

In approximately 250 words or less, please explain your interest in participating in this REU. Please feel encouraged to address how participation will further your own research and career goals.

Pursuing my undergraduate education became a battle of studying conflicting disciplines, ranging from international affairs, more broad social sciences, and the somewhat stoic nature of computer science. While on the surface they may occupy completely different spaces within academia, I have come to find out they have more intersections than what I originally thought. Consequently, my interest in the interdisciplinary nature of the subjects I come to know about as I move further through my education became heightened. The REU site at UW caught my eye at the right time, as I needed an outlet to express and research topics that align with my current studies and the topics I want to learn more about, especially having a past as a political organizing navigating the landscape of heavily gerrymandered electoral politics. Being a self-taught coder can be limiting at times, mostly due to the fact that I have little structure and opportunities to apply my conceptual, abstract knowledge to substantial, long-term projects. Fortunately, UW fills this niche with great precision and even goes as far as to teach the necessary skills to research in the topics they are interested in, a benefit that is not seen in many similar programs. Participating in research through the university will propel me into the future, hopefully filled with helping in software development, technical research, and eventually becoming a professor for a multitude of subjects.

In approximately 250 words or less, how do you see your experiences and background contributing to the goals of the project in which you are interested?

Being a political organizer and self-taught programmer grants me a different perspective than most when dealing with long-term research projects. Here, I want to hone in my skills from seemingly two planes of academia and synthesize them into something that can help every one of my peers. This is evident in my past internships, where I worked with design teams to produce data visualizations and charts utilizing JavaScript's D3.js library and Datawrapper. My course load provided me with the necessary skills to carry out quantitative tasks, ranging from spatial sociological analysis with GIS, coding in C, and analyzing global events with Stata. It was also found in my research endeavors, where I was able to work in a socio-technical research lab and built a web survey tool using languages such as Python and PHP to collect data that will be qualitatively coded to improve risk machine learning algorithms. Finally, my own personal projects display my dedication, as I made use of whatever was at my disposal to demonstrate my willingness to learn and mistakes when programming.

Aiding the “MAPPERing” project and adding to our theoretical understanding of the social sciences will fulfill my want to deepen my understanding of the complexities surrounding American political districting. I view this research through two lenses, as an outsider researching in and an insider who worked in the districts being studied. Consequently, I am helping the subsequent individuals who are taking collective action to change their vulnerable communities through this REU.