

Javon Hickmon

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EDUCATION

University of Washington – Ph.D. Computer Science	Sept. 2026 – Present
University of Washington – M.S. Computer Science (with Certificate in Ethics)	Sept. 2024 – June 2026
University of Washington – B.S. Computer Science (with Honors)	Sept. 2021 – June 2024
Olympic College – A.A.	Sept. 2019 – June 2021

RESEARCH INTERESTS

My interests broadly include **human-AI interaction** and **AI ethics**. I currently explore ways to evaluate and augment morality within machine learning systems to be aligned with users' morals. My goal is to mitigate the risks associated with AI systems by improving their ethical capabilities.

PUBLICATIONS

Bricker, L., **Hickmon, J.**, Bowe, L., Payton, J., & Dowling, K. (2026, February). Providing Supplemental Programs for First Generation and/or Low-Income CS Students in Trying Financial Times. In *Proceedings of the 57th ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education V. 2* (pp. 1613-1614).

Hickmon, J. (2024, March). Multimodal Ensembling for Zero-Shot Image Classification. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 38, No. 21, pp. 23747-23749).

Preprints

Hickmon, J. (2025). D3G: Diverse Demographic Data Generation Increases Zero-Shot Image Classification Accuracy within Multimodal Models. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2512.15747*.

Hickmon, J. (2024). Multimodal Approaches to Fair Image Classification - An Ethical Perspective. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2412.12165*.

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

ARCS Scholar	2026 – Present
Corin Anderson Endowed Fellowship in Computer Science & Engineering	2026 – Present
NSF Graduate Research Fellow	2025 – Present
GEM Fellow (NASA)	2024 – 2026
Husky 100 Scholar	2024
Selected as one of the top 100 students who made the most out of their time at the University of Washington, a school of 40,000 students	
AAAI Undergraduate Consortium Scholar	2024
Selected as a top student researcher and presented research proposal at AAAI 24	
Google CS Research Mentorship Program Scholar	2023 – 2024
Accepted to a three-month program that matches students with Google mentors and peers to support their pursuit of computer science research pathways	
Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Scholar	2023 – 2024
Selected from a competitive pool of students as a strong potential Ph.D. applicant	
Leo Maddox Foundation Endowed Scholarship	2023 – 2024

Washington State Opportunity Scholar	<i>2021 – 2024</i>
Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity Merit Scholar	<i>2022 – 2024</i>
Bava Scholarship	<i>2021 – 2024</i>
Dean's List	<i>2021 – 2024</i>
President's List	<i>2019 – 2021</i>

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant	<i>Sept. 2026 – Present</i>
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- Advised by Professors Katharina Reinecke and Max Kleiman-Weiner.

Independent Research	<i>June 2025 – June 2026</i>
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- Current morality datasets used for fine-tuning Language Models do not have extensive information about the annotators who labelled the data. This project aims to explore how diverse annotator demographics (such as nationality) could improve the moral adherence of Language Models deployed within communities that match those demographics.
- Working with Professors Katharina Reinecke and Colin Marshall.

Research Assistant – RAIVN Lab	<i>Jan. 2023 – June 2026</i>
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- Currently developing a project to balance the moral judgements produced by multimodal models by aligning the morality embodied within the image and text domains.
- Led the development of D3G, a project aimed at offsetting harmful demographic bias within any vision-language model. Achieved higher and more balanced classification accuracies when compared to OpenAI's CLIP model.
- Supervised by Professor Ali Farhadi and mentored by Sarah Pratt.

Research Scientist Intern – NASA	<i>June 2024 – Sept. 2025</i>
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- Within the Advanced Operations Concept Lab (AOCL), developing multispectral imaging for non-contact cognitive state estimation.
- Led the full project aimed at the accurate tracking and monitoring of human cognitive workloads. Designed novel experiments, wrote and trained a custom multispectral deep neural network, and modelled circuitry for alternative approaches.

Undergraduate Research Assistant – Peleg Lab	<i>June 2023 – June 2024</i>
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- [poster] Honeybee Swarm Dynamics: Investigating the Relationship Between Individual Decision Making and Collective Foraging.
- Created a novel multi-object tracking and segmentation algorithm that could track honeybees throughout the entirety of 5-minute-long videos without any loss in accuracy or spatiotemporal coherence.
- My algorithm outperformed XMem, a state-of-the-art long-term video object segmentation architecture. It achieved consistently higher long-term segmentation accuracies when evaluated in the context of our behavioral assay.
- Mentored by Dr. Orit Peleg.

Independent Research	<i>Jan. 2024 – Mar. 2024</i>
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- [poster] Audio-Lyric Alignment via Emotional Sentiment.
- Trained a large multimodal Deep Neural Network to perform cross-modal audio-to-lyric retrieval. Explored the feasibility of aligning audio and lyrics within a multimodal embedding space, using emotional sentiment as a similarity metric for contrastive learning.

Independent Research	<i>Jan. 2024 – Mar. 2024</i>
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- [poster] When and Why do Large Language Models Exhibit Biases?
- Explored whether LLM bias could be traced back to specific data points, which would allow for a flagging system when updating datasets, or even the utilization of model unlearning.
- Using red-teaming and “What’s In My Big Data” identified sources of harmful outputs, then proposed methods to offset this bias using Reinforcement Learning via Human Feedback.

TEACHING & MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Instructor – University of Washington

March 2025 – June 2026

- Instructor for CSE 190Y and CSE 197Y (these were the same course).
- These courses are for students in the Allen School Scholars Program, a program designed to support individuals from first-generation, low-income, and underserved communities.
- Led a team of 22 TAs across the series of courses. Developed course materials and restructured content to improve student learning.

Graduate Teaching Assistant – University of Washington

Jan. 2025 – March 2025

- Intro to Programming 1, 2, and 3 supplemental courses.
- Developed teaching materials, proctored exams, and hosted office hours.
- Managed and mentored our team of teaching assistants

Instructor – University of Washington

Sept. 2024 – Dec. 2024

- Instructor for CSE 190W: Allen School Scholars Program CSE 121 Supplemental Course
- These courses are for students in the Allen School Scholars Program, a program designed to support individuals from first-generation, low-income, and underserved communities.

Lead Teaching Assistant – University of Washington

Mar. 2022 – Sept. 2024

- Intro to Programming 1, 2, and 3 supplemental courses. Promoted to Lead TA Fall 2023.
- Developed new course materials, assignments, and assessments with the instructor. Wrote problems for the midterm and hosted office hours with 30+ students.
- Managed and organized grading responsibilities for a team of 9 teaching assistants, ensuring fair and consistent evaluation of student work.

COM² Big/Little Mentorship Program – University of Washington

Oct. 2023 – Present

- Mentored 3 first-year students for the Computing Community (COM²) Big/Little Mentorship Program within the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science and Engineering.

LEAP Summer Research Panelist – University of Washington

Nov. 2023

- Selected from a highly competitive pool of undergraduate students to speak about my summer research experience in the Peleg lab.

Allen School Research Roundtable Panelist – University of Washington

Apr. 2023

- Spoke to 60 admitted Computer Science students about my experience performing research at the undergraduate level. Contributed to academic discourse and supported future researchers.

Visiting Speaker – Bluffton Highschool

Dec. 2022

- Shared my Computer Science journey with a class of 30 high school students. Offered guidance in their studies along with their future career pursuits.

PRESENTATIONS

Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence 2024

Feb. 2024

- Multimodal Ensembling for Zero-Shot Image Classification

The Gabriel E. Gallardo Symposium

Apr. 2024

2023 SACNAS NDiSTEM Conference

Oct. 2023

- Honeybee Swarm Dynamics: Investigating the Relationship Between Individual Decision-Making and Collective Foraging

2023 UCLA National McNair Conference

May 2023 – July 2023

STARS Celebration Conference

Paul G. Allen School Undergraduate and Master's Research Showcase

- Thinking Beyond Images: Using Chain-of-Thought Prompting to Harness the Power of Language in Multimodal Models

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SDE Intern – Amazon

June 2022 – Sept. 2022

- Built technologies within a large, distributed computing environment for Amazon EasyShip. Designed and developed features for batch shipping within the full-stack mobile application, focusing on REST APIs, high-quality code architecture, and test automation.

Lead Software Development Intern – CoMotion Labs

June 2023 – Sept. 2023

- Formed a project to advance Digital Literacy in marginalized communities worldwide. Digital Tether was entirely student-led and fully funded by CoMotion Labs.
- Led my team to write the full-stack codebase for our primary product, a Google Chrome extension to enhance understanding of online threats. Hosted weekly SCRUM meetings for the team of 4 software developers.

SERVICE

Student Advisor – COM² (Computing Community)

Sept. 2024 – May 2025

- Developed and hosted the Paul G. Allen School's **first-ever** student-led high school and middle school outreach program. Collaborated with Seattle Public Schools to present content for 577 students in 22 classes at 10 schools.
- Created the Allen School's **first** outreach program with the Seattle Public Library. Organized a team of 10 volunteers to present an introduction to programming workshop at 4 library branches across the greater Seattle area.

Education Director – COM² (Computing Community)

May 2023 – May 2024

- Headed the development processes and led a team of **10 student leaders** to create **10+** events. These were some of the first skill-building workshops COM² has hosted since 2013.

Social Events Coordinator – COM² (Computing Community)

May 2022 – May 2023

- Led all social event planning and execution by coordinating a team of 20 officers to create **more than 30** social events. **500+ CSE undergraduates**, graduate students, and professors attended our largest event.

AP CSA Content Presenter – Code.org

Mar. 2022

- Impacted thousands of students worldwide by utilizing innovative teaching methods and creative approaches to present Computer Science Principles in a fun and engaging manner for the **Code.org** AP Computer Science A curriculum.
- Promoted diversity, equity, and inclusion in Computer Science by providing my experiences and encouraging participation from students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Associate Officer – Association for Computing Machinery (now COM²)

May 2021 – May 2022

- Planned and executed seven social events throughout the year. Our largest event had 350 attendees. Communicated with 20 team members and managed tasks efficiently.

- Raised **over \$1200** in funds for non-profit organizations, such as Code.org, Black Girls CODE, and the U District Food Bank.