Dedan Kimathi University of Technology
Better Life Through Technology
+254612050000
vc@dkut.ac.ke

"WHAT DeKUT INFUSED IN ME OVER THE YEARS FAR OUTWEIGHS ANY INFLUENCE I COULD HAVE GOTTEN ELSEWHERE".

DeKUT Spotlight

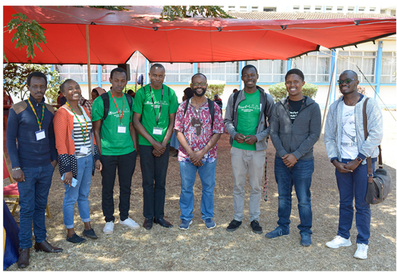
August 2020 Edition

Meet Chris Barsolai – A Technical Trainer for Data Science at Moringa School

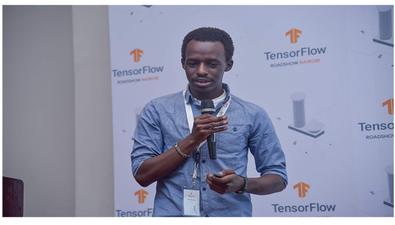


"Choosing the University one wants to go to is an important decision. It ultimately sets the pace for the launch of one's career and the success that follows. For the longest time, I'd always been fascinated by the communication technologies that power our connected life, and the vast array of tools and possibilities that were in the telecommunication space, thus I knew I definitely wanted to study engineering. As I was scoping possible universities to join and pursue that line of interest after high school, I stumbled upon Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT). In all honesty, I had very limited knowledge of the university before then but I had a positive conviction about it and again, it offered my dream course as part of her I therefore decided to take a dive and see how it would turn out and sure enough, it paid off. Once I joined DeKUT, I could immediately tell that studying there would be a positive life changing experience. A bonus was, it had a breathtaking view of Mt. Kenya" – Chris Barsolai.

It is our students that give life to DeKUT and Barsolai is not an exception. He was one of those students you could tell is aiming at living a very purposeful life by honing and transferring skills that can be harnessed to create solutions and solve problems. During his period of study, he and his friends/classmates; among them Marvin Ngesa, Barclay Koin and Billy Rotich became the 1st students to take full advantage of the University's Innovation and Incubation Hub (DeHUB) and ventured into actualizing a number of projects with the aim of empowering the society and raising a community of developers in the University. "We wanted to stir up a revolution; one that would change the University's tech community for the better and showcase DeKUT as a Premier Technological University in the country and beyond" he reiterates. Barsolai was successful in his numerous involvements and upon graduating with a Bachelor's in Telecommunication and Information Communication in 2018, he was immediately selected to attend the Deep Learning Indaba 2018 - an annual gathering of African Artificial Intelligence (AI) students, researchers and entrepreneurs that aims to strengthen African machine learning and provide a space to learn and share on machine learning and artificial intelligence, and our African contributions to this scientific endeavor. Barsolai got to present his poster project at Stellenbosch University and engage in technical sessions spanning a full week; he says that this ultimately helped strengthen and shape his capabilities & interest in the AI field. Within the same year, Barsolai actualized a number of data science and machine learning projects while working collaboratively in teams. As an Intel AI Ambassador, he got to travel to different parts of Kenya and the wider East Africa region facilitating hands-on training on frameworks and conducting workshops on machine learning. In 2019, he was officially engaged by Andela as a program coordinator to help steer the Google Africa Developer Scholarship program. Together with a continent-wide team, they coordinated in offering 30,000 scholarships to developers across Africa on Android, Web and Cloud technologies. Within the same year, Barsolai was part of the leadership team that organized the Deep Learning Indaba 2019 which was held in Nairobi, Kenya with over 750 participants from all over the world.



Barsolai is currently working as a technical trainer for data science at Moringa School where he transitioned to in early 2020. Moringa School is a multi-disciplinary coding school committed to closing the skills gap in Africa's job market by offering high-potential students the necessary technical and professional training. Barsolai is charged with delivering a highly technical curriculum to the developers and equipping them with world class skills by engaging in the content and data science projects; a role he says is his passion as a tech educator as he focuses on empowering talent to enable Africa to be a key player in the fourth industrial revolution."I'm a strong believer in Africa's potential, and how we can harness talent across the continent to help solve our daily civic challenges. My mantra is that 'Innovation is what matters'. In essence, whatever we learn each day is not actualized potential until we create products and services that stretch to change the nature of our daily lives for the better. I also believe in the power of community; that with the power of collective action, social networks and crowdsourcing, individual actions are amplified to have extraordinary influence on the larger systems that surround us. It starts at the smallest scale - with one person determined to make something happen - and can grow like wildfire to the extent our imaginations deem possible" – expresses Barsolai who is also an organizer for two tech communities: Nairobi AI and TensorFlow Nairobi.



"DeKUT is a university that prides itself in excellence within all scopes. The University is hinged on a strong culture of academic rigor, and thus I was able to get the best education in its highest quality. Without a doubt, DeKUT was a huge player in the many successes that I've experienced along the way. Through the University's holistic and practical approach to studies and development, I was empowered to apply a 'hands on' approach to developing the world around me. This prepared me for the job market in more ways than one hence my transition was seamless and over the years, it has become even more evident how DeKUT enabled me to channel my skills and ingenuity into industry and research" – says Barsolai adding that Kenyan technological and industrial scene is poised for even greater and more exciting changes ahead and that he was lucky to have studied in an institution that has always been at the forefront in ensuring that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to bridge this gap.



Asked about his achievements so far, Barsolai picked out two: When he was selected to attend the O'Reilly TensorFlow World Conference that was held in California, USA in 2019 and being part of the team driving the Google Africa Developer Scholarship. At the Tensorflow conference, Barsolai got a chance to represent Kenya on the global stage by being a speaker at a talk session called Ignite. On the Google Africa Developer Scholarship,he says that he is amazed by the impact the program is having across the continent. Barsolai's interest lies in an amalgamation of machine learning and telecommunication engineering, with hints of cloud engineering. He says that his ultimate goal is to bring the power of analytics to every facet of technology. "In the long run, I look to combine data science and machine learning in telecommunications engineering to help make sense of the vast amounts of data to improve services" – says Barsolai who is making every necessary effort towards this end.

Mahatma Gandhi said that in a gentle way, one can shake the world. In Barsolai, we see a relentless person shaking the world in his own gentle ways a step at a time and as his alma mater, we salute him!