**Overcoming Adversity**

My academic journey reflects resilience and growth in the face of challenges. Initially focused on physics through high school Olympiads, I transitioned to computer science after discovering AI and graphics technology during my sophomore year. With no prior programming experience, I faced steep barriers in adapting from independent problem-solving in physics to the collaborative, project-driven nature of computer science.

Persistence was key. I taught myself programming through hands-on projects like building QT applications and embraced teamwork through collaborative research. These experiences pushed me out of my comfort zone, teaching me to navigate communication challenges and develop technical expertise.

As I gained confidence, I took on leadership roles, notably in a machine learning project where I organized tasks and mentored less experienced members. Supporting others in overcoming their own challenges was a rewarding culmination of my journey, highlighting the value of perseverance and collaboration in achieving growth.  
 **Community Involvement (e.g. volunteer service, organizing, activism, teaching, mentoring, counseling, community art production etc.)**  
One of my most impactful experiences, though not directly related to myfield of study, was volunteering at an orphanage in a remote andunderprivileged Tibetan region in China. The goal was to providepsychological support to children who had lost their parents or beenabandoned. While these children lived fulfilling lives in the orphanage.they often faced uncertainties about family, self-worth, and personalgrowth.Our diverse team, including psychology professors, high schoolstudents, undergraduates, and graduate students from various fields.organized activities to help these children address potentialpsychological challenges and build self-confidence. This diversity posedboth challenges and opportunities. First, we non-psychology volunteersunderwent training on psychological principles, which challenged someof our misconceptions and required us to adjust our approachesThrough shared leaming, we developed a unified understanding.enabling us to leverage our individual strengths to benefit the children.For instance,lshared the joys of exploring science through my

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background in computer science and physics, while a colleague with ahistory background inspired the children to express themselves asthinkers and writers. Artistic teammates taught drawing, while l, as anamateur photographer, documented the children's creativity andprogress.This experience taught me the value of interdisciplinary collaborationand respect for diverse perspectives. it deepened my appreciation forinclusivity and the power of combining our strengths to achieve acommon goal-helping the children grow into confident, well-roundedindividuals.

Social Justice Experience (e.g. addressing systemic inequality through education, organizing, activism, mentorship, counseling, outreach/access, survival and development work, event planning/coordination, community building and development, etc.)

Still I want to talk about my experiences volunteering at an orphanage in a remote Tibetan region in China, where I worked to address systemic inequalities in education and personal development. The children we supported—orphans from underprivileged backgrounds—often struggled with self-worth and personal growth due to their limited access to resources and opportunities. Our goal was to provide psychological support and inspire these children to believe in their potential, regardless of their circumstances.

I played a role in designing activities aimed at fostering self-expression and ambition. For example, I introduced science workshops, using experiments and hands-on demonstrations to ignite curiosity, while colleagues used art and storytelling to nurture creativity and critical thinking. This multidisciplinary approach highlighted the importance of exposing children to diverse fields, helping them imagine themselves as contributors to society in roles traditionally beyond their reach.

What stood out most was the transformative impact of creating spaces where these children felt heard and valued. Their growing confidence reflected the importance of equitable education that prioritizes empowerment over rote learning. This experience strengthened my resolve to address disparities in access and representation, particularly for marginalized groups, and reinforced my belief in education as a tool for social justice.