

Personal Business Plan

Lucy Jiang - ENTRE 370

Vision and Opportunity

- After leaving UW, I plan to pursue my doctoral studies in computer and information science to expand my skills, research impact, and interpersonal connections in the subfield of accessibility. I am currently in the process of deciding which school to attend, and I'm flying around the country all month to visit UC Irvine, UMD College Park, and Cornell! After receiving a PhD, my long-term vision is to become a professor and create a research lab focused on accessibility, uplifting the next generation of computer scientists to feel empowered and confident about their ability to apply their skills to solving some of society's biggest problems.
- My purpose, values, and mission are to make the world more accessible, equitable, and inclusive for marginalized groups, with a focus on empowering disabled communities and engaging them in an inclusive design process from start to finish. Three questions that guide my life and work are:
 - Am I asking the right questions that can change someone's life for the better?
 - Am I listening to the right people and amplifying the right voices?
 - Am I happy with where I am while still maintaining a passion to dig deeper?
 - This last question is the question that I plan to ask and answer most. As someone who has experienced serious burnout and mental health struggles throughout my undergraduate career, I hope that checking in with myself can help me take better care of myself moving forward!
- The market and opportunity that aligns with my goals is the overall technology market – and to be more specific, the accessible technology market. My existing skills in accessibility and human-computer interaction (HCI) research have helped me identify access problems: one example is a lack of audio description on almost all online videos, which impacts the blind and low vision community's ability to access them.
 - I am currently working on VerbalEyes, a startup dedicated to solving that exact problem. While our group is passionate about accessibility, investors indicated that they were not interested in our idea because the accessibility market was too small. We underwent a rapid series of pivots to cater to investors' suggestions, but ultimately narrowed back on online video accessibility for user-generated content and large enterprises with global advertisements. This taught me that gathering feedback is always helpful, but it is up to you to decide what you truly implement from their feedback. Oftentimes, others do not know your business idea as well as you do, and they may be missing a key piece when making suggestions. In the future, I plan to critically analyze feedback and briefly explore different solutions before settling on a future direction to maximize my potential.

Marketing and Implementation Strategy

- Hello World! I'm Lucy Jiang, a researcher, entrepreneur, and designer who is passionate about making the world more accessible and equitable. I am a senior studying computer science and entrepreneurship at the University of Washington, with experience in accessibility research, student leadership and management, founding a startup, and design. Above all, I am driven by empathy and inclusivity.
- A compelling value that I offer to employers and society is that I really, truly listen to end users and do my best to make sure that they are happy. While other students that I have worked with have prioritized profit margins over user feedback, I treat users as the end all be all, and strive to do right by them. Especially when you are working with marginalized and exploited populations, building trust and honoring the relationship that you have built with them is critical. I believe that when you respect your end users and demonstrate that you value their needs through tangible actions, a strong business will follow.
- I differentiate myself from other UW students in my interdisciplinary expertise, including my education and experience in both computer science and design. Accessibility research is a niche field, but the need for access is not. 1/7 of the world's population has a disability, and the rapid advancements of recent technology have excluded disabled communities from engaging in critical discourse. In a similar vein, I believe that my unique set of experiences and values in a small field that serves a large market are important differentiators between myself and the broader populace. There is still so much left to learn, and I am excited to embark on this journey soon. As I deepen my understanding of accessibility technology and continue to explore the field, I believe that my domain expertise will continue to set me apart from others.

Risks and Mitigation

- Key milestones and checkpoints
 - June 2022: Graduate from UW and have a fun, relaxing summer spending time with family and friends before I (maybe) move out of town!
 - August or September 2022: Start my graduate studies and become acclimated to life as a PhD student
 - Summer of year 2 / 3 of my PhD: Do an industry internship to get a feel for how industry research works and to decide whether or not I want to pivot from my current goal of becoming a professor
 - Year before graduating from my PhD: Enter the job market and look for opportunities, whether that's a post-doc or a professor position
 - May or June 2027 (or 2028?): Graduate with a PhD (and hopefully at least 8 papers under my belt) and get ready for what's next!
- Some of these milestones are easier to measure or determine success for than others. For example, success for the third milestone would be landing an internship at a company that I want to work at, but success for having a fun, relaxing summer can be subjective. As such, I will define success as my happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction

with where I am at each stage of my life. Even if I don't attain some of these milestones, as long as I am content with my progress so far, I believe that will be a success.

- External factors that might negatively affect attaining my success include failing my qualifying exams, having a bad relationship with my advisor, or having a family or personal emergency. Some positive factors could be receiving a fellowship (such as the NSF GRFP) and attending conferences and networking with other accessibility researchers.
- In the case that any of the negative external factors are on the horizon, first and foremost, I will consult trusted individuals such as my PhD advisor (unless the problem is the relationship that I have with them), peers in the lab and at the university, and friends and family. I believe that talking to trusted people about the hardships that I am going through can help me develop solutions and create an action plan for moving forward. Knowing myself, I will also plan to take one or two days to fully relax and decompress from any built up anxiety that I might be feeling about the failure before targeting the problem head-on and working hard to pick myself up out of the situation I find myself in. If I can no longer get a PhD, I will look into finding teaching or product management jobs that do not require graduate school credentials.

Personal “Board of Directors”

- [Haben Girma](#): Girma is the first deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law. She is currently a Disability Rights Lawyer and has been an incredible changemaker, activist, and advocate for disability rights. I find her work both online and offline to be interesting, and hope to learn from her successes in leveraging online community support to fight for rights that have in-person impacts. Her background in law and humanities is also complementary to my skill set.
- [Emily Kim](#) (and Heather Hodges): If I wasn't working on accessibility, I would probably be working on a baking and pastry-related business idea. [The Pastry Project](#) is a Seattle-based social enterprise started by two former Molly Moon's leads, and Kim was the Director of Social Impact prior to starting this venture (Hodges was the head chef at the time). They focus on making baking and pastry more accessible to people with barriers to employment, such as formerly incarcerated people. I really admire their ability to create a brand new business with a focus on empowering others in their local community, and would love to be advised by either of them!
- [Daniel Zhu](#): Daniel is a close friend who is also one of the smartest people that I know, both in computer science and in business reasoning. I've worked with him in the past and he often asks hard-hitting questions that can be difficult to answer, but these questions are necessary as they get to the core faults in an idea. Since he is a close friend, I feel more comfortable discussing a wide variety of issues with him, rather than domain-specific questions that I may be asking the other two directors.