

Jessica Vitak, PhD

CV OF FAILURES

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ABOUT ME

- EMPLOYMENT:** Associate Professor, University of Maryland (2019—present)
Assistant Professor, University of Maryland (2012-2019)
- EDUCATION:** PhD, Michigan State University (2008-2012)
MA, Georgetown University (2006-2008)
BA, Elon University (1998-2002)
- RESEARCH:** privacy, data ethics, surveillance, internet of things, digital literacy

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This “CV of failures” is inspired by a 2016 [CNBC article](#) on the same topic. Everyone fails, regardless of their career path, but academics seem to face rejection a lot. Journal and conference rejections, grant proposal rejections, poor teaching evaluations, and more are a regular occurrence. These rejections can be frustrating, disheartening, and can lead promising academics to leave the field.

While academia is definitely not for everyone, I have put together this document to highlight my many failures in hopes of presenting a more realistic portrayal of academic “success.” I still remember the first or second year of my PhD program when I learned that some of giants of my field had faced rejections—sometimes multiple rejections of papers now viewed as central to the field. It made it (just a wee bit) easier for me to process the rejections I was receiving as an academic. I am no giant of my field (yet), but I hope documents such as this provide clarity to current grad students preparing to enter the field.

Note: This is likely not a complete list. Outside of my memory (which is pretty long), I identified a lot of these rejections based on searching my email for rejections of various types. So the “complete” list of failures is probably even longer. And I’m okay with that.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES THAT HAVE BEEN REJECTED

- Communication Research: 2011
- Communications of the ACM: 2016
- Computers in Human Behavior: 2011, 2015, 2017, 2022
- Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking: 2011
- First Monday: 2014
- Group Dynamics: 2010
- Human Communication Research: 2010
- Information, Communication and Society: 2011
- JASIST: 2023
- JCMC: 2009, 2010, 2017
- JOBEM: 2012
- Journal of Communication: 2009
- Journal of Personality & Social Psychology: 2010
- Media, Culture & Society: 2019
- Media Psychology: 2010
- New Media & Society: 2013, 2014, 2019
- Media, Culture, & Society: 2019
- Social Media & Society: 2022

PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PAPERS THAT HAVE BEEN REJECTED

- AoIR: 2016 (x2), 2018
- ASIST: 2012
- CHI: 2011, 2016, 2017 (x3), 2018 (x3), 2019, 2020, 2021
- CSCW: 2015, 2016, 2017 (x2), 2018a, 2018b (x2), 2019, 2020, 2023
- DIS (Designing Interactive Systems): 2018
- HICSS: 2016
- ICA: 2013 (x2), 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022
- ICWSM: 2015 (x2), 2017
- IDC: 2019
- NCA: 2010
- SOUPS: 2022

RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSALS THAT WERE REJECTED

National/International

- Google Award for Inclusion Research Program, 2022 (\$60k)
- NRT-HDR: Securing Privacy and Trust in AI and Data Science (not invited)
- NSF DCL, "Cybersecurity Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence" (not invited)
- Cisco Research Grant, 2019 (\$82k)
- Instagram Research Grant, 2018 (\$100k)
- Mozilla Research Grant, 2017 (\$100k)
- NSF CAREER, CISE, 2017 (\$575k)

- NSF Small, SBE/SaTC, 2016 (\$500k)
- NSF Small, SBE/SaTC, 2016 (\$500k)
- NSF Medium, SBE, 2015 (\$1.2M)
- NSF Small, SBE, 2015 (\$500k)
- NSF Small, CHS, 2015 (\$500k)
- Consumer Privacy Rights Fund/Rose Foundation, 2015 (\$50k)
- Digital Trust Foundation, 2015 (\$300k)
- NSF EAGER, 2014 (\$275k)
- NSF Small, SBE/CHS, 2014 (\$500k)
- NSF Small, CHS, 2010 (as grad student personnel) (\$500k)

UMD-Specific Funding Opportunities

- UMD Summer RASA—Research & Scholarship Awards, 2016 (\$9000)
- UMD Summer RASA—Research & Scholarship Awards, 2015 (\$9000)
- UMD ADVANCE Seed Grant, 2015 (budget: \$20k)

Michigan State-Specific Funding Opportunities

- MSU Summer Research Fellowship, 2010 (\$3500)
- MSU Summer Research Fellowship, 2010 (\$2500)

JOBS I DID NOT GET

- 2012 Academic Job Search (I had two phone & one campus interview from five applications, all local)
- Google Policy Fellowship, Summer 2007
- Many, many job applications between graduating from undergrad and being hired in first full-time position (May-September 2002). I also was rejected from my first post-bachelors' job (at PR Newswire), and was offered the job only after another spot opened on the editorial team.
- Internships during college at WHFS (DC radio station) and NPR

GRAD SCHOOLS THAT REJECTED ME

- University of Michigan, School of Information—PhD (2008)
- Northwestern University, Media, Technology & Society—PhD (2008)
- University of Maryland Graduate Program in Communication—MA (2006)
- University of Maryland Graduate Program in Sociology—MA (2005)
- Columbia University Graduate Program in Journalism—MA (2002)

AWARDS/FELLOWSHIPS I FAILED TO GET

- ACM-W Rising Star Award (2023)
- Andrew Carnegie Fellows Program (2020)
- New America Fellowship (2019)
- SIGUSE Best Information Behavior Conference Paper Award (2019)

- Social Informatics Best Paper Award (2016)
- iConference Dissertation Award (2014)
- NCA HCTD Dissertation Award (2013)
- ICA Communication & Technology Dissertation Award (2013)
- Elon University Leadership Fellows (1998)

OTHER STUFF I'VE FAILED AT

- I tried out for *Jeopardy* in 2004 (the year Ken Jennings won 74 straight episodes). In retrospect, not making the cut wasn't such a bad thing.
- Even though I graduated from college at the top of my class, it took me four months to get a job. There were **many** applications submitted during that time.
- I tried out with some friends for [*Wanna Be a VJ 3*](#) on MTV in 2000. I didn't stand a chance.
- AP Exams: I failed the AP Spanish (1) and AP Calculus (2) exams my senior year of high school (3 is passing). I'd like to blame it on having mono that spring, but also, hablo español muy mal.
- When I made varsity lacrosse in high school junior year, I just sat on the bench so I asked to go back down to the JV team.
- 8th Grade School Play: My school was putting on *Snow White* and I wanted to be the evil queen but I was sick the day of my audition and totally blew it.