

My service work reflects a deep commitment to advancing equity across academic, governmental, and civic sectors. Throughout my career, I have occupied unconventional spaces: a policymaker with an art school background, a senior official who left a secure government career to attend law school in the United States, and a law student conducting research within computer science labs. These intersections taught me that diverse perspectives broaden our collective capacity for innovation and empathy, as Martha Nussbaum writes in *Poetic Justice* [3]. In that spirit, I seek to create pathways that invite others to learn, lead, and imagine freely.

By my mid-twenties, I was appointed Deputy Director in the Korean central government after passing a national civil service examination with a 1% acceptance rate. I fought hard to implement the ideas I believed were right, such as transforming the National Museum of Korea into a cultural technology hub and contributing to the passage of the Artists' Welfare Act. I stood firm against political pressure during high-profile investigations and multi-million-dollar budget negotiations. My performance placed me among the top 1% of high-performing government employees. I had the privilege of participating in high-level policy decisions, but working as a woman in a still male-dominated society meant facing subtle exclusions from critical information and occasional overtly unpleasant encounters. Recognizing these patterns, I began working to make government a more supportive and equitable environment for women. I organized mentoring and study groups to help colleagues develop confidence in their professional identities and strengthen peer solidarity. Many of them have since advanced into leadership roles, and I still receive unexpected calls from former colleagues seeking guidance or simply sharing their progress.

My transition from policymaking to academia was guided by a desire to study the limits of state authority and the growing influence of private digital platforms. As a Fulbright Scholar, I entered the University of Washington School of Law to pursue a Ph.D., where I experienced, for the first time, life as an immigrant navigating linguistic and cultural barriers. This experience strengthened my understanding of inclusion and belonging, motivating me to **advocate for other underrepresented students**. As the Graduate Representative in the Student Bar Association, I proposed policies to increase access to legal professional networks for international students. I also served as Vice President for both the Asian-Pacific American Law Student Association and the Minority Law Student Association, co-organizing a successful networking event that connected judges, prosecutors, and attorneys with students. This service work was recognized with a Korean Bar Association of Washington (KABA) scholarship, and I later joined KABA's Board of Directors to manage scholarships and organize large-scale events.

During my doctoral work, I realized that understanding the law alone was not enough to understand the challenges posed by digital technologies. At the University of Washington's Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering, I found a new intellectual home with the guidance of great mentors such as Tadayoshi (Yoshi) Kohno, Aylin Caliskan, and Amy X. Zhang. This journey was far from effortless. **Cross-disciplinary research is deeply rewarding but carries high risk** because it falls outside conventional academic molds. At times, I felt dismissed: through harsh peer reviews, puzzled looks at conferences, and quiet doubts about whether I belonged. My advisor, Yoshi Kohno, encouraged me to view these moments as part of building an *iceberg* of interdisciplinary research—vast below the surface, slow to be recognized, but ultimately meaningful (see Figure 1). I later distilled these reflections into a talk titled Overcoming Academic Frustrations at the Korean-American Scientists and Engineers Association conference, which received the Best Speech Award.

That dissonance strengthened **my dedication to mentorship**. Each week, I receive messages from students around the world who aspire to pursue similarly cross-disciplinary paths. I take time to respond with honesty and transparency because I want to be, for others, what Yoshi and other generous mentors were for me. Over the course of my Ph.D. and postdoctoral years, I have advised more than twenty students across law, computer science, design, information science, and business, many from underrepresented backgrounds. Some sought guidance on research design and writing, while others turned to me during experiences of sexual harassment, financial hardship, or visa-related precarity. As part of a broader effort to reveal the “hidden curriculum”—the knowledge of higher education that is accessible only to the privileged few [1]—I created a widely read Korean-

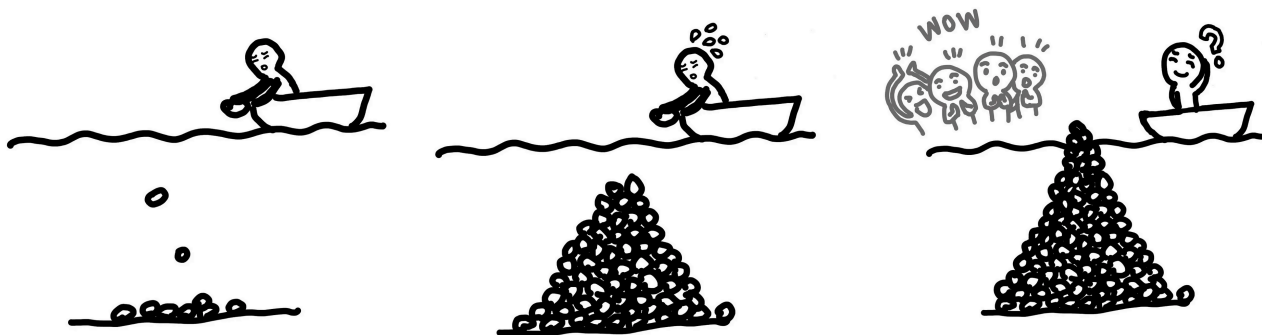


Figure 1: Building a new research island begins with producing valuable work that remains largely unseen, progresses as a nascent subdomain takes shape, and culminates when sustained effort transforms it into a recognized area of inquiry. Yoshi featured this drawing in his blog post [2].

language blog series on graduate school applications and scholarship opportunities. These writings evolved into long-term mentorships with more than fifty students, many of whom now pursue Ph.D. programs at institutions such as Princeton, Carnegie Mellon, the University of Washington, and the London School of Economics.

As I have continued to build my own iceberg of interdisciplinary research, I now lead cross-disciplinary initiatives that **bridge AI research and governance on an international scale**. At NeurIPS 2023, I organized an AI Ethics Meet-up that convened over forty researchers and practitioners, fostering new collaborations that continue today. I later founded the AI Intentionality Workshop, bringing together scholars from NLP, machine learning, HCI, communications, and ethics to examine how intent can be conceptualized in AI design. My recent work has drawn interest from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Office of the Colorado Attorney General, and the Office of Congressman Bill Foster, reflecting growing recognition of the policy relevance of my research. I continue to advise South Korean ministries on AI governance and technology regulation, including the Ministry of Science and ICT, the Korea Communications Commission, the Ministry of Culture, and the Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC). In particular, I have supported PIPC's engagement with generative AI policy through six months of sustained dialogue. I also serve as a core member of the Korean Administrative Law Society and the Korea Privacy Professionals Association, helping build global connections.

I believe that curiosity-driven, risk-taking researchers who experiment across fields should be celebrated, not sidelined. My aspiration to become a faculty member is inseparable from this conviction. As faculty, I will work to **increase representation and equity across all career stages** through reflexive, intersectional, and accessible practices. I will prioritize inclusive mentorship for graduate students, ensuring that advising relationships account for cultural difference, caregiving responsibilities, and other personal constraints. Within the university, I plan to establish a mentorship pipeline linking undergraduate and graduate students, host an NSF REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) site, and build an *AI Ethics Academy for Youth* to engage K-12 students through mentorship and applied learning. Beyond campus, I aim to decentralize AI governance discussions that are dominated by North American and European perspectives. Drawing on my policy and scholarly networks in South Korea, I hope to strengthen the presence of East Asia in global conversations on AI ethics and regulation. I will contribute to communities such as the emerging ACM Critical Computing Conference and the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD), sharing open documentation of my experiences in research, mentorship, and institutional navigation to make the hidden curriculum of academia publicly accessible.

References

- [1] Jahani Hariharan. I felt lost in a new academic culture. Then I learned about the hidden curriculum. <https://www.science.org/content/article/i-felt-lost-new-academic-culture-then-i-learned-about-hidden-curriculum>, 2019.
- [2] Tadayoshi Kohno. Publishing in New Research Domains and the “Building a New Island” Analogy. <https://medium.com/navigating-academia/the-establishment-of-new-research-domains-and-the-building-a-new-island-analogy-0d737a633055>, 2024.
- [3] Martha C Nussbaum. Poetic justice: The literary imagination and public life. *Political Theory*, 26(4):557–583, 1998.