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Leiser '16 to Receive Google SVA Scholarship

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University student and U.S. Army veteran Timothy Leiser '16 is one of only eight students nationwide to be awarded a Google SVA Scholarships. The $10,000 scholarship sponsored by Google and Student Veterans of America (SVA) is awarded to student veterans pursuing a degree in computer science. The honor includes an invitation to attend Google's Summer Scholar's Retreat in June.

Google and the nonprofit SVA created the scholarship in 2012 to support the SVA's mission of providing veterans with the resources, support and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and throughout their careers. A computer science and sociology double major at Illinois Wesleyan, Leiser will use his scholarship to attend graduate school next year to pursue an MBA.

Timothy Leiser '16 won a Google SVA scholarship, which he'll use to attend graduate school next year.

A native of Mundelein, Ill., Leiser said he was in the last days of sixth grade when Deep Blue, IBM's chess-playing computer, squared off against then-world champion Garry Kasparov. Viewing the match on TV with his father, Leiser watched the computer defeat Kasparov. "From that point on, nothing interested me more than computers," Leiser said. "Other kids my age went to summer camp, but I went to technology camp."

Leiser first enrolled at Augustana College in 2007, but financial hardship caused him to withdraw. He then enlisted in the U.S. Army and eventually served two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. "Though my career was much different from my dream of being a software developer for Microsoft or Square Enix, I never once forgot about it," he said. Discharged from the U.S. Army in 2013, Leiser enrolled at Illinois Wesleyan on the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. He has thrived at the University, working as a resident advisor where he developed programs based on his residents' interests, backgrounds and academic majors. He's also worked part time on campus as a technology coordinator and volunteered to design a website for the Action Research Center.

"My dream of becoming a software programmer for a 'Triple A' game designer has not vanished, but it's evolved," he said. "Utilizing both of my majors, I will be able to develop software that will be beneficial to almost any person in the world."