

Sean Nian

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Education	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science	Champaign, IL Aug. 2025 – Aug. 2031
	San Jose State University Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with Honors	San Jose, CA Aug. 2021 – Dec. 2024
Publications	K. Hollingsworth, S. Nian , A. Gutierrez, and A. Padmanabhan. <i>An Analysis of Network Overhead in Distributed TinyML</i> . [Short Paper]. IEEE/ACM Symposium on Edge Computing (SEC), Rome, Italy, 2024, pp. 449-455. DOI: 10.1109/SEC62691.2024.00051.	
	S. Nian and G. Ishigaki. <i>Autoscaling in Knative for Serverless Computing Using Deep Reinforcement Learning</i> . [Short Paper]. IEEE Global Communications Conference (GLOBECOM), Taipei, Taiwan, 2025. (Under Review).	
Presentations	<i>An Analysis of Network Overhead in Distributed TinyML</i> . [Sole Presenter]. INTERACT Workshop, IEEE/ACM Symposium on Edge Computing (SEC), Rome, Italy, 2024.	
	<i>An Analysis of Network Overhead in Distributed TinyML</i> . [Poster, Co-presented]. Harvey Mudd College CS Summer Research Multi-Institutional Seminar, 2024.	
Other	S. Nian , A. Huang, and B. Reed. <i>Building a Mastodon Compatible Java Server for ActivityPub</i> . [Preprint]. arXiv:2412.09011 [cs.SI], 2024. DOI: 10.48550/arXiv.2412.09011.	
	S. Qi, X. I. Quan, T. Park, and B. Makani. <i>The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Scholarly Research – AI Tools Evaluation</i> . [Acknowledged Research Assistance: S. Nian]. Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines, vol. 11, no. 3/4, Feb. 2025, pp. 90-114.	
Research	User-Centric Machine Learning Systems with Prof. Fan Lai University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	Aug. 2025 – Present
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Effectively serving machine-learning models in long-context settings, with an emphasis on resource-latency trade-offs	
	ML Systems for Serverless Computing with Prof. Genya Ishigaki San Jose State University	Aug. 2024 – April 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed a Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) agent using PPO to perform simultaneous horizontal (pod count) and vertical (CPU/memory) scaling in KnativeAchieved superior performance over native autoscalers, reducing memory consumption by up to 44% while increasing request throughput by 18.6% in high-concurrency scenariosEngineered a custom OpenAI Gym environment wrapping a live Kubernetes cluster to train the agent and programmatically apply scaling decisions by modifying Knative manifests in real-time	
	Optimizing TinyML Systems with Prof. Arthi Padmanabhan Harvey Mudd College (NSF Funded REU)	May 2024 – July 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engineered a distributed TinyML inference system using C++ on ESP32-S3 microcontrollers by partitioning a quantized TensorFlow MobileNet model and distributing intermediate computations over Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE)Optimized the BLE network communication protocol for enhanced fault-tolerance and energy efficiency, analyzing network overhead to reduce the distributed inference failure rate to 0%Authored a 6-page paper on the network overhead and challenges of distributed TinyML, accepted for publication and presentation at the INTERACT workshop at ACM/IEEE SEC 2024	
	Decentralized Social Media Networks with Prof. Ben Reed San Jose State University	Jun. 2023 – May 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explored decentralized social media networks by analyzing the ActivityPub Protocol’s architectureEngineered moth, an open-source ActivityPub server in Java, by implementing RESTful API endpoints with JSON payloads using Spring WebFlux to ensure robust decentralized communicationReverse-engineered Mastodon’s client-server API by analyzing network traffic with Wireshark,	

enabling full compatibility between our moth server and the official Mastodon web frontend

Industry
Experience

PACCAR Silicon Valley Innovation Center
R&D Software Engineer Intern

May 2025 – Present

- Architected an edge-to-cloud data pipeline for an AI-powered dashcam system in Kotlin using Android Studio with low-level libIPC components, optimizing for resource-constrained hardware
- Engineered a vehicle data processing module by creating custom DBC files compliant with SAE J1939 standards; decoding 60+ CAN messages, mapping over 600 signals and 20,000 PGN/SPNs
- Implemented an edge management system to prevent on-device storage exhaustion, implementing a RAM and ROM monitoring system to automatically offload encrypted files to the cloud
- Enabled fleet-wide data visualization and analysis, creating a scalable RESTful API using Node.js and Express.js to ingest high-volume telemetry into the PACCAR data lake via MongoDB schemas
- Presented the end-to-end system at the PACCAR Innovation Center's Q3 review and briefed leadership at PACCAR Global Connected Services, demonstrating production viability and leading to plans for continued development

Awards

2025 NSF Graduate Research Fellow

2024 NSF Student Travel Grant IEEE/ACM SEC

– \$1,700

2021 SJSU Gail Fullerton Endowment

– \$1,000

2021 SJSU XILINX Scholarship

– \$2,500

References

Prof. Fan Lai

Assistant Professor of Computer Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign,
Email: fanlai@illinois.edu.

Prof. Genya Ishigaki

Assistant Professor of Computer Science at San Jose State University, Email: genya.ishigaki@sjsu.edu.

Prof. Arthi Padmanabhan

Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Harvey Mudd College, Email: arpadmanabhan@g.hmc.edu.

Prof. Ben Reed

Assistant Professor of Computer Engineering at San Jose State University, Email: ben.reed@sjsu.edu.