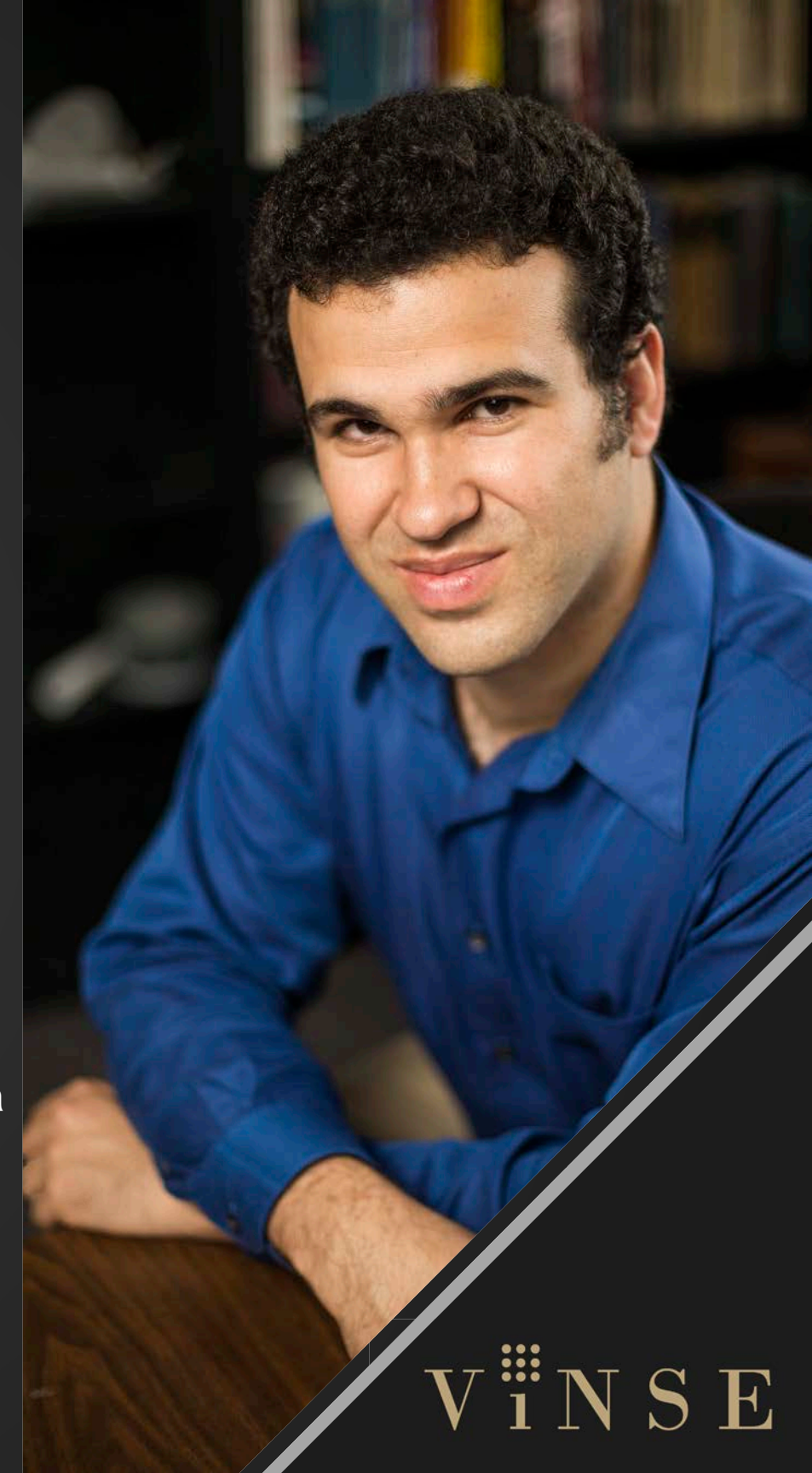
I really enjoy getting to know the next generation of STEM researchers and hope to impart the skills needed to make important scientific discoveries and technological advancements. I find it very rewarding to see students develop these troubleshooting skills themselves.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Going to see live music, exploring new restaurants, and enjoying green spaces. We have a great zoo here!

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Take advantage of all your lab (and Nashville!) have to offer while here. Get to know your lab partners, mentor, & other REU students. Remember you are doing groundbreaking research, almost nothing will work the first time, don't get frustrated, figure out what you can learn from failed experiments. Have fun & learn a lot!



DR. JOSH CALDWELL

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Attleboro, Massachusetts

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Virginia Tech – Chemistry (GOOOO HOKIES!!!!)

Graduate Institution & Major: University of Florida – Physical Chemistry

Email: josh.caldwell@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I completed two 1/2 ironman races. I also lived in Manchester, United Kingdom for a year.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I always enjoy teaching students and find the REU program especially engaging. Perhaps the thing I enjoy most is to see how fast the students pick up the extremely complicated scientific topics and how successful their projects are.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Love coaching my son's baseball team, getting outside for the exceptional hiking. However, my favorite summer activity is canoeing on the Harpeth!

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Give it your all and really focus on learning the fundamentals. What you learn in these programs can have a significant impact upon work you do later in life.



DR. CRAIG DUVALL

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Greenville, Kentucky

Undergraduate Institution & Major: University of Kentucky – Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

Graduate Institution & Major: Georgia Tech – Biomedical Engineering

Email: craig.duvall@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I spent a summer in college doing surveying for a civil engineering firm.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

Provide new opportunity to learn and grow skillset for promising young bioengineer; advance my lab's research mission.

What are your favorite activities?

Hiking, sports with my kids, gardening.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Be consistently present and ask lots of questions; try to get exposure to other projects in the lab outside what you are working on.



DR. KANE JENNINGS

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Centre, Alabama

Undergraduate Institution & Major: Auburn University – Chemical Engineering

Graduate Institution & Major: MIT – Chemical Engineering

Email: kane.g.jennings@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I was a twice state champion in tennis (doubles) a long, long time ago. I actually played on my college team for two years before chemical engineering began to demand my full attention.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I hope to gain the satisfaction of introducing a bright young scholar to thrills and challenges of scientific research and discovery.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Playing tennis, walks with my daughter and dog, streaming an engrossing TV series with my wife, throwing frisbees for the pooch, and watching college sports.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Aim to learn something every day, and at the end of each day, write down all that you learned. Review that list at the end of the summer and how the nature of the concepts you learned changed over the experience.



JANELL LEES

VINSE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Hometown: St. Louis, Missouri

Email: janell.lees@vanderbilt.edu

What's something that people would be surprised to know about you?

I am doing my 6th Nashville Rock & Roll half marathon in April.

What are your favorite activities?

My husband and I enjoy road trips with our spoiled dog, Coco.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Paddleboarding on Percy Priest Lake or the Harpeth River.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Congratulations on taking this exciting step in your academic journey! Research is all about discovery, so don't be afraid to ask questions.



DR. ETHAN LIPPMANN

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Naperville, Illinois

Undergraduate Institution & Major: University of Illinois – Chemical Engineering

Graduate Institution & Major: University of Wisconsin – Chemical Engineering

Email: ethan.s.lippmann@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

My favorite sport is volleyball.

What are your favorite activities?

My favorite activities are reading in quiet places, lifting weights in my garage, and chasing my kids around with my wife.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Going to brunch – the restaurants in Germantown are the best.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Be willing to learn anything and everything.



DR. JANET MACDONALD

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Dorset, Ontario, Canada

Undergraduate Institution & Major: McGill University – Chemistry

Graduate Institution & Major: University of Alberta – Chemistry

Email: janet.macdonald@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I lived in Jerusalem for two years.

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

Helping someone blossom as a scientist is very rewarding.

What are your favorite activities?

Hiking, Canoeing, and taking care of my backyard chickens.

What are your favorite things about Nashville?

My favorite place in Nashville is Radnor Lake State Park.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Don't be afraid to ask for guidance.



DR. MARJAN RAFAT

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Campbell, California

Undergraduate Institution & Major: MIT – Chemical Engineering

Graduate Institution & Major: Harvard University – Engineering Sciences

Email: marjan.rafat@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I play multiple musical instruments, including the piano, guitar, and santur (traditional Iranian instrument).

What do you hope to gain from being a REU mentor?

I interacted with and mentored many REU students during graduate school, and I'm excited to continue with the program as a faculty mentor.

What are your favorite activities?

Eating, baking (e.g. cupcakes, cakes, pies for pi day!), playing badminton.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Learn as much as you can. This is an important time to gain important skills in research but also to determine your interests moving forward. Try to build relationships not only with your immediate mentors but also with others in the lab and the community—these connections can help you develop lifelong mentors and friends.



SARAH ROSS

VINSE SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER

Hometown: Tucson, Arizona

Email: sarah.m.ross@vanderbilt.edu

What's something that people would be surprised to know about you?

I am an introvert and rather shy.

What are your favorite activities?

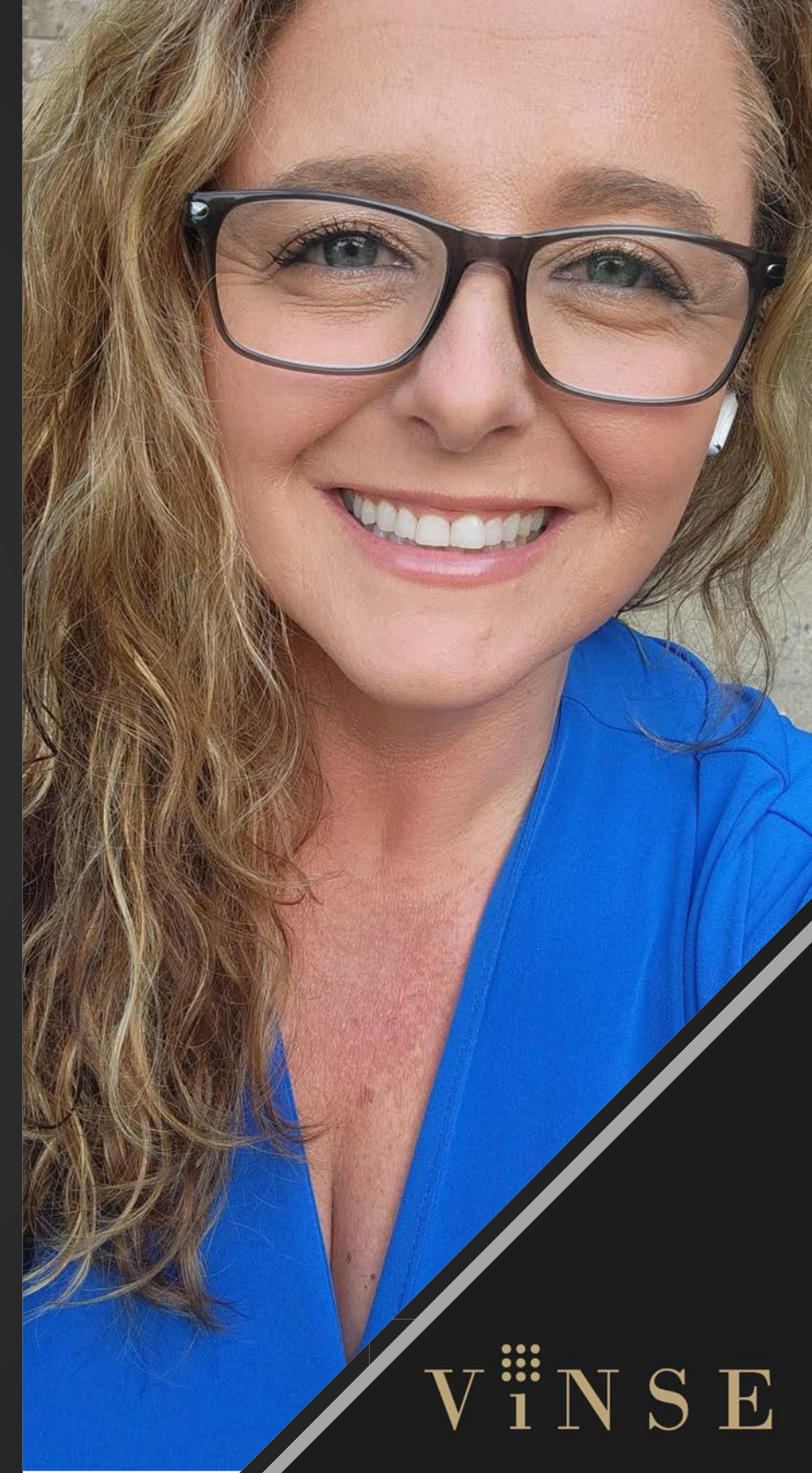
I love paddleboarding, hiking, canoeing, swimming, traveling, and playing cards. I recently adopted a new pup, Oh'Klee, which you likely meet this summer.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Food, music, sports and the parks/greenways. There is so much to explore.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Many of your student mentors and faculty advisors were once REU students and can relate to your fears, excitement and anxiety. Take advantage of every opportunity to interact with the VINSE community, especially in the beginning - both socially and during professional development. You will find the professional connections you make over the summer to be invaluable later.



DR. BENJAMIN SCHMIDT

CLEANROOM MANAGER

Hometown: Cary, North Carolina

Undergraduate Institution & Major: NC State University – Chemical Engineering

Graduate Institution & Major: Vanderbilt University – Chemical Engineering

Email: ben.schmidt@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I've biked across the state of Iowa twice and enjoy ice fishing!

What do you hope to gain from managing the Tech Crew team?

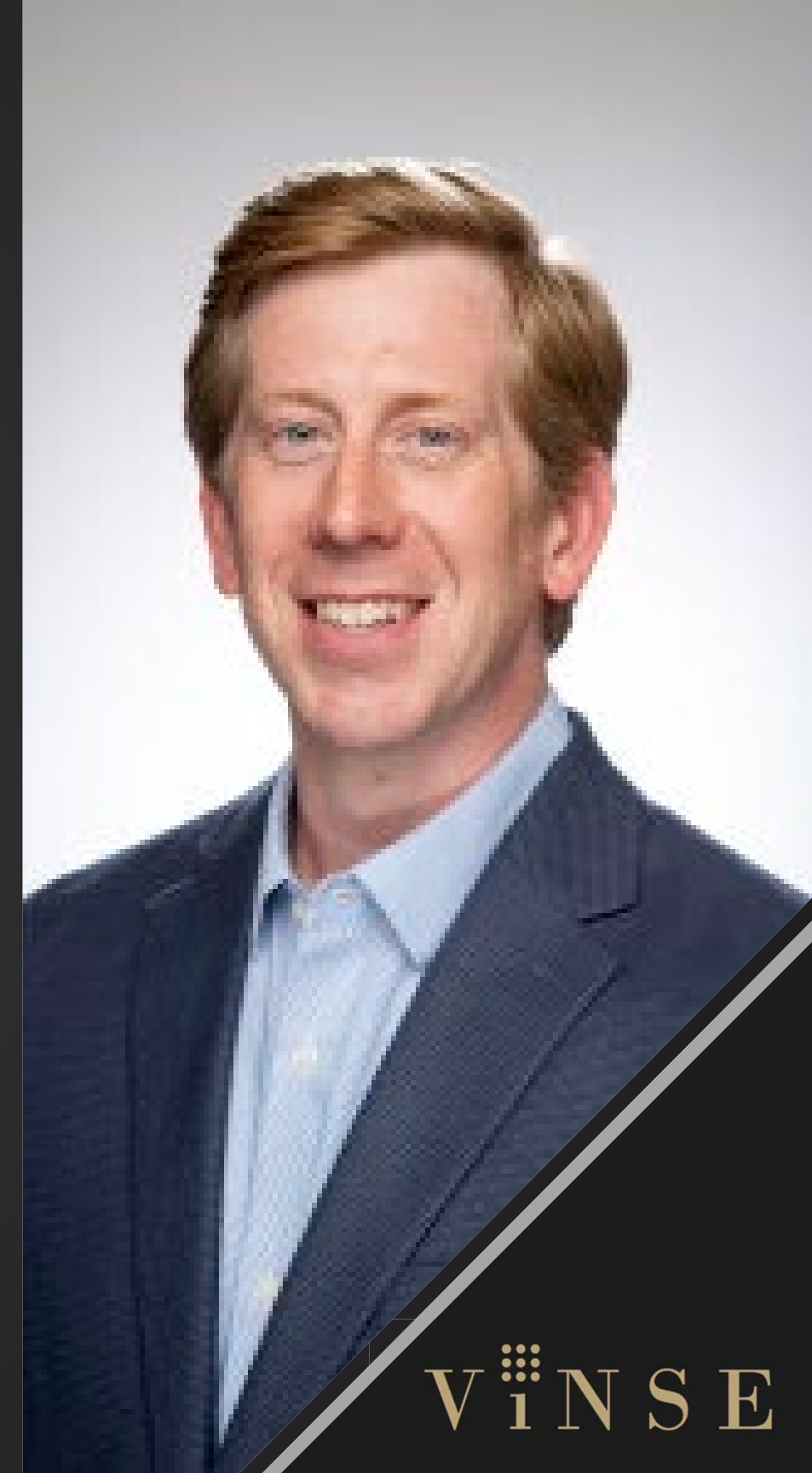
I look forward to working with the new students and see how their backgrounds and goals overlap with the tools and techniques we use in the cleanroom.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

I enjoy checking out live music options, finding the best hot chicken, enjoying time outdoors with my family.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Ask lots of questions. Expect to feel overwhelmed early on, but by the end of the summer, you'll be amazed how much you've learned.



DR. SHARON WEISS

FACULTY MENTOR

Hometown: Rochester, New York

Undergraduate Institution & Major: University of Rochester – Optics

Graduate Institution & Major: University of Rochester – Optics

Email: sharon.weiss@vanderbilt.edu

What would people be surprised to know about you?

I was recruited to college to play soccer.

What are your favorite activities?

Reading, gardening, taking walks, spending time with family.

What are your favorite things to do in Nashville?

Walking/hiking in parks, concerts at Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

What advice would you give to a summer undergraduate research student?

Take advantage of this opportunity to learn new skills and see what it is like to do research. Don't worry if everything does not work as expected the first time. If you have questions, just ask. Have fun!

