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Author: Tamasha Khanyi



Warren Naidoo

SCIENTIST

PhD for maths boffin

TAMASHA KHANYI
tamasha.khanyi@ini.co.za

WARREN Naidoo, 27, is graduating with a PhD in maths this week.

The UKZN student said his PhD research was based on cosmology.

He said: "Here we are interested in the evolution of the universe as a whole. What is it made up of? Where did it come from? What will happen to it in the future?"

"Specifically, we studied how we can use future astronomical surveys of the universe to place constraints on the nature of the universe.

"Particularly, we focused on using neutral hydrogen surveys to understand the universe.

"I believe that understanding the universe we live in is one of the most fundamental questions about the nature of our existence.

"It has intrigued our species since the dawn of civilisation and our curious nature will always drive us to understand the universe as best we can."

Naidoo also completed his undergraduate, Honours and Master's degrees at UKZN.

"I completed my undergraduate degree (in applied maths and physics) at UKZN in 2016, which I passed *cum laude*."

He was then awarded the GI Bateman Memorial Prize for the best maths student in UKZN.

"I then completed my Honours degree *summa cum laude* in applied maths at UKZN in 2017."

He was awarded the Hanno Rund Award for the best UKZN Honours maths student.

"I completed my Master's degree *summa cum laude* in applied maths (focused on applications to cosmology) in 2019 at UKZN."

Naidoo lives in Chatsworth with his parents.

He matriculated in 2013 from Asoka Secondary School in Chatsworth.

He said he knew he wanted to be a scientist from a very young age.

"I always had a deep fascination with all things science and loved watching science documentaries and learning new things about the world around us."

He said one of the main obstacles during his PhD was the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I had to complete most of my research from home and adapt to the new life, which included meeting collaborators over Zoom."

Naidoo said being oneself was the most important thing to finding success. "Every person is different and once you understand yourself you can then find the best balance to perform at your best.

"A balance between working hard and having a fresh mind and body is essential."

In his spare time, he enjoys playing his guitar and attending band practice sessions or jam sessions.

"I also like doing sketch art, solving the Rubik's cube and trying to always improve my speed in completing this puzzle as well as watching YouTube a lot, particularly comedy, music or documentary-style videos.

Naidoo said the highlight of his academic career at UKZN was being able to achieve his life-long dream and study astrophysics/maths.

"Growing up, I was quite afraid that such a career choice was not possible, so I was extremely delighted to find out that UKZN offered this course and provided an excellent centre to learn and grow in this field."

Naidoo said he was awarded the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory post-doctoral Fellowship which he would be undertaking at UKZN.

"This is a three-year research position.

"Afterwards, there are numerous avenues I can take, including many in South Africa and overseas.

"Currently, I feel like I still want to give back to the community, school and people who helped me get this far in life.

"They say the sky's the limit, but in our field the sky is only the starting point," he said.

