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### Dreaming up your dream job

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University Park,  
April  
15,  
2022

# Dreaming up your dream job

Juan Gilbert speaks at GSU



“If you had your Ph.D. today (and) you could work anywhere you wanted to work, do anything you want to do, where would you work and what would you do?”

Speaking to an intimate audience at [Governors State University \(GSU\)](#), Gilbert — a leading scholar whose program has produced more Black Ph.D.’s in computer science than any other school in the nation—admitted he poses the same query of every prospective student he meets.

“I ask that question repeatedly all the way through the program because it could change. My goal is to train you so you have a set of credentials that makes you attractive for the job of your dreams,” Gilbert said.

Realizing dreams was at the core of Gilbert’s presentation, the third and final one in GSU’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Distinguished Speaker series designed to advance GSU’s diversity and equity initiatives.

The series kicked off in January with diversity scholar [Damon Williams](#) followed by [Author Mikki Kendall](#) in March.

Gilbert is the Andrew Banks Family Preeminence Endowed Professor and chair of the Computer & Information Science & Engineering Department at the University of Florida. He also leads the Human-Experience Research Lab, where his students work on real-world problems and have produced technology to combat police brutality during routine traffic stops and voting irregularities.

In 2016, his students produced the Brain Computer Interface (BCI) which allowed “pilots” to power drones with their thoughts. His work has been praised by peers and presidents.

Former President Obama recognized Gilbert for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring at University of Florida, Clemson and Auburn universities.

At Governors State, Gilbert shared seven brilliantly simple strategies to overcome barriers facing students who are underrepresented in STEM.

One barrier is a negative stereotype associated with STEM professions. To counter the barrier, Gilbert encouraged students to make their work relevant to things that they care about. “There are plenty of problems that need your expertise and your passion. You could be a scientist and change the world,” he has told students.

Another barrier is the need for many underrepresented students to give back to their communities. The most obvious pathway most see is education and health care. Gilbert offered practical science-based ways to help such as the Virtual Traffic Stop inspired by students upset after seeing an African American man on the news because he was killed by police during a traffic stop.

The program allows police to video chat with a motorist during a traffic stop and allows a third party (i.e. parent, guardian, etc.) to join the conversation. Designed to eliminate face-to-face interaction with police officers and opportunities for violent interactions. The Virtual Traffic Stop is already being used at some police departments in the United States.

“We build innovative solutions to real world problems by integrating people, technology, policy, (and) culture. That’s who we are.”

In his closing, Gilbert discussed how educational institutions could diversify their programs. This took him back to the day when one of his professors at the Miami University encouraged him to become a professor. “One conversation changed the trajectory of my life,” he said. “And as a result, changed the lives of 100’s of others.”

“Grow your own,” he went on to say. “You have students here. You know who’s talented. You know who has potential. Tap them on the shoulder and say ‘look, you know what you could do? *Tell them*. Don’t assume because they are smart that they know. Identify talent or promise. Encourage it. Show them the pipeline.”

To view Dr. Gilbert’s entire keynote address, please click [here](#).