

Personal Statement

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When I was about to start my freshman year, I came across a recruitment notice for participants in a VR experiment. At the time, I had never experienced VR before, but out of curiosity, I decided to join. During the study, I had many thoughts and shared them with the experiment designer, a senior student. Later, I volunteered to assist him with other parts of the user study. Even though my tasks were small, I was fully engaged. That project focused on exploring interpersonal relationships, which fascinated me as someone with a strong interest in psychology. This was my very first encounter with the broad field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). I believe that HCI is a highly meaningful field. In my view, the advancement of science and technology should always be closely connected to human needs, and technological progress should contribute to human well-being and serve society.

My academic performance in the first semester was not particularly strong, which I believe was due to the disappointment I felt after the college entrance examination, compounded by family-related stress and the challenges of adjusting to university life. At the same time, I used to believe that I needed to master many skills before I could begin any research work. This mindset caused me to delay getting started. One day, I suddenly realised that knowledge is endless, and that learning through practice, while filling in gaps as needed, is often sufficient for research. Motivated by this shift in perspective, I began reaching out to faculty members and eventually joined a lab.

In April 2025, I learned that the CHI conference would be held in Japan and that student registration would cost only \$200. I signed up without hesitation. During my week in Japan, I had the opportunity to meet many outstanding researchers and encounter meaningful work. (I even saw one of my academic idols, though, regrettably, I didn't get to meet you. Otherwise, I certainly would have asked for a photo together !)

At the conference, I met Yue Jiang, whose experience and persistence deeply moved me. I also read Professor Zhicong's work on the BLV (Blind and Low Vision) community, where he explored how BLV users interact with smartphones to enrich their inner world. My senior (Prof. Mingming Fan's student) also had a paper at CHI 2024, focusing on helping BLV individuals retrieve their packages. These projects provided practical support to underserved communities and showed me how research can genuinely improve people's lives. I believe such work is deeply meaningful.

The project I am currently collaborating on with a senior investigates what kinds of prompts can effectively capture students' attention during the teaching process. I believe that VR could one day be integrated into education as a tool for reducing inequality—a vision that motivates me further.

My senior, Dr. Yue Li (now an Assistant Professor at XJTLU), focuses on cultural heritage restoration and preservation. She and her team, in collaboration with the Suzhou Museum, have produced meaningful work. Xin Tong (HKUST (GZ)) has also contributed to cultural preservation through a project centred around Admonitions of the Court Instructress. Their efforts have inspired me, as they demonstrate the power of HCI and technology in sustaining cultural identity and values.

I consider myself someone with ambitious goals. I aspire to carry out meaningful research that can bring about real change and help others. I am still at the beginning of my journey, but I am determined to grow, contribute, and push boundaries.