

A Change of Plans

A computer science major is the first Brazilian student to graduate with a bachelor's degree from Kent State's American Academy.

BY APRIL MCCLELLAN-COPELAND

As a student in mechatronics at a Brazilian university, Alvacir Wesley Kalatai Alberti, AS '20, BS '22, had never considered studying abroad until he read a roadside billboard in 2018 advertising Kent State's new American Academy program. However, the prospect of studying in the United States intrigued him enough to call the Brazilian office and find out more.

Until then, studying abroad had “felt so out of reach and so difficult that I really never had given it any thought,” says 25-year-old Kalatai Alberti, who is from Imbituva, a municipality in the state of Paraná in southern Brazil. But the American Academy's pathway to Kent State made a study abroad program seem possible—and, although he was a good student, he wasn't sure he wanted to continue in engineering.

As long as he felt he could improve himself through the program, his parents supported him fully, seeing it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He became one of the first 15 students to enroll in the American Academy, which launched in July 2018.

SUCCESS DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

But the road to Kalatai Alberti's study abroad program didn't go exactly as planned. By 2020, when he was able to attend Kent State in person, the pandemic had shuttered college campuses across the United States. He decided to major in computer science and took all his courses online for a year before arriving at the Kent Campus in August 2021.

Once there, Kalatai Alberti fell in love with the campus. He made friends with students from countries around the world, including Nigeria, China, Italy, Lebanon and India. An avid rock climber, he scaled the Warren Student Recreation and Wellness Center's rock-climbing wall, connected with other outdoor enthusiasts and explored the hiking trails of Northeast Ohio.



He saw snow for the first time, and he and his friends had snowball fights on campus. And speaking Portuguese with his two Brazilian roommates in their off-campus apartment kept him feeling connected to his home country.

Kalatai Alberti had planned to graduate at the end of 2022 until he learned of an opportunity to do a master's degree program in computer software engineering at the Polytechnic University of Madrid, beginning in fall 2022. His advisors at Kent State supported his plans, explaining that if he focused his concentration he could graduate earlier.

So, in May 2022, Kalatai Alberti became the first student to graduate from the American Academy with a four-year degree, earning a bachelor's in computer science, with a concentration in robotics and embedded systems.

“I did a lot of the program remotely,” Kalatai Alberti says, “but being at Kent State and talking to people—and being able to interact and do stuff together—that's a whole different thing. I've met such amazing people.” ⚡

“I did a lot of the program remotely, but being at Kent State is a whole different thing. I've met such amazing people.”