Hello,

I am writing to apply for the Applied Machine Learning Pre-Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Mullainathan. Please find my resume attached along with my application.   
  
I’m currently a graduate student at the University of Oxford and the Oxford Internet Institute, doing my MSc in social data science. Additionally, I am a recent graduate from Queen’s University, where I studied computer science with a minor in political science, achieving a cumulative GPA of 4.03/4.30. The social data science program, and my prior work in computing and politics, give me a unique skillset to explore and reason about technical, abstract concepts – and then apply them to important social phenomena.

This past summer I worked as a research scientist at the University of Toronto’s Computational Social Science Lab. Here I worked with a team of graduate students and Dr. Ashton Anderson to study how political communities on Reddit distort or mirror the broader political landscape. This involved modelling 1.6 billion Reddit comments with a novel extension of the Word2Vec neural network, which we called a community embedding. The result was a paper, currently under review for publication, which I am the lead author on. This is attached as my work sample.

Many of my interests lie at the intersection of technology, policy, and public life, and as I’ve gotten further into my research I’ve realized it’s not only our preferences that shape behaviour, but the mechanisms through which these preferences are made known. My work studying online platforms has convinced me that regardless of our propensity for vitriol, it is the platforms at the end of the day who decide how such content is rewarded. I’ve realized this structural approach is often a more natural fit with economics than either computer science or political science, and I’m interested in exploring computational economics under the supervision of Dr. Mullainathan.

My technical aptitude, combined with my computationally heavy research at UofT and Oxford makes me well suited to understand complex systems, and a unique applicant to economics PhDs. The necessary first step, however, is to continue developing my research aptitude at UChicago. Working with Dr. Mullainathan at the Center for Applied AI offers exactly what I am looking for: technical complexity, intellectual rigor, and the ability to work with experimental as well as observational data.

Finally, I firmly believe that technical wizardry means little without the ability to communicate its impact. Social data science and computational social science puts me in a position where I am constantly bridging disparate worlds in statistics, computer science and engineering – to sociology, political science and economics. Overall, I believe my experiences demonstrate my ability to learn quickly, work in new environments, and work effectively with others. I look forward to hearing from you.   
  
Sincerely,   
Cameron Raymond