

Sean Mulherin

Los Angeles, CA
smulherin519@gmail.com
seanmulherin.github.io

Research Interest

Statistics, Time Series Analysis, Point Process Analysis, Education, Social Statistics

Education

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| Ph.D. Statistics, UCLA | 3/2025 - Present |
| Advisor: Dr. Frederic Schoenberg | |
| M.S. Applied Statistics and Data Science, UCLA | 9/2023 - 3/2025 |
| <i>Testing for Causal Clustering in K-12 Student Discipline</i> | |
| Advisor: Dr. Frederic Schoenberg | |
| M.A.T. Secondary Mathematics, UNC - Chapel Hill | 5/2019 - 9/2020 |
| Advisor: Dr. Josh Corbat | |
| B.S. Mathematics, North Carolina State University | 9/2015 - 5/2019 |

Teaching Experience

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| UCLA Department of Statistics and Data Science | 2024 - Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Graduate Teaching Fellow◦ Reader/Grader◦ Student Ambassador | |
| Brentwood School | 2024 - 2025 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Physics Faculty◦ Cross Country Coach◦ Academic Advisor | |
| Jackson Hole High School | 2021 - 2023 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Math Faculty: Geometry, AP Prep Algebra II, Trigonometry/Precalculus◦ Cross Country & Track Coach◦ Chess Club Coach | |
| Mountain Academy of Teton Science Schools | 2020 - 2021 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Lead Math Faculty: Algebra, Geometry, IB Applications & Interpretations◦ Academic Advisor | |

Carrboro High School

2019 - 2020

- Student-Teacher: Geometry, AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC

North Carolina State University Tutorial Center

2016 - 2018

- Math Tutor: Calculus I-III, Foundations of Advanced Mathematics, Differential Equations I, Mathematical Probability

Research Experience

Current Research Project*In-Progress*

Mitigating Spurious Cross-Excitation in Multivariate Hawkes Process Models of Infectious Disease Using Distance and Mobility Constraints

This paper investigates methods to mitigate false cross-excitation of infectious disease transmission in multivariate Hawkes process (MHP) models. Conventional Hawkes models neglect geographic distance and, therefore, are unable to penalize the likelihood of cross-excitation where contagion is improbable due to geographic barriers. Two penalizing methods are investigated: one utilizing human mobility and the other utilizing geographical distance. In both methods, independent MHP models are fitted to each location, yielding local parameters. Keeping local parameters fixed, penalties are applied to cross-productivity rates to optimize intercity parameters via negative binomial likelihood with elastic net regularization. Models are tested on observed COVID-19 data as well as synthetically generated data. The final model parameters reflect penalized cross-excitations between dormant city pairs and are shown to improve the model fit by reducing spurious connections across distant locations and dormant mobility pipelines, with the mobility penalization method offering the superior fit.

UCLA Master's Thesis, Testing for Causal Clustering in K-12 Student Discipline

2024

The degree to which causal contagion explains the event of student misconduct is investigated. A test introduced by Kresin (2023) and McGovern (2024) is applied, wherein likelihood-ratio tests are performed using information gain statistics to compare the fit of a Neyman-Scott model to that of a Hawkes model. Data records the number of disciplinary actions for K-12 students grouped by day, school, and school year spanning from 2016 to 2023. Evidence of causal clustering appears to vary across grade levels and school years. Out of the twelve different school/year combinations tested, seven exhibited statistically significant evidence of causal triggering. Interestingly, both frequency and magnitude were found to hold strong governance over the conclusion of hypothesis tests.

Advanced Studies Institute in Mathematics of Data Science & Machine Learning

2024

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation, I traveled to Uzbekistan to participate in a two-week workshop focusing on the mathematics of machine learning. Topics covered include model-based clustering, Hawkes point processes, benign overfitting, generalization, double descent, and mirror descent.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Research Project

2020

Assessing Collaboration and Critical Thinking Opportunities in Online Learning at the Secondary Level during the COVID-19 pandemic

This paper studies the instructional strategies and tools secondary school that teachers used during the COVID-19 quarantine to promote collaboration and critical thinking amongst their students through virtual learning. A sample of the literature about online instructional techniques and critical thinking or collaboration is reviewed. We collected data from 36 secondary instructors via online surveys and virtual interviews. Results show a strong positive correlation between teachers who report higher amounts of participation and the assigning of group work.

North Carolina State University, College of Design

2017 - 2018

As a research assistant, I collected data pertaining to the efficacy of healthy diets on the social, emotional, and academic performance of elementary school students.

Portfolio Projects

Financial Modeling

2024

Programmed a web application that provides two tools operating at the confluence of statistics and finance. The first is a forecasting tool that uses the Prophet model to fit and predict the daily adjusted closing price of a user-specified asset. The second tool is one for portfolio optimization and valuation wherein the user inputs multiple assets and relevant performance metrics are displayed such as volatility, return, weights, and so on.

Forecasting Selling Price of Houses in the U.S.

2024

Programmed an interface for users to input a city and forecast period to observe and explore the forecasted trends and prediction metrics computed by the Prophet model. This model leverages concepts from SARIMAX models to accurately fit and predict time series data. Moreover, housing prices are atypically volatile, so this model does particularly well at producing accurate home price forecasts.

An Artificial Neural Network Approach to Identifying Diabetes Risk Status

2023

Programmed an artificial neural network from scratch to classify a user's risk of developing type II diabetes after completing a 21 question survey. The model was trained using CDC data and achieves 84% accuracy in its validation-set predictions.

Tracking Global Carbonization

2023

Conducted a comprehensive statistical analysis of the current state of global carbon dioxide emissions. Data was obtained from the United National Development Program and analyzed using R. Advanced data visualizations were displayed to portray interpretable results.

A Classification Analysis on Breast Cancer Tumors

2023

Evaluated various models that were built to classify breast cancer tumors as malignant or benign. Models compared include: linear discriminant analysis, quadratic discriminant analysis, support vector machines, logistic regression, random forests, Naive Bayes, and KNN. The most optimal model used linear discriminant analysis to predict with 97% accuracy on the validation set.

Appointments & Awards

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| UCLA Statistics Outstanding Masters Student Award | 2025 |
| UCLA Statistics Graduate Student Association, VP of External Affairs | 2023 - Present |
| UCLA Math and Physical Sciences Council Member | 2023 - Present |
| National Institute of Statistical Sciences GSN Council Member | 2023 - 2025 |
| DataFest Conference Guest Speaker - Introduction to R | 2024 |
| DataFest Conference Guest Speaker - Data Cleaning and Wrangling in R | 2024 |
| NCAA Division I Cross Country & Track Athlete | 2015 - 2019 |

Note: all of my data science projects, academic papers, and lecture notes from my teachings can be found on my online portfolio linked in the header. All projects are programmed using Python, R, and HTML with Github as the cloud platform.