

Coming from a Psychology background, I've always been fascinated by human behavior and how the mind works. I'm particularly interested in the psychology of design and the way it affects its users. Today, computing is moving quickly away from just the traditional desktop, and technology can help people accomplish goals, stay connected, and enhance quality of life. The industry is evolving in a way that requires designers to think more intuitively and effectively, and I believe the MHCI+D program at the University of Washington will equip me with the right skills and design thinking to make an impact in the field.

After I completed my undergraduate education at UC Santa Barbara, I found a role doing administrative work at rfXcel, a small company that builds SaaS software for the pharmaceutical industry. This was where I discovered human-computer interaction for the first time and I was determined to learn as much as I could and break into the field. I enrolled in two certification programs that taught me foundations in interaction design, and I took on side projects to begin building a portfolio of my work. The projects included a redesign of rfXcel's company page to better the user experience, an app idea to improve safety, and another app that streamlines workflow for students and employees. I later joined a start-up called Handpick in San Francisco to get closer to UX designers and gain more exposure. I was still in the admin role, but it was the first time I got to see designers at work and gained mentorship with my own career path. Handpick employees have a special passion and place an importance on the impact of technology on people's lives. Working there, I began to understand the role design plays in innovation and improvement.

I continued studying for my classes and creating my portfolio outside of the regular 9 to 5 day. I spent months doing research to find solutions to current problems, conducting tests to understand user insights, and learning the complex design tools of Adobe Creative Suite. It was taxing, challenging, and frustrating, but it was the first time in my life that work didn't feel like work; it was fun and fulfilling. Throughout the process, I learned that H-CI is more than just solving problems; it's also about facilitating interactions between people in richer and deeper ways. In doing so, we can find new ways to create meaningful connections.

I believe the intense involvement and strong collaboration within UW's immersive program will teach me to build on the skills I already have, and supplement me with what I'm missing in order to be successful. I have the curiosity, drive, and dedication, but am needing the collaborative and team-centered environment that the MHCI+D program offers. I have a strong background in psychology that allows me to understand human behavior and user insights, but am lacking and want to sharpen my decision-making, development process, and problem solving skills. UW's faculty is especially appealing to me as much of the past research regarding influencing behavior and health and wellness are similar to future goals that I plan to pursue. I also have an attachment to the city of Seattle and everything it has to offer. Every time I've visited, I can't get enough of the vibrant community, diverse people, and innovative culture.

I envision myself designing technology to encourage healthier and better lives. My family has a history of diabetes and high cholesterol, and I myself have struggled with insomnia and sleep issues. I want to explore wearables and other devices that involve health informatics to maintain healthy lifestyles and prevent ailments wherever possible. My interests aren't limited to just the digital realm of the health industry, but also includes research into how user behavior is affected in areas such as social advocacy and renewable energy. Designers have a chance to make an impact with the rapid evolution of technology and it's important that we explore the possibilities.

I believe that design research will always be true in its consideration of people. The future lies in broadening our horizons and becoming co-creators with not just the companies we're working for, but also the communities and individuals that we are designing for. H-CI Design is where I find my true passion; it's the perfect cross between technology and psychology, but coming up with an idea is just the beginning. It's crafting the idea into a real, working thing that is a truly exciting experience.