

Personal statement

I am deeply interested in computational biology research after having developed a strong research passion for mathematical modeling and statistical analyses of large, complex datasets, particularly in the biological domain. In undergrad, I obtained new results about verbal problem-solving from the large and unprocessed eye-tracking data of an original experiment that I designed and oversaw. At NASA, I deployed statistical machine learning models to reveal algorithmic bio-signatures, which could inform the instrumentation protocols of life-detection missions. The team has expanded so that I am now working with my NASA mentor and an outside postdoc towards a publication. I am a highly motivated researcher who has completed numerous extracurricular projects, generally applying a novel approach or answering an original question with mathematical modeling and programming. In my Master's at Oxford, I am deepening my statistics, machine learning, and other computational skills, which I believe will advance my Master's dissertation and intended Doctorate research thereafter.

Education

- Oct 2020 - Sep 2021 **Master of Science in Statistical Science**, *University of Oxford*, United Kingdom.
Coursework: Stochastic Models in Mathematical Genetics, Computational Statistics, Statistical Machine Learning, Bayes Methods, Applied Statistics, Foundations of Statistical Inference, Statistical Programming (*in R*), Advanced Simulation Methods, Advanced Topics in Statistical Machine Learning. | Dissertation with an academic supervisor (three months) | Christ Church college placement. | Departmental supervisor is François Caron.
- 2016 - 20 **Bachelor in Physics**, *Drew University*, Madison, New Jersey.
Summa Cum Laude - GPA 4.000/4.000 | Minor in Mathematics | Additional coursework: Statistics, Modeling and Simulation, Molecular and Cellular Biology, Biochemistry, Organic Chemistry I & II, Biological Psychology. | GRE - Jan 2020 - 169/170 Quantitative, 165/170 Verbal, 5/6 Analytical Writing.
- 2015 - 16 **Cello Program**, *The Juilliard School*, New York, New York.
Studied cello for a year at a competitive music program before transitioning career paths. | SAT - 770/800 Math, 750/800 Critical Reading, 800/800 Writing.

Research Experience

- Jun 2020 - **Astrobiology Statistics Research**, *NASA Ames Research Center - Biospheric Science Branch*, Mountain View, California, Diana Gentry.
Project: Statistical Classification of Biosignature Information. | Implementing machine learning classification algorithms to reveal complex biosignatures in element composition and isotope fractionation data. | Demonstrated how combinations of chemical biosignatures can make accurate classifications and uniquely inform the instrumentation protocols of life-detection missions. | Continuing the research from a paid full-time summer internship. | Expanding the project through a collaboration with postdoc Sunanda Sharma to include spectral data. | Tools used: (in Python) Principal Component Analysis, K-Nearest Neighbors, Logistic regression, Linear Support Vector Machines, Gaussian Naïve Bayes, k-Means Clustering. | Selected to be on the panel for an upcoming NASA astrobiology outreach event. | Presented a research poster to NASA Ames and to the New Jersey Space Grant Consortium.
- May 2019 - Jun 2020 **Eye-Tracking Research**, *Drew University*, Minjoon Kouh.
Project: Gaze sequences reveal how people gradually arrive at a solution to a word puzzle (anagram) | Designed and ran an original eye-tracking experiment of 29 participants. | Formed and led a small research team of undergraduate students and high school volunteers. | Structured and analyzed raw eye-tracking coordinate-time-series data (90 million rows). | Obtained new results about how the beginnings and ends of solution words are significantly more informative than their middles. | Spring 2020 phase II experiments unfortunately remain postponed due to the pandemic, delaying publication efforts.
- Dec 2019 - **Independent Statistics Research**.
Project: Markov chain model of polygenic inheritance. | From two separate datasets, the model is shown to accurately describe the inheritance of human stature, with complete confirmation in the case of stable population variance. | Important properties of the Markov chain are derived: the conditional distribution of any ancestor or descendant's score, exponential functions for the convergence to the population distribution, a time-reversible stationary distribution. | Introduction of a novel measure of mobility and information loss, probability kernels are shown to make important predictions over any number of generations. | Developed a written manuscript - aiming for a conference proceeding.

- Summer 2017 **Atmospheric Chemistry Research**, *Drew University*, Ryan Hinrichs.
Adsorption rates of Pinene onto dust and sand samples under varying temperatures and relative humidities.
| Skills and technologies used: Infrared spectroscopy, Gaussian, IGOR Pro.
- 2017 - **Independent Research Projects**, *Available to view on jessemurray.com*.
Completed about a half-dozen small research projects that apply computational simulation, data analysis, and mathematical modeling to real world situations. | Some examples include: Machine Learning to Predict COVID-19 Cases from US Census Data, Modeling the Growth of Non-decomposed Municipal Solid Waste in US Landfills, Proposed Musical Tuning Algorithm.

Conferences

- Dec 2020 **Algorithmic detection of elemental biosignatures**, *American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting*.
Accepted for research poster presentation at the Planetary Sciences session: *Getting the Most Out of Data in Astrobiology: Overcoming the Too Little, Too Rare, and Too Different*.
- Mar 2020 **Gaze sequences reveal how people gradually arrive at a solution to a word puzzle (anagram)**, *Brain and Behavior Conference - University of Scranton*.
Presented a research poster.

Skills

- Computational Expertise: Python (NumPy, Scikit-learn, Pandas, SciPy, Matplotlib, Seaborn), R (tidyverse), Excel. | Fluency: Git, MATLAB, Octave, C. | Some experience: Linux, Mathematica, Java, SQL, Julia.
- Mathematical Statistics, Probability, Statistical Machine Learning, Linear Algebra, Calculus, Differential Equations.
- Scientific Molecular and Cellular Biology, Genetics, Spectroscopy, Biochemistry, Organic Chemistry, Mathematical Physics, Mechanics, Optics, Electronics, Electricity and Magnetism.
- Presentation L^AT_EX, Jupyter Notebook, Markdown, HTML, Powerpoint, Microsoft Word.
- Musical Cello, Piano, Music Theory, Improvisation, Absolute Pitch.

Teaching Experience

- 2017 - 20 **University Tutor**, *Center for Academic Excellence*, Drew University.
Physics I & II, Calculus I, II, & III, Pre-Calculus, Statistics, Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Organic Chemistry | 5 - 6 hours per week. | Leader of *Quant Camp*, a program for students to show up and receive help on any quantitative problems across the range of coursework.
- Jul 2020 **Research and Teaching Assistant**, *New Jersey Governor's School in the Sciences*.
Project: Implementing machine learning with iRobot hardware for human detection. | Graded and answered students' questions about problem sets for *Special Relativity*. | Full-time paid position. | Made a time-travel simulator spreadsheet, which calculated and put into real-life terms the energy requirements and length contraction under special relativity.

Additional and volunteer experience

- 2019 **President**, *Math Club*, Drew University.
Fully revamped the undergraduate club. | Promoted the club with posters of beautiful or real-world math problems | Initiated weekly meetings for solving the problems or presenting original projects. | Launched a professor-talk-series for quantitative professors to give unique academic talks, around 25+ attendance.
- 2019 - **Science contributor**, *Wikipedia*.
Made hundreds of contributions to mathematics and science-related articles. | Improvements to technical writing, connections between related topics, and information additions. | Received a Wikipedia award for contributions to pages around *Industrial processes*, interviewed for an article in *Mashable* on the scientific communication of climate change, releasing in November 2020.
- Fall 2018 **Volunteer internship**, *Morristown Medical Center, Emergency Department*.
Assisted medical staff with patient intake and evaluation. | Total of 50 hours over the semester.

Awards, Scholarships, and Societies

- Awards Marshall C. Harrington Prize in Physics and Astronomy (for completion of an outstanding research project) - Spring 2020 | Arnold S. Boxer Memorial Prize in Physics - Spring 2019 | John F. Ollom Prize in Physics - Spring 2017
- Scholarships Weddell Family Scholarship - Spring 2018 | Dean's Transfer Scholarship - Fall 2016
- Societies Pi Mu Epsilon - Spring 2020 | Sigma Pi Sigma - Spring 2019 | Phi Beta Kappa - Spring 2018