

# Two degrees in one year: Natasha Afranie focuses on a career in neurotherapy

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Natasha Afranie will earn her associate's degree this May – followed by her bachelor's degree in the fall.

Originally from Ghana in West Africa, Afranie is enrolled both at SUNY Broome and Binghamton University. Her quest: to aid people with mental disorders and brain diseases through neurotherapy.

“It means that I could help people with mental disorders. With a Ph.D. in neuroscience, you can work with patients,” she explained. “You learn about the brain and how different parts of the brain work.”



Her interest in the brain was sparked after she arrived in this country in December 2009, and began working as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) for patients with Alzheimer's and dementia. She began to wonder about the processes behind the disorders. How could the brain – the body's ultimate control center – just “give up one day”?

To get those answers, she looked into neuroscience, as well as nursing as a possible career option.

While she has a degree in business accounting from Meridian University in Ghana, she began her American education in January 2011, and finished an Associate of Science degree in chemistry at Bronx Community College. She then transferred to BU as a major in integrative neuroscience.

In the fall of 2014, she enrolled at SUNY Broome to take classes she needed – chemistry, history, English. Her advisor then told her that she could earn another degree with the credits she had.

An individual studies major with a focus in science, she has since taken courses in abnormal psychology, cultural anthropology and biology, all of which are applicable to her future path.

“It pertains to what I want to do career-wise,” she said.

Becoming a Hornet also presented Afranie with another set of opportunities: internships. She is currently an intern for the college’s International Education office, the American Civic Association and at nearby United Methodist Homes, where she works as a CNA.

“I felt it was a stronger community here than the experience I had at Binghamton. People seemed more connected to each other,” she said of SUNY Broome, adding that professors were eager to interact with and assist students. The smaller class sizes help too, she noted. “I feel I am doing better here and being more productive.”

Along the way, she has come to love the Binghamton area, which she finds welcoming and family-oriented.

“There are opportunities out here if you seek them correctly,” she said.

Natasha is also working on making that community more accessible to immigrants such as herself. As part of Binghamton University’s Community Engagement Program, she and three other students worked on a [guide for immigrants in Broome County](#), which offers newcomers help in navigating amenities, services and more. She and other students helped translate the guide into Spanish, Korean and French to make it more accessible to different communities.

“Adapting to change and new things is really hard. We created it to make it easy to move around,” she said. “Moving into an area where you know nobody can be frustrating.”

Looking ahead, she’ll spend the summer finishing the senior-level seminars at Binghamton University that she needs to complete her degree. She’s investigating Ph.D. programs in her field, and has applied to work in the office of a neurotherapist who just relocated to this area from Buffalo.

Going into graduation, she feels a heady mix of happiness and sadness as she leaves the college she has come to love.

“It has opened a lot of doors for me,” she said of her SUNY Broome experience. “This is just the beginning.”

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