

# Justin Yirka

Ph.D. Student in Computer Science  
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## Research Interests

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Quantum computing & Theoretical computer science:

Complexity theory, algorithms, and connections to applications

## Education

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### University of Texas at Austin (UT)

Ph.D. in Computer Science 2019 – present

Advisor: Scott Aaronson, Ph.D.

M.S. in Computer Science 2022

### Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

B.S. in Computer Science 2018

B.S. in Mathematical Sciences Concurrent/Dual degrees

Minor in Physics

## Research

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### Experience.....

R&D Intern Summer 2023–present

Sandia National Laboratories

Supervisors: Ojas Parekh, Ph.D. and John Kallaughner, Ph.D.

Topic: Hardness of estimating optimum product states of local Hamiltonians. Quantum constrained optimization problems.

Summer school / Research Assistant Summer 2019

Los Alamos National Laboratories Quantum Computing Summer School

Supervisor: Yiğit Subaşı, Ph.D.

Topic: Near-term (NISQ) quantum algorithms. Studied use of qubit resets to construct circuits for entanglement spectroscopy which were noise-resilient *and* low-width.

Research Assistant Summer 2018

Graph Theory Computational Discovery Lab, VCU

Supervisor: Craig Larson, Ph.D.

Topic: Automated conjecturing and graph theory. Studied conditions for graph Hamiltonicity. Assisted with programming and open-source project management.

Undergraduate Researcher (NSF REU C.A.A.R.) Summer 2017  
 Joint Center for Quantum Inform. and Computer Science (QuICS), University of Maryland  
 Supervisor: Andrew Childs, Ph.D.  
 Topic: Quantum tomography. Investigated minimum number of Pauli observables necessary to identify a quantum pure state.

Undergraduate Research Assistant 2015–2016  
 Quantum Computing Lab, VCU  
 Supervisor: Sevag Gharibian, Ph.D.  
 Topic: Complexity theory. Studied quantum oracle classes (e.g.  $P^{QMA[\log]}$ ) and complexity of simulating local measurements. Helped develop a “quantum PH” and “quantum Toda’s Theorem” ( $QCPH \subseteq P^{PP^{PP}}$ ).

## Invited positions & Workshops.....

Invitation-only workshop June 2021  
 Schloss Dagstuhl — Quantum Complexity: Theory and Application

Visiting Researcher November 2018  
 University of Paderborn, Germany  
 Collaboration with Sevag Gharibian, Ph.D.  
 Topic: Complexity theory and algorithms. Studied  $QMA_1$ -hardness of the quantum satisfaction problem ( $k$ -QSAT) given qudits of lower dimensions.

## Preprints.....

S. Gharibian, S. Piddock, and J. Yirka. Oracle complexity classes and local measurements on physical Hamiltonians. Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/1909.05981>. 2019.

## Journal Publications.....

S. Gharibian, M. Santha, J. Sikora, A. Sundaram, and J. Yirka. Quantum generalizations of the polynomial hierarchy with applications to  $QMA(2)$ . *Computational Complexity*, 31:12, 2022. DOI: 10.1007/s00037-022-00231-8.

J. Yirka and Y. Subasi. Qubit-efficient entanglement spectroscopy using qubit resets. *Quantum*, 5:535, 2021. DOI: 10.22331/q-2021-09-02-535.

S. Gharibian and J. Yirka. The complexity of simulating local measurements on quantum systems. *Quantum*, 3:189, 2019. DOI: 10.22331/q-2019-09-30-189.

## Conference Presentations ..... (grouped by paper) .....

J. Yirka and Y. Subasi. Qubit-efficient entanglement spectroscopy using qubit resets.

- **Contributed talk by J. Yirka** at 6th Conference for Young Quantum Information Scientists (YQIS). Virtual, 2021.
- Contributed talk by Y. Subasi at APS March Meeting 2021. Virtual.
- **Contributed talk by J. Yirka** at 20th Asian Quantum Information Science Conference (AQIS). Virtual, 2020.

S. Gharibian, S. Piddock, and J. Yirka. Oracle complexity classes and local measurements on physical Hamiltonians.

- Contributed talk by S. Piddock at 37th Symposium on Theoretical Aspects of Computer Science (STACS). Montpellier, France, 2020.

- **Contributed talk by J. Yirka** at 23rd Conference on Quantum Information Processing (QIP). Shenzhen, China, 2020.
- Poster by S. Piddock at 14th Conference on the Theory of Quantum Computation, Communication, and Cryptography (TQC). College Park, MD, USA, 2019.
- Poster by S. Piddock at Workshop on Quantum Computing Theory in Practice (QCTIP). Bristol, UK, 2019.
- **Poster by J. Yirka** at 22nd Conference on Quantum Information Processing (QIP). Boulder, CO, USA, 2019.
- **Contributed talk by J. Yirka** at 18th Asian Quantum Information Science Conference (AQIS). Nagoya, Japan, 2018.

S. Gharibian, M. Santha, J. Sikora, A. Sundaram, and J. Yirka. Quantum generalizations of the polynomial hierarchy with applications to QMA(2).

- Poster by A. Sundaram at 22nd Conference on Quantum Information Processing (QIP). Boulder, CO, USA, 2019.
- Contributed talk by A. Sundaram at 18th Asian Quantum Information Science Conference (AQIS). Nagoya, Japan, 2018. — **“Long”/plenary talk: top 7% of submissions.**
- Contributed talk by A. Sundaram at 43rd International Symposium on Mathematical Foundations of Computer Science (MFCS). Liverpool, UK, 2018.

S. Gharibian and J. Yirka. The complexity of simulating local measurements on quantum systems.

- Contributed talk by S. Gharibian at 12th Conference on the Theory of Quantum Computation, Communication, and Cryptography (TQC). Paris, France, 2017.
- **Poster by J. Yirka** at 20th Conference on Quantum Information Processing (QIP). Seattle, USA, 2017. Presented under a different title.

J. Yirka. Evaluation of TCP header fields for data overhead efficiency.

- **Poster by J. Yirka** at 30th National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR). Asheville, NC, USA, 2016.
- **Poster by J. Yirka** at VCU Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creativity. Richmond, VA, USA, 2015. — **Awarded “Launch Award for Outstanding Research Poster”.**

## Departmental Seminars.....

Pure state tomography with Pauli observables. QuICS, University of Maryland. 2017.

Quantum complexity of estimating local physical quantities. Department of Computer Science, VCU. 2016.

## Scholarships and Funding (all dollar amounts in USD)

VCU Presidential Scholarship	2014–2018
\$110,000, Virginia Commonwealth University	
Awarded to 0.6% of admitted students.	

Travel grant to attend QIP 2020 in Shenzhen, China	2020
\$1100, QIP student support / NSF	

Travel grant to attend QIP 2019 in Boulder, CO, USA \$400, QIP student support / NSF	2019
Grants for seminar series by VCU RamDev software development club \$1,900, VCU Student Government Association	2016–2018
Mark A. Sternheimer Capstone Design Award \$660, VCU School of Engineering Grant for developing and testing senior project mobile app.	2017
Travel grant to present at QIP 2017 in Seattle, USA \$500, VCU Honors College	2017
Travel grant to present at NCUR 2016 in Asheville, NC, USA \$550, VCU Honors College	2016

## Awards and Honors

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Honorable Mention NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF GRFP) Awarded to top 30% of over 12,000 applicants.	(Awarded twice) 2019, 2020
Pure Mathematics Award VCU College of Humanities and Sciences Student in pure math concentration with highest graduating GPA.	May 2018
Launch Award for Outstanding Research Poster VCU Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creativity For poster <i>Evaluation of TCP header fields for data overhead efficiency</i> .	2015
Volunteer of the Year Grade-school robotics program, Prince William County Schools, VA	2014

## Teaching Experience

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UT.....	
Head Teaching Assistant Quantum Information Science (Web-based for M.S. program) QIS course for students in online M.S. program. All lecture content was pre-recorded by S. Aaronson. I was responsible for all other content and logistics, including modifying the homework, exams, and grading for the online format. I handled student concerns, academic integrity, and final grades nearly autonomously, with S. Aaronson as instructor of record. Supervised 4 other teaching assistants.	Spring 2022, 2023
I was tasked with ensuring a successful first iteration of the course for the growing MSCS program at UT. Spring 2022 course: 200 students, course evaluation 4.1 / 5	

Teaching Assistant Fall 2021  
Introduction to Quantum Information Science (Honors course)  
With Scott Aaronson. Taught recitation and graded assignments.

Instructor Summer 2021  
UT International Academy: Software Engineering  
Virtual. Introductory software engineering course for international undergraduate students.

**VCU**.....

Teaching Assistant (2 semesters) 2016–2017  
Algebra with Applications (MATH 141)  
Assisted with daily in-class exercises, offered tutorials, graded assignments.  
Average student evaluation scores — Fall 2016: 4.78 / 5.0; Spring 2017: 4.36 / 5.0.

Mentor for first-year student Fall 2016  
Honors College freshman mentorship program

Teaching Assistant Fall 2015  
Honors Rhetoric (HONR 200) — first-year honors writing and research course

**Other**.....

Instructor 2016–2018  
CPR and first-aid courses for lifeguards  
Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince William County, VA

## Service

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**Refereeing**.....

**Journal reviewer::** *Quantum* (2022, 2020)

**PC Member:** YQIS 2021 — 6th Conference for Young Quantum Information Scientists

**Conference subreviewer:** QIP (2024, 2022), TQC (2023, 2022), ITCS 2023, RANDOM 2023, CCC 2022

**Professional Service**.....

Representative and Chair Spring 2020–Fall 2021  
UT Graduate Representative Association of Computer Science (GRACS)  
○ GRACS representative to UTCS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council, 2020–2021.

Ph.D. application reviewer Fall 2020  
UT CS Graduate Admissions Committee

Lead Mentor Fall 2020  
Graduate Application Assistance Program (GAAP) for UTCS by GRACS  
Student-led program for mentoring under-represented applicants to Ph.D. program. As part of GRACS, I helped organize the first year of this program, managed volunteer mentors, and mentored prospective students.

Panelist — Grad school discussion for underrepresented undergraduates UT CS student organizations	August 2020
GradFest committee member UT Department of Computer Science Helped plan visit weekend for admitted Ph.D. students.	Spring 2020
Met with U.S. Army Operations Group I was asked to share my observations from AQIS 2018.	November 2018
Student Advisory Board member VCU Department of Computer Science Met with department faculty. Participated in hiring interviews for new faculty in 2017.	(2 academic years) 2016–2018
Senior Reader for Honors program graduation dossiers VCU Honors College Coordinated other readers.	(2 academic years) 2016–2017
Panelist — Career workshop for freshman mentorship program VCU Department of Computer Science	2017
Panelist — Undergraduate conference preparation workshops VCU Honors College	2017
Judge — Launch Award for Outstanding Research Poster VCU Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creativity	2016

### Extracurricular Service.....

Founder and President RamDev: Software Development at VCU	(2.5 academic years) 2016–2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coordinated 46 weekly seminars including 9 corporate speakers and several hackathon trips.</li> <li>○ Secured and managed \$2400 in funding and resources.</li> <li>○ Increased weekly attendance to 20 students, becoming largest C.S. organization at VCU.</li> </ul>	

### Outreach and Community Service.....

Tutor for remedial math students at local high school Manchester High School, Midlothian, VA Up to 4.5 hours per week with several groups of students.	Spring 2019
Talk — Computer Science theory <i>is</i> fun VCU RamDev software development club	April 2018
Talk — Quantum programming (e.g. IBM Q, LIQUi >)) VCU RamDev software development club	2017
Organizer — Local Hack Day of Richmond, VA Major League Hacking (MLH) and VCU Department of Computer Science Organized event for 30 students including 12 high school students.	2016
Volunteer for grade school robotics competitions (FIRST, Vex robotics) Prince William County Schools, VA Awarded “Volunteer of the Year”, 2014.	2011–2015

Mentor to middle school robotics team (FIRST robotics)  
Wilder Middle School, Richmond, VA

Fall 2014