

Jackson McCaslin

12th Grade

Vanguard Academy-Broken Arrow High School

Oklahoma

What Drives Me?

What drives me is the idea that I can use my interests in technology to make a real difference in people's lives. I have always been drawn to problem solving and innovation, which is one of the reasons I chose to attend a STEM based high school with a project based learning environment. Through this experience, I have learned how to work in teams, meet deadlines, present ideas, and create meaningful projects that solve real world problems. It made me realize that I do not just enjoy technology, I want to use it in a purposeful way.

My motivation has also been shaped by personal challenges. Over the past few years, my family has faced the emotional and financial stress of my mother's breast cancer diagnosis. Balancing school, responsibilities at home, and a part time job during that time was not easy, but it taught me resilience, time management, and the importance of staying focused even when life feels overwhelming. That experience gave me a stronger sense of maturity and determination, and it pushed me to keep working toward my future no matter the obstacles.

Another thing that truly drives me is working with elementary age students in my community through STEM based activities. I specifically design hands on STEM lessons and collaborate with teachers in my district based on the needs of their classrooms. By working with them, I am able to create activities that align with what their students are learning and then come into the classroom to lead those hands on experiences. Whether it is problem solving challenges, simple engineering projects, or interactive technology based activities, my goal is to make STEM fun, engaging, and accessible. I love seeing students get excited when they realize they can build, create, and think critically on their own. Giving younger students the chance to experience hands on learning helps them discover their curiosity, confidence, and excitement about technology in a safe and positive way.

I plan to major in computer science and cybersecurity at The University of Tulsa, and hopefully work in a national security role one day. Cyber threats and online safety are major issues today, especially for young people, and I want to be part of the solution. I am driven by the goal of creating safer digital spaces and helping protect people from online harm.

Overall, what drives me is a combination of perseverance, curiosity, and a genuine desire to help others. I am passionate about higher education because it will give me the knowledge and skills to turn my interests into a career that makes a meaningful impact. I want to keep learning, growing, and using my abilities to solve problems, protect others, and give back to my community.