

Program: Ph.D. in Accounting

Statement of Purpose

Applicant: Yuanhao Xiang

In July 2023, I made the life-changing decision to pursue an academic career, ignited by a profound realization of the incredible impact I could make as a college professor—conducting innovative research, collaborating with inspiring colleagues, and shaping the minds of future generations through teaching. The intellectual freedom to delve into complex phenomena and manage my own path excites me deeply. I am eager to contribute to the advancement of accounting and financial economics theories, pushing the boundaries of knowledge in these fields. When I shared my Ph.D. aspirations with my supervisor, Prof. Xuejiao Liu at UIBE, she generously supported my decision, marking the true beginning of my research journey.

I am currently leading my own research project that delves into macro-analysts' forecast optimism in China's real estate industry. The study employs a quasi-Difference-in-Differences (DiD) approach to investigate whether macroeconomic analysts in state-owned brokerages tend to issue more optimistic forecasts for the real estate sector following a major policy shift in December 2021. In addition to examining the direct impact of forecast optimism on brokerages' investment behavior, the research further explores whether these brokerages have more financial ties through share-holding in real estate firms.

By focusing on a hot-button issue in China's economic landscape, this project not only contributes to the field of macro-forecasting accuracy but also sheds light on the role of macro-analysts within the context of China's political business cycle. Through this work, I aim to deepen the understanding of how state ownership and political dynamics shape financial forecasting in China's critical real estate industry. Since June 2024, under the guidance of Prof. Liu, I have been driving this project forward independently.

From September 2023 to January 2024, I assisted with a project on commercial banks' future-oriented human capital demand after the implementation of the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) model. This project examines whether commercial banks increased their demand for forward-looking skills after implementing the IFRS9 Expected Credit Loss model. My major role involved textual analysis and data cleaning, where I used the density of keywords as a proxy for forward-looking features of employees. This experience deepened my understanding of how accounting methods influence information management. The project is currently under the second round review of a top-tier Chinese journal.

I also worked as a part-time research assistant for Prof. Charles Kang at the University of Hong Kong from March to June 2024, collecting data on U.S. non-profit subsidiaries and mergers. Despite the tedious data-gathering process, working directly with raw data was rewarding and deepened my understanding of complex datasets. For example, many profitable companies are also registered as non-profit organizations on search websites; Non-profit organizations that are subsidiaries of other companies are often foundations established by a profitable enterprise itself.

My interest in research dates back to when I read *Freakonomics* by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner in junior high school. This book opened my eyes to how data could uncover hidden stories, such as detecting cheating teachers through answer patterns or revealing collusion in sumo wrestling through win rates. Since then, I have been driven to find insights through data analysis. I am determined to explore the social and financial phenomena behind various types of data, uncovering new perspectives that are both fascinating and valuable.

I have the ability to quickly acquire new skills. Beyond research, I have honed my technical skills in courses such as *Econometrics*, *Python and Big Data*, and *Advanced Financial Accounting* at UIBE, and *Data Science in Python* on Coursera. My empirical analysis report on regional fiscal revenue and women's education in China for the *Econometrics* course was highly rated by Econometrics Professor Dr. Wei Lin. I also minored in Italian for undergraduate years and reached B2 level of the CILS certification.

Motivated by a Hegelian philosophical belief that the "world spirit" drives me to seek, impart, and even create knowledge, I aim to become a tenure-track assistant professor at a leading university. I seek rigorous doctoral training to strengthen my research skills and academic foundation. I am confident in my ability to excel in this academically challenging environment and contribute meaningfully to the accounting research community.