

Carissa Bleker Receives PhD

Carissa Bleker successfully defended her doctoral dissertation on May 5th, 2020. Titled “Data-Driven Analytics for High-Throughput Biological Applications,” her work focused on systematic techniques for thresholding biological data, and the application of data science principles to basic problems of brain network analysis and prokaryotic metabolism. The approach she took throughout was to develop general-purpose methods that are data-driven and without bias. Her work demonstrates how algorithmic development can be applied to amplify human understanding and move it well beyond the scope of current knowledge. Her doctoral committee consisted of Dr. Michael A. Langston (advisor and committee chair), Dr. Nina Fefferman, Dr. Audris Mockus and Dr. Russell Zaretzki.



A native of South Africa, Carissa began striving toward her PhD as a Bredesen Center scholar in 2015. During her career at the University of Tennessee she worked as a graduate research assistant and collaborated with a variety of research scientists, most notably Dr. David Ussery at the University of Arkansas School for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, Arkansas, and with Dr. Roozbeh Rezaie at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis.

Carissa will join the Department of Biotechnology and Systems Biology at the National Institute of Biology in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as a post-doctoral fellow under the supervision of Dr. Kristina Gruden. She will be sorely missed. She brought new data science tools to our lab and has been a constant source of alacrity, inspiration and good humor. Nevertheless, we are delighted to see her join the workforce and wish her every well-deserved success!