

PhD Student

Department of Computer Science

Northwestern University

2233 Tech Dr (Office 3202), Evanston, IL USA 60208

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Research Interests

My research interests span across the fields of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Preventive Medicine, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), converging to explore the interplay between technology design and personalized health tools. The objective of my work is to design novel strategies and interventions that apply user-centered design to address usability, safety, and ethical challenges when implementing machine learning insights into clinical workflows and similar sociotechnical settings.

Education

- Expected 2026 **Northwestern University**, Evanston, IL
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Computer Science, McCormick School of Engineering; GPA: 3.9/4.0
Advisor: Dr. Maia L. Jacobs
Research track: Human Computer Interaction (HCI) / Interfaces
- 2023 **Northwestern University**, Evanston, IL
Master of Science (MS), Computer Science, McCormick School of Engineering; GPA: 3.9/4.0
- 2021 **Northeastern Illinois University**, Chicago, IL
Bachelor of Science (BS), Computer Science, College of Business and Technology; GPA: 3.85/4.0
- 2017 **Harold Washington College**, Chicago, IL
Associate in Arts (AA), General Studies; GPA: 3.87/4.0

Honors and Awards

- 2023 - 2026 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship
- 2022 Segal Design Research Cluster Fellowship
- 2022 Northwestern Social Justice Mini Grant
- 2021 Northeastern Illinois University Computer Science Scholarship
- 2020 Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award
- 2018 – 2020 The National TheDream.US Scholarship

Research Funding

Understanding the connection between youths' mental health needs and educational challenges during the pandemic. *Northwestern's Office of Diversity and Inclusion Social Justice Mini Grant*, 2021-2022 (\$2,500 USD).

Publications

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Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles **Ulloa, M.**, Rothrock, B., Ahmad F., Jacobs, M. "Invisible Clinical Labor Driving the Successful Integration of AI in Healthcare." *Frontiers in Computer Science*.

Research Posters **Ulloa, M.**, and Jacobs, M., "Embedding Mental Health Support into Community CS Programs" *2023 CRA WP Grad Cohort Workshop for Women*. San Francisco, CA, April 22, 2023.

Ulloa, M., and Jacobs, M., "Embedding Mental Health Support into Community CS Programs" *2022 Lambert Conference on the Future of Human Computer Interaction + Design*. Evanston, IL, October 24, 2022.

Ulloa, M., Clark, S., Hatheway B., Weber J., Foust E., Wasson S., Ho Y., "Developing a Real-Time Weather Museum Touchscreen" *The National Center for Atmospheric Research: SIParCS and NCAR-Wyoming Presentations*. Boulder, CO July 29, 2020.

Ulloa, M., Clark, S., Hatheway B., Weber J., Foust E., Wasson S., Ho Y., "Developing a Real-Time Weather Museum Touchscreen" *The National Center for Atmospheric Research Poster Presentations*. Boulder, CO July 30, 2020.

Ulloa, M., Clark, S., Hatheway B., Weber J., Foust E., Wasson S., Ho Y., "Developing a Real-Time Weather Museum Touchscreen" *UCLA National McNair Conference*. Los Angeles, CA July 29-31, 2020.

Ulloa, M., Garcia J., Salem M., Gomez C., Adler R. F., Iacobelli F., Trana R. "Creating a Large Cyberbullying Dataset from Multiple Sources to Improve the Accuracy of Cyberbullying Classifications" *2019 SACNAS The National Diversity in STEM Conference*. Honolulu, HI October 30 - November 3, 2019.

Garcia J., **Ulloa, M.**, Salem M., Gomez C., Adler R. F., Iacobelli F., Trana R. "Cyberbullying classification: Semantic Analysis of Text in Shared Image Memes" *2019 SACNAS The National Diversity in STEM Conference*. Honolulu, HI October 30 - November 3, 2019.

Garcia J., Salem M., **Ulloa, M.**, Gomez C., Adler R. F., Iacobelli F., Trana R. "Creating a Large Cyberbullying Classification: Analysis of Text in Social Media Memes" *11th Annual SCSE Student Research Symposium*. Chicago, IL September 27, 2019.

Research projects

01/2022 - **Co-designing patient-facing machine learning for prenatal stress reduction**

Present *Northwestern University (NU)*, Evanston, IL

- Examine ways pregnant people want to interact with next-day machine learning stress predictions, explanations, and recommendations
- Lead multiple participatory design sessions with a diverse population of participants
- Develop innovative co-design methodologies to engage research participants virtually
- Design a prototype of the patient-facing DST that visualizes distinct layers of machine learning, such as predictions, explanations, bias, uncertainty and risk and (when appropriate) recommendations to use a stress management exercise
- Conduct usability testing to assess the functionality of the application

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12/2022 - **Technology-enabled prevention service for at-risk youth**

Present *Northwestern University (NU), Chicago, IL*

Principal investigator: Ashley Knapp, PhD

- Iteratively design and evaluate a technology-enabled prevention service for anxiety with youth and community partners
- Perform literature review on elements to incorporate in digital mental health tools in order to support wellness of adolescents
- Collaborate with research team across distinct domains on design of the mental health web application being developed

03/2022 - **Design of Digital Tools for Youth Mental Well-being**

Present *We All Code, YWCA (WAC), Chicago, IL*

- Leading longitudinal participatory design studies with students from We All Code (WAC), a non-profit organization offering free programming resources to youth with diverse backgrounds
- Identifying the social support and mental health needs of students
- Designing Community-Based Participatory Research interventions with participation from students (ages 12 - 18)
- Attend meetings with WAC's founder to develop student engagement strategies
- Mentoring students (ages 7 – 18) learning to code in Saturday workshops hosted virtually and in person

01/2022 - **Iterative design of clinician-facing machine learning tools**

11/2022 *Northwestern University (NU), Evanston, IL*

- Assessing user experience following a machine learning pilot in Northwestern Medicine's Electronic Health Record
- Leading qualitative semi-structured interviews with end-users (clinicians and members of the technical team) involved in the development of AI tool used to identify patients with advanced heart failure
- Independently coding themes from audio-recordings and discussing with research team
- Performing contextual inquiry study to understand the workflow and output of the machine learning model further
- The overarching goal of this work is to inform the integration of AI-powered tools into medical settings, with a focus on how to overcome sociotechnical challenges

05/2019 - **Improving the accuracy of cyberbullying algorithmic classifications**

11/2019 *Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), Chicago, IL*

- Applied text classification algorithms that identified text as harmful or non-harmful with 87% accuracy
- Used Python scripts to retrieve and classify new socially relevant text memes from existing datasets
- Engaged in weekly career development workshops
- Researched various subjects that were related to the project and presented information to mentors and team
- Presented findings at SACNAS National Conference and NEIU's Student Center for Science Engagement Symposium

Related Work Experience

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08/2019 - **Computer Science Peer Leader**

05/2021 *Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), Chicago, IL*

- Lead weekly virtual and in-person workshops on programming I and II concepts for first-year undergraduate students
- Collaborate with other peer leaders and faculty in optimizing programming workshops
- Served as a role model and guided students to campus resources and external opportunities
- Participated in combined virtual and in-person Peer Leader training throughout the year
- Demonstrated strong communication, leadership, and organizational skills

05/2020 - **SIPARCS Intern**

08/2020 *The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), Boulder, CO*

- Developed a new touchscreen interface that displays real-time weather data to deliver a user-friendly and educational kiosk application to be installed at NCAR's Mesa Lab and NCAR Wyoming Supercomputing Center
- Lead virtual user interviews and communicate with stakeholders with the goal of gathering application requirements
- Took an active role in team meetings, engaging with all parties and transcribing detailed notes of plans, decisions and options discussed
- Participated in ten weekly science communication workshops while engaging in group and team building discussions
- Gave a poster and oral presentation to the NCAR and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientific community

08/2019 - **Computer Science Society President**

05/2021 *Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), Chicago, IL*

- Attended meetings with faculty advisor and other officers on implementation of student-led biweekly workshops
- Led team responsible for maintaining the society's website
- Designed informative recruitment materials for workshops
- Coordinated workshops provided by a team of officers on tools such as GitHub and JavaScript fundamentals

Related Skills

Programming Java, Python, HTML, CSS, SQL
UX Tools NinjaMock, Figma
Version Control GitHub
Languages English, Spanish

Service

Conference JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion) Ambassador — UbiComp / ISWC 2023
Service Student Volunteer — ACM Interaction Design and Children (IDC) 2023

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University	Future of Health and Computing Collective (FHCC) — Student Committee
Service	Graduate Women in Computing (GWiC) — Board Member NU SROP Pathways to the Professoriate - Navigating Graduate School — Panelist CS PhD Student Visit Day — Planning Committee Computer Science Social Initiative (CSSI) - Board Member
Community	We All Code
Service	Pancreatic Cancer Action Network Chicago Canine Rescue Cornerstone Autism Services Friendship Center Northeastern Illinois University Food Pantry Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Lurie Children's Hospital

Press

- 2023 **Patient-Focused AI System Seeks to Reduce Stress during Pregnancy**
<https://casmi.northwestern.edu/news/articles/2023/patient-focused-ai-system-seeks-to-reduce-stress-during-pregnancy.html>
- 2022 **Supporting Mental and Emotional Health Within Computer Science Education**
<https://www.mccormick.northwestern.edu/computer-science/news-events/news/articles/2023/supporting-mental-and-emotional-health-within-computer-science-education.html>
- 2022 **Mara Ulloa Awarded NSF Graduate Research Fellowship**
<https://www.mccormick.northwestern.edu/computer-science/news-events/news/articles/2023/lily-ge-and-mara-ulloa-awarded-nsf-graduate-research-fellowships.html>
- 2020 **CS major Mara Ulloa named Lincoln Academy Student Laureate**
<https://www.neiu.edu/news/computer-science-major-obs-mara-ulloa-named-lincoln-academy-student-laureate>

Affiliations

Computer Science Society
 McNair Scholars Program
 Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
 Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)
 The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

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