Personal History Statement

Jincheol Jung

https://bik1111.github.io/

Through the process of turning past wounds into opportunities for growth, I realized one important fact: my dream is to become a contributor who addresses critical societal issues and makes a positive impact.

During middle and high school, my father often struggled to control his anger during arguments with my mother, frequently breaking household items or exhibiting violent behavior toward us. At the same time, I found joy in expressing myself by performing songs by female artists. However, my friends, shaped by rigid gender norms in Korean society, regarded me as abnormal and ostracized me. These experiences left deep emotional scars and prompted me to question the direction and purpose of my life.

One day, I happened to come across actors on screen who transformed their emotions into artistic expression, and this changed my perspective. Their uninhibited emotional expression deeply resonated with me and inspired me to pursue acting. I enrolled in an acting academy, where I staged plays and collaborated with peers from diverse backgrounds. This experience taught me the value of individuality, creativity, and teamwork. Fueled by this passion, I decided to major in Theater at university. However, the rigid hierarchical system within the university left me disappointed, and to seize greater opportunities for growth, I decided to leave the university and immerse myself in the more dynamic theater scene in Daehangno, Seoul.

Joining in the theater community gave me the opportunity to freely express myself and collaborate with diverse individuals to create meaningful performances. By performing the works of Anton Chekhov and Shakespeare and receiving applause from the audience, I realized that true happiness lies in making a positive impact on others. However, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly halted all theatrical activities, leaving me directionless and deeply frustrated for nearly a year. During this time, I came across a COVID-19 contact tracing app developed by a university student. This app corrected misinformation, alleviated public anxiety, and had a positive impact on society. This experience instilled in me a sense of awe for the impact technology can have on society and sparked a dedicated passion for this field. Ultimately, it became the turning point that led me to transition to the field of computer science.

Transitioning into the field of computer science through a transfer was not easy. Without a strong background in mathematics, I struggled with subjects like calculus, linear algebra, and engineering mathematics. However, my determination to become a software engineer capable of making meaningful contributions drove me to study rigorously for over a year. This effort led to my acceptance into one of Korea's top 10 universities. There, I taught myself software development, improved my technical skills, and earned awards in hackathons. My dedication culminated in receiving the SW Ownership award, recognizing excellence in software-related projects. I also mentored first-year students, further deepening my sense of fulfillment and achievement.

My interest in cloud computing began when I deployed my software on cloud platforms and received positive feedback from my peers. This experience motivated me to join AWS University Student Groups (AUSG) and AWS Cloud Club (ACC), where I shared knowledge about cloud services and organized events. These activities revealed the necessity and potential of cloud technology. While fulfilling, they also fueled my curiosity to explore fundamental and foundational problems in computer science.

I found direction in intelligent cloud systems. During a research internship, I summarized and reported prior research findings to my advisor, developing communication skills and a appreciation for cloud computing's potential. One of the first papers I studied focused on reinforcement learning for adaptive scaling, offering profound insights into intelligent systems' ability to solve complex real-world problems. Unlike my undergraduate years, where theory often felt abstract, tackling real-world challenges was deeply motivating. This journey led me to focus on predictive resource allocation, adaptive scaling, and achieving Quality of Experience (QoE) in cloud systems.

Confucius once said, "A true gentleman is not a tool" (君子不器), highlighting the importance of versatility and diverse perspectives. Transitioning from the arts to computer science was challenging, but this journey, blending creativity with analytical thinking, embodies the spirit of an era where technology converges with philosophy and science with the humanities. This interdisciplinary foundation equips me to develop innovative solutions to diverse challenges.

My unique background, combining the creativity of an artist with the precision of an engineer, aligns with University at Buffalo's values of diversity. Through experiences of pain and hardship, I have learned to transform adversity into opportunities for growth and collaboration. Although this journey was fraught with challenges, it provided invaluable opportunities to work with diverse individuals and gain broader perspectives. As I have turned past hardships into growth, I now aspire to create technological advancements that positively impact lives and drive meaningful change.