

KAVYA

MENDU

PH.D. CANDIDATE | CIVIL &
ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
mechanics, materials, & structures



1. Where are you from? From a coastal city named Visakhapatnam in India

2. Where did you get your undergrad degree from and what was your major? Do you have a MS? B.Tech in Civil Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Warangal, India; M.S. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (majoring in Structural Engineering)

3. What attracted you to engineering? As far back as I can remember, I really enjoyed science and math and had a great time learning and building things and the ability to build and create something tangible got me interested in Engineering from my middle school. This interest only grew with time!

4. What attracted you to pursue a Ph.D. in your specialty area? I've done a research internship at Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, India during my undergrad and worked on a very dynamic interdisciplinary research work which used image analysis techniques to understand the particle size gradations in natural materials. That experience really put me in the path for conducting interdisciplinary research and got me to pursue Masters and PhD half way across the world.

5. How do you explain your thesis research to a non-scientist? With concrete being one of the most ubiquitously used man-made materials on earth, it is important to make it more sustainable and efficient. One of the ways to achieve it is to modify at a very fine scale. I get to introduce nanotechnology in cement materials to achieve this.

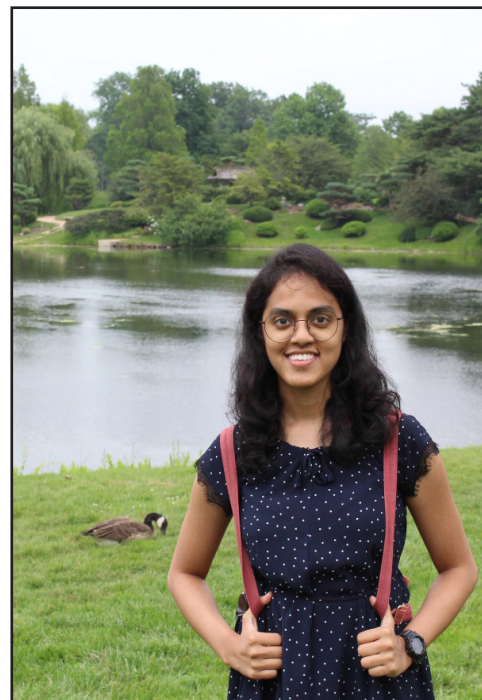
6. What attracted you to NU? Northwestern University has a uniquely collaborative approach to research and its strong Materials and Mechanics program for students coming in with a Structural Engineering background made it a unique and attractive choice. The university's location in Evanston, close enough to the Chicago downtown and yet a little far from the hustle makes it a vibrant and peaceful environment to live.

7. What has been the highlight of your time at NU and CEE? An opportunity to work under Professors Corr, Shah and Cusatis who are some of the best names in the field and a collaborative and supportive lab environment. Also working as a team lead and interacting with several students, researchers and industry folks during the Northwestern NASA habitat challenge was a very unique and special experience.

8. What has been the most challenging aspect of your graduate school experience? I'd say working on experiments during the pandemic

9. Can you tell us about your experience being mentored or mentoring others? Having enthusiastic undergraduate students who want to work in the lab gave me an opportunity to mentor them and work on aspects like brainstorming, planning and implementation of a project. Teaching assistantship over the last few years also facilitated interactions with several students and mentorship. As a mentee, besides my advisors I've received advice from Northwestern's career advancement professionals as well.

10. What are your interests or hobbies outside of your research? I'm interested in leadership and mentorship roles and worked as a President for a professional club on campus. I enjoy spending time with my colleagues (who are my friends too :D) and discuss a lot about food in general. I do enjoy reading quite a few non-fiction books with my most recent one being "My life in Full" by Indra K. Nooyi.



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