



# **SIUE's Tolava Earns National Concrete Association Scholarship**

by Kalli Collins

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EDWARDSVILLE – Consistency, determination and striving to achieve are some of the attributes that make one a serial winner. Such is the story of Cristian Rodrigo Tolava Torrico, a second-year graduate student in the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Engineering (SOE) Department of Civil Engineering.



Tolava has been awarded the American Concrete Institute (ACI) Foundation Scholarship's W. Gene Corley Memorial Scholarship. Named after a recognized industry leader, the scholarship is awarded to graduate students with an interest in forensic engineering and the behavior and design of concrete structures.

"This recognition became an extraordinary component of my life and keeps me moving forward," said Torrico. "I certainly have more to accomplish and more to learn."

For someone whose long-term aspiration is to set up a structural consulting company and tutor rising engineers, Tolava believes the scholarship, with other internship and lab experiences, is a boost. Most importantly, he enjoys the opportunity to develop research that comes with the privilege of establishing connections with different companies and collaborating with department colleagues.

Tolava's current research involves investigating the use of multiple dosages of a high-performance concrete mix strengthened with carbon and steel fibers in different gradations of lengths and quantities.

He is grateful for the peers, faculty and colleagues who are supportive of his aspirations, most especially acknowledging SIUE's state-of-the-art facilities that are pivotal in carrying out groundbreaking research.

"I loved using all the equipment for testing the concrete beams and cylinders," shared Tolava. "I still have some equipment that I would like to learn, for instance the Wind Tunnel machine."

Owing to his hard work and avid interest in research, Tolava has previously won several scholarships. Among them is the recognition of excellence in academics and exemplary character by the ACI Missouri Chapter Scholarship named Dr. David N. Richardson 2022-2023 meant to promote careers in structural concrete and materials design, research, and practice.

Tolava was also honored by the Concrete Council of St. Louis and the ACI Missouri Chapter during its 2022 annual award presentation given to only one student from the St. Louis area, who is deemed most deserving and best able to utilize knowledge of concrete construction in their career.

"Receiving these awards meant a lot to me and my family because whenever I got news of an earned recognition, sharing the moment was like having them next to me," he said.

John Cabage PhD, associate professor in the SOE's Department of Construction and one of Tolava's mentors, noted, "Tolava ranks in the best graduate assistants I have ever had. He has a strong work ethic, and his research is cutting edge in the field. He is deserving of all of these recognitions."

While describing the uniqueness of Tolava's research strength, Cabage noted that his home country of Bolivia faces a costly steel import process to build more earthquake-resistant structures. Tolava is working to reduce the amount of steel used and create a way to absorb more energy during an earthquake.

"This level of research sets Tolava apart," said Cabage. "He is on the verge of groundbreaking research."