UMBC

AN HONORS UNIVERSITY IN MARYLAND

Department of Information Systems
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
1000 Hilltop Circle
Baltimore, MD 21250

PHONE: 410-455-3206
WEB: www.is.umbc.edu

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Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing in application to the Human-Computer Interaction and Design tenure-track position at the Assistant Professor level in the Department of Informatics at the University of California, Irvine. I am currently a Lecturer in Information Systems at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). After earning my degree in Computer Science at Virginia Tech in 2014, I joined UMBC as a postdoctoral researcher. I converted to a Lecturer position in 2015 to lead a first-year diversity in computing program and continue my interdisciplinary research collaborations. I would like to join the research faculty at UCI in order to make more substantial contributions to academia and society at large, through researching social assistive technologies and promoting inclusivity in science and technology.

My research sits at the intersection of Social Computing and Assistive Technology, exploring how technologies mediate colocated interpersonal relationships, specifically in regards to how they affect the physical safety and social well-being of marginalized people. My recent and ongoing studies investigate technological threats to safety and well-being as people with vision impairments navigate public spaces, as people with disabilities encounter law enforcement at protests, as blind parents care for their children at home, and as transgender people socialize in online and offline spaces. Themes I investigate include empowerment, disability, gender, algorithmic bias, interdependence, and ethics in design research.

My work addresses the missions of funding agencies like NSF, NIH, and commercial businesses. I have end-to-end grant management experience and am pursuing several funding opportunities. I am the sole PI of a $84,540 Maryland Industrial Partnerships (MIPS) grant with TRX Systems, Inc. investigating tools for blind software engineers who build assistive navigation applications. I was co-PI of a $190,000 grant from Toyota that recently concluded, and I am currently working with my Toyota collaborators to develop a new program exploring disability, technology, and social trust in disaster and crisis contexts. I am Senior Personnel on a $350,000 NSF CRI grant. In August of 2017, I submitted an NSF CRII proposal ($165,000), which is currently under review, to fund my work on domestic technologies for blind parenting. I am currently preparing to submit a Google Grant proposal to fund research on technology for disabled activists and an NIH proposal (PA-18-169) on technology for reducing health disparities among minority and underserved children.

My publication strategy since taking the Lecturer position has been to submit a small number of high-quality papers to top-tier Human-Centered Design conference venues. My work is regularly published at ACM CHI, DIS, and CSCW venues, where acceptance rates have ranged from 15% to 27%. Two of my publications have been recognized with Best Paper Awards, one at CHI and one at DIS. My current CHI 2018 submission was recently accepted and has been recommended by all reviewers to receive a Best Paper Honorable Mention. I value engaging in interdisciplinary collaborations; I have published with 13 academic collaborators and seven industry collaborators, including researchers from Intel and Toyota. I also value student mentorship and have enjoyed publishing with five graduate students and four undergraduate students. In 2016, I managed a team of two PhD students, an MS student, and an undergraduate student, culminating in two full research papers and three research posters that the students successfully presented at top conferences.

Building my capacity to teach and inspire students has been a core focus over the last two years as a Lecturer. I have thus been a regular participant in activities offered by UMBC's Faculty Development Center. My teaching approach involves team-based learning, flipped classroom, and critical discussion. I collect student feedback throughout the semester to drive evidence-based course innovation. I have taught three courses at the graduate and undergraduate level: Foundations in Human-Centered Computing (HCC 629), Management Information Systems (IS 300), and Computational Thinking and Design (COMP 101). In Spring 2017, student evaluations in HCC 629 and IS 300 scored my overall effectiveness as 4.8 and 4.9, respectively, on a 5-point scale; the average at UMBC is 4.2. For my work in COMP 101, I was nominated this Fall by Dean Keith Bowman for the Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate award, for which only one candidate per University can be put forward annually.

I seek out service commitments that (1) support my academic community and (2) promote inclusivity in computing as a public service to state citizens. For example, I organized multiple workshops at CSCW and CHI on ethical research practice, culminating in a Special Issue in the Interacting with Computing journal that I proposed and guest-edited with collaborators. I have served on conference organizing committees, most recently as a Papers Associate Chair for CHI 2018 and Co-Chair of the Student Research Competition for ASSETS 2017. To the second point, I co-organize the annual NCWIT Aspirations in Computing scholarship program and awards ceremony for Maryland high school women. I am also an active member on both the Center for Women in Technology Advisory Board and the Women's Center Advisory Board at UMBC. Finally, I recruit and work with a diverse group of students to enhance my research and teaching, including students with visual disabilities, mobility impairments, and cognitive impairments, many of whom have diverse gender and racial identities.

The Department of Informatics in the Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences is a strategic location for me to expand the scope and impact of my research, service, and teaching. <redacted. In this portion of the letter, I identify people, organizations, and resources in the Department, University, and local community I would like to develop relationships with towards bringing my research, teaching, and service to the next level.>

Thank you for considering my qualifications and fit for this position. I look forward to an opportunity to speak with the members of the search committee.

Best regards,

Stacy Branham, Ph.D.

Lecturer, UMBC
Department of Information Systems
<redacted, phone>
www.stacybranham.com