

HO CHI CHENG

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EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- University of Georgia (UGA)** *Athens, GA*
Ph.D. in Polymer, Fiber, and Textile Sciences (*Presidential Graduate Fellow*) *Expected 2030*
Concentration: International Merchandising
- **Virginia Wilbanks Kilgore Scholarship** (college-level merit award) *August 2026 – May 2027*
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)** *Blacksburg, VA*
M.A. in Economics *August 2023 – December 2024*
- **Graduate Teaching Assistantship** (funded position awarded for outstanding academic performance and teaching potential) *August 2023 – May 2024*
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)** *Blacksburg, VA*
B.A. in Economics (*Summa Cum Laude*) *January 2020 – May 2023*
- **College of Science, Dean's List** (awarded to students with high GPA) *FA20, SP21, SP22, FA22, SP23*
 - **Outstanding Junior Award** (awarded for academic excellence, extracurricular activities, and professor recommendations) *Spring 2022*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Markov Decision Processes (MDPs) for Healthcare Decisions** *Blacksburg, VA*
Research Assistant/Affiliate Researcher *June 2025 – Present*
- Worked on the “Scheduling Institutionalization Six Months Ahead” project, led by Prof. Huaiyang Zhong of Virginia Tech’s Grado Department of Industrial Systems Engineering and Prof. Ali Hajjar of Mohammed Bin Salman College of Business, applying Markov Decision Processes to dementia care decisions;
 - Screened and reviewed over 100 foundational works on dynamic decision-making in chronic disease/dementia care; extracted and presented state definitions, transition matrices, sojourn times, costs, and reward structures in a structured evidence table;
 - Presented a 20-slide synthesis of two core papers to project supervisors, as well as developing the conceptual framework, providing weekly updates, cleaning and organizing data in Jupyter Notebooks, and archiving outputs;
 - Worked with supervisors to co-develop an MDP for dementia care and created a six-month look-ahead policy to inform the decision to institutionalize immediately or continue home care;
 - Designed and implemented a reproducible Python simulation framework for testing and validating decision-making policies, drawing on expertise in algorithm development and data-driven evaluation.
- Impact of Online Social Networks on Economic Behaviors** *Blacksburg, VA*
Research Assistant *January 2022 – August 2023*
- Collaborated with Principal Investigator Prof. Xu Lin of the Department of Economics, Virginia Tech, on two research streams: fashion brand signaling and eWOM, and the relationship between social media engagement and consumption; delivered analysis plans covering four semesters; coordinated R and Stata pipelines from data cleaning to OLS/logit;
 - Conducted peer review on roughly 100 academic articles on topics related to the project over four semesters (3-10 papers per cycle, ranging from 10 to 500 pages in length), producing a summary, reflection, and actionable recommendations for each;
 - Used Stata and R to collect and analyze data; cleaned panel/survey logs, constructed engagement features (e.g., view/like/comment counts), and ran correlation and regression analyses to understand the relationship between user engagement and purchase intention/brand perception.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Department of Economics, Virginia Tech
Graduate Teaching Assistant

Blacksburg, VA
August 2023 – May 2024

- Led four two-hour review sessions for 50-110 students on the undergraduate course *Principles of Microeconomics* in both the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters;
- Produced 20+ original practice questions, including fully worked solutions, and a slide deck for each session (totaling over 160 questions);
- Independently delivered three 50-minute sessions to a class of 125 undergraduates, each comprising a lecture, guided problem-solving session, and Q&A, ensuring syllabus continuity and students' readiness for examination;
- Assisted the professor with cohesive classroom instruction and course logistics; provided support for over 50 students during regular office hours at the Economics Tutoring Center, improving their understanding of difficult concepts and assisting with exam preparation.

Department of Economics, Virginia Tech
Peer Mentor

Blacksburg, VA
August 2022 – December 2022

- Gained familiarity with education technology tools, running weekly Zoom sessions for students on the course *Pathway in Economics* to provide enhanced feedback;
- Served as a bridge between students and teaching staff, reporting on students' progress and weekly plans to professors in order to seek their guidance on securing better outcomes;
- Created learning aids to help first-year students apply their knowledge to real-world examples, including one-page concept maps, quick-reference sheets for formulas and definitions, and step-by-step problem walkthroughs;
- Provided one-on-one mentoring on study plans and managing deadlines; coordinated with faculty to ensure students received consistent guidance on grading and course details across sections, supporting their effective adaptation to university life.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Giving Forward
Data Analytics and Business Intelligence Specialist

New York, NY
June 2025 – April 2026

- Used Excel to build a brand tracker covering aspects including category and price tier; conducted overall market research and competitor analysis, based on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and annual reports and press releases, to support audience targeting and strategic outreach;
- Collected data on pre- and post-campaign social signals (brand mentions, like and comment rates) and news sentiment; cleaned, merged, and visualized data in Excel to produce before-and-after summaries for proposals for improving social media strategies, leading to a 22% growth in brand awareness and public engagement compared to the previous year;
- Translated findings into data-backed pitch decks to help leaders better understand core concepts and benefits, as well as key performance indicators (KPIs) and how these relate to final profits;
- Built the company's social media presence from zero across three platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Reddit), creating visual content in Canva and writing platform-specific captions for manual posting on all three.

CrossCity Culture Advertising Media Co., Ltd
Chief Operating Officer Assistant

Shenzhen, China
January 2021 – May 2021

- Selected from 20 candidates for the role of assistant to the COO of NONHUMAN, a subsidiary fashion brand under a fashion media group; responsible for all communication with other departments, ensuring coordination of the COO's schedules and resources;
- Responsible for the casting of ten models and for choosing a photoshoot location from five options, based on the models and the nature of the event, ultimately receiving high praise from clients;
- Produced an observation report and field investigation to analyze branding strategies during Shenzhen Fashion Week, receiving positive feedback from the COO;
- Reported on a Louis Vuitton VIC event, gaining insight into luxury client experiences and providing recommendations for spatial and presentation improvements at NONHUMAN events.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND LEADERSHIP

Virginia Tech Economics Club ***Co-Founder***

Blacksburg, VA
August 2022 – December 2022

- Launched the Economics Club with a faculty sponsor, aiming to promote economics as both an academic subject and a career path and to create a peer learning space for undergraduates;
- Coordinated with Economics department faculty to host around 10 informative talks by staff or alumni (e.g., “What is Economics?”), attended by over 300 students; handled room booking, prepared Q&A prompts, and posted event recaps on social media;
- Managed the club’s TikTok account via a weekly content calendar, writing post captions and using Canva to design event posters; used TikTok analytics to time reminders and drive attendance;
- Organized eight movie nights and two game nights; designed a “Nash-equilibrium chess” activity to teach best-response reasoning and led short debrief sessions to link play to economic concepts.

Virginia Tech Chinese Students and Scholars Association (VT-CSSA) ***Executive Officer & Event Host***

Blacksburg, VA
August 2021 – December 2021

- Co-led planning and on-site delivery of five large-scale cultural events, each with over 300 attendees, creating detailed rundowns, vendor checklists, and promotion timelines; coordinated with eight organizers to finalize logistics and approvals;
- Served as lead host and stage coordinator for competitions and live shows, managing audience interaction and transitions;
- Supervised backstage operations, assigning roles and cues to the sound, lighting, and stage crews; maintained communication via intercom and handled real-time scheduling, including last-minute program changes, as well as troubleshooting technical issues as they arose;
- Drafted hosting scripts, safety announcements, and WeChat posts in collaboration with the media and publicity teams; coordinated on-site filming and produced highlight videos for each event, uploaded within 24 hours to the organization’s WeChat account and YouTube channel.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Languages: Mandarin (native); Cantonese (native); English (fluent)

Programming Languages and Frameworks: R/RStudio (proficient); Python (proficient); Stata (proficient); LaTeX (proficient); SPSS (proficient); SQL (proficient); Microsoft Suite (proficient); Minitab (basic)

Interests: Fashion styling and street photography, contemporary art, playlist curation, fitness

REFERENCES

References available upon request.