

Daniela M. Markazi

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EDUCATION

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)

Ph.D. in Informatics (Focus Area: Design, Technology, and Society)

January 2020 - August 2026

GPA 4.00/4.00

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Agricultural and Biological Engineering,

Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (B.S.A.G.) in Agricultural and Biological Engineering

August 2015 - December 2019

SKILLS

Research: Human-centered design, usability testing, interview design, survey design, focus groups, contextual observation, ethnography, qualitative and quantitative analysis, mixed methods research, design accessibility, prototyping

Tools & Programming: Figma, Dovetail, Airtable, Qualtrics, Excel, Miro, Trello, Notion, Python, R, SQL, C, Swift

Management: Agile development, stakeholder engagement, cross-functional team management, project management

PROFESSIONAL & RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Biological Modeling Analysis and System Simulation Laboratory

Urbana, IL / Puerto Rico

Graduate User Experience (UX) Researcher, Fellow, and Mentor

January 2020 - Present

- Designed and led foundational research with 20 teens to understand how they learn about climate change on social media, using surveys and diary studies to capture broad behavioral patterns and in-the-moment insights.
- Co-designed social media content via design thinking workshops with 18 teens, translating participant-generated concepts into actionable recommendations, with preliminary results published in 2 top HCI conferences.
- Partnered with a Puerto Rican organization to identify teen technology practices via 4 focus groups with 31 teens.
- Helped to secure a \$750,000 NIFA grant for engineering disaster-relief education, enabling a new Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program at UIUC, providing students with new research opportunities.

The Family Resiliency Center, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Urbana / Danville, IL

Graduate Researcher and Mentor

May 2023 - August 2025

- Guided 50 youth and 4 educators to lead their own research projects through youth participatory action research.
- Conducted semiweekly focus groups at 3 high schools (100+ sessions) to support project ideation and insights.
- Designed curricula for teaching research to youth and educators via ethnography, interviews, and surveys; refined based on feedback and data-driven insights; results published in a journal and 2 manuscripts in progress.

Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN)

Remote / Champaign, IL

Graduate Researcher

July 2023 - October 2024

- Led the development of global vision and mission statements for community informatics (published in The Journal of Community Informatics), highlighting inclusivity to create equitable, user-centered solutions.
- Designed and facilitated a workshop on the fundamentals of community informatics at the 2023 CIRN conference, focusing on fostering accessibility, engagement, and meaningful community participation.

Coding it Forward, General Services Administration (GSA)

Remote / Washington, DC

User Experience (UX) Researcher Fellow

June 2024 - August 2024

- Selected from an applicant pool of 4,500 with an acceptance rate of 2% as part of the Coding it Forward Fellowship, a program that empowers early-career technologists to explore technology careers in government.
- Improved cross-functional knowledge-sharing and informed new primary research by leading a research initiative to streamline the sharing of actionable insights across the GSA. Worked with design, engineering, and product management teams to ensure user-centric, data-driven decisions, creating more effective product development.
- Identified user needs and planned a GSA insights library through 27 user interviews, a literature review, competitive analysis, and user personas. Presented at Coding it Forward's Demo Day and GSA's Research Guild.
- Honored as the only fellow in the 2024 cohort to receive the Courtney Brousseau Community Builder Award, awarded for outstanding leadership in strengthening community, collaboration, and peer engagement.

INFEWS-ER Disaster Relief and Resilience Cohort Challenge

Graduate Student Lead, Project Manager, and Mentor

Remote / Urbana, IL
October 2020 - August 2023

- Led a global, transdisciplinary research initiative with 17 graduate students and a Puerto Rican NGO, creating a literature and grant database to support underrepresented communities near San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- Developed and prototyped a virtual resource hub to support graduate transdisciplinary research and education, utilizing Figma, design thinking, need-finding interviews, A/B testing, and a comprehensive literature review.
- Enabled an NGO to secure grant funding by synthesizing research insights through literature reviews.

John Deere

Software / Robotics Engineer

Champaign, IL
January 2018 - April 2023

- Created a UI for an autonomous tractor's tire monitoring system, employing Visual Studio Code, C, and the Gen 4 John Deere platform, based on customer meetings, UI/UX team collaboration, usability studies, and field visits.
- Engineered software and scripts on Ubuntu MATE for Raspberry Pi, pivotal in empowering 5 senior design teams at UIUC to command John Deere Tangos (autonomous lawnmowers), later utilized throughout the world.

Social Computing Systems Laboratory

Graduate Student User Experience (UX) Researcher

Champaign, IL
January 2020 - October 2021

- Orchestrated and led 2 comprehensive studies focused on understanding individuals' perceptions of AI. This involved conducting 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews, followed by thematic analysis to derive conclusions.
- Led a two-phase research initiative for PocketBot, a chatbot for long-distance couples, employing iterative design and conducting interviews. Performed pilot studies with 11 participants and evaluated the chatbot design with 18 participants in a week-long field trial followed by exit interviews. Results published at a top HCI conference.

Bhalerao Laboratory

Student User Experience (UX) Researcher

Urbana, IL
May 2017 - May 2018

- Created and designed the UI for a swine probe app for the Department of Animal Sciences at UIUC.
- Enhanced usability, accessibility, and functionality by implementing UI improvements with Swift and Xcode.
- Refined the app based on user feedback through contextual observations and need-finding interviews.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

UIUC Alliance for Research Enterprise Excellence in STEM (AREES)

Professional Socialization Working Group Co-Lead and Program Coordinator

Champaign, IL
June 2022 - Present

- Coordinated and facilitated the inaugural Student Summer Research Experience, engaging with 16 underrepresented students and faculty from 6 partner institutions to monitor research progress and provide mentorship to participants on fundamental research, team building, and project management skills.

UIUC Puerto Rico Disaster Relief Program

Graduate Student Lead, Head of Engagement, and Mentor

Urbana, IL / Puerto Rico
January 2018 - Present

- Develops different projects to assist Puerto Rican communities and global stakeholders, leading and mentoring 52 undergraduate students in engineering, computing, data science, and human-centered design research projects.
- Designed and developed a course (creating all materials) on Community-based Design and Management for Disaster Resilience based on design justice principles, engaging with communities and partners in Puerto Rico.

National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)

Chair of the Central Illinois Chapter of NCWIT Aspirations, Campus Ambassador, Mentor

Urbana, IL
September 2015 - Present

- Organizes the NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing Ceremony and delivers presentations at elementary, middle, and high schools, annually reaching over 300 students to inspire young people to engage in STEM.

AWARDS

NCWIT Impact Award (2024); Coding it Forward Courtney Brousseau Community Builder Award (2024); UIUC Graduate Student Leadership Award (2023); UIUC President's Research in Diversity Award (2023); New Face of Tech Scholarship (2023); Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group in High Performance Computing Fellowship (2021); Generation Google Scholarship (2021); Grace Hopper Celebration Student Scholarship (2021)