Candidate Statement | **Xinru Wang**

For as long as I can remember, I was the only girl in my Go class. Slightly introverted, I only had as my best friends my two boxes of elegant, black and white Go pieces made of agate and purple jade. Six years of training and tournaments made me a 4-dan at ten and No.1 in the women's Go game in Hangzhou city, one step away from entering the 5-dan rank and becoming a professional chess player. Representing the Youth Group of Jiangxi Province Go Team with my aggressive style and formidable calculation skills, I enjoyed every game and contest. But everything changed when AlphaGo easily defeated Lee Sedol and Ke Jie (both former world No. 1s in 2016 and 2017, respectively), not to mention its updated version, AlphaGo Zero. That was why I chose to study computer science in college, which seemed a far more exciting game.

Since graduation, my professional experience and, particularly, daily exposure to astronomical data and immense operational complexity in Meituan, one of the leading e-commerce platforms in China, further convinced me of the necessity of graduate-level training to better harvest the power of data. To that end, I cannot think of better means other than statistical methods, machine learning, and artificial intelligence as the main frameworks to distill essence from ever-increasing data in all industries. This vision became clearer with the advent of large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, Llama, etc. Motivated by the same vision of empowering developers with intelligent digital assistants, I must receive graduate-level training.

Therefore, I am pursuing the Master Program in Computer Science (MPCS) at the Department of Computer Science, UChicago, which appeals to me for many reasons. Among the broad research areas covered by the department, AI and Machine Learning align with my passion perfectly. I am first attracted by MPCS' flexible curriculum. For instance, elective courses like Applied Data Analysis (MPCS 53120), Big Data (MPCS 53013), and Machine Learning (MPCS 53111) will lay an all-around groundwork to encapsulate the essence of data for real-world scenarios. Additionally, I admire the department's first-rate faculty, conducting research on exciting topics, such as efficient online decision tree learning by Assistant Professor Yuxin Chen, the convolutional neural network designed for meshes by Assistant Professor Rana Hanocka, and distribution-free inference for neural networks by Professor Rebecca Willet. Looking forward to working with them, I covet the abundant research prospects offered by the various labs, groups, and industrial partners. On top of that, I aspired to forge connections with and receive wisdom from experts in the field who host frequent academic events. I am also optimistic about my professional future because of the outstanding career resources, including CS Job Board, Career Advancement, and UChicagoGRAD.

Upon completing training at UChicago, I will seek full-time employment at a leading-edge AI-focused company like OpenAI or Google DeepMind. Committed to the vision of a world where programmers don't need to code, I am open to any challenge.