

Zachary Hafen-Saavedra

PhD, Theoretical and Computational Astrophysics

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Summary

[click here for a work sample](#)

Computational scientist and analyst with ten years experience earned as a Northwestern University and UC Irvine astrophysicist. Extensive history leading interdisciplinary collaborations and communicating complex concepts. Exploring positions related to data science, data analysis, and quantitative modeling.

Skills

Techniques: data analysis (time-series, cleaning, exploratory, big data, sparse), machine learning, natural language processing, frequentist/Bayesian statistics, code testing, multiscale/hierarchical modeling

Soft skills: technical leadership and management, public speaking, mentoring

Tools: Python (numpy, pandas, matplotlib, scikit-learn), SQL, TensorFlow, Unix, C/C++, git, nltk

Experience

McCue Prize Postdoctoral Fellow

University of California, Irvine

July 2020 - Present

Irvine, CA

- Employed [natural language processing](#) to convert >200,000 scientific abstracts to quantitative data
- Discovered text similarity correlates with a $\sim 1.5\times$ [increase in citations](#), using a custom C++ backend
- Performed complex [filtering of >2 TB of remote data](#) via the NASA astrophysics data system API
- Led an [eight-institution, international collaboration](#) to enable an analysis requiring expertise from observers, analysts, and simulators
- [Forward-tested Bayesian statistical models](#) against three increasingly-complex test cases
- Interpolated simulation outcomes by enhancing [sampling of N-dimensional probability distributions](#)
- Improved [mock-data fidelity by >200%](#) by interfacing with open source atomic spectra data
- Explored [6 variations of 23 datasets](#) by developing a tool for application-agnostic data-management
- Organized [a meeting of 20 leading galaxy-shape experts](#) to identify target measurements

GK-12 Graduate Fellow

Northwestern University

June 2014 - July 2020

Evanston, IL

- Created [quantitative visualizations](#), educational [explanatory visualizations](#), and award-winning [artistic visualizations](#) to communicate core messages
- Processed [tens of TB of >20-dimensional data](#) using high-performance-computing resources, reducing to <100 GB of highly-interpretable data
- Employed [modern software development best practices](#) (unit testing, version control, etc.) to maintain a broad suite of essential software
- Utilized and modified a C simulation code to generate [>100,000-CPU-hour simulations](#) of entire galaxies
- Interpreted [complex time-series trajectories](#) by utilizing and modifying 3D interactive viz software
- Developed [software for non-relational data management](#), including analysis of contained relational data
- Brought opportunities to [>100 students from underrepresented backgrounds](#) by leading one of Chicago's first data-science education initiatives
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary range of scientists to publish (to date) [36 papers, 7 as a lead author](#)

Education

Northwestern University

PhD, MS, Physics and Astronomy

Specialization: Theoretical and Computational Astrophysics

May 2020

Evanston, IL

University of Northern Colorado

BS, Physics, Math emphasis

May 2014

Greeley, CO