Charles Gao

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EDUCATION

Presidential Scholar at the University of Southern California — Los Angeles, CA
B.S. in Cognitive Science and AI — *Aug. 2024 – June 2027*
- USC merit-based half-tuition scholarship
- *Cumulative GPA*: 3.7/4.0 | *Honors*: Dean's List

Phillips Exeter Academy — Exeter, NH
High School Diploma — *Sep. 2021 – June 2024*
- *SAT Score*: 1580 | National Merit Scholar | Highest Academic Honors
- Captain of Varsity Water Polo Team, 3-Time All-American

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Languages: Python, C/C++, Java, JavaScript, TypeScript, SQL
Frameworks: React, Next.js, FastAPI, Tailwind CSS, LangChain, Express.js
Developer Tools: Git, Cursor, VS Code, Visual Studio, Docker
Libraries: PyTorch, pandas, NumPy, Hugging Face, scikit-learn

FOUNDING EXPERIENCE

Founding Engineering @ Robust — May. 2025 – Aug. 2025
Robust — *New York, NY*
- Founding engineer at an AI startup that raised **1.25M** from Z Fellows and Link Ventures
- Iterated and developed PRDs and software for agentic browser agents, using MCP and Fireworks AI
- Spoke with **dozens** of executives at Walmart, Deloitte, as well as top VCs directly for partnerships

Co-Founder of Trifect @ LavaLab — Jan. 2025 – May. 2025
LavaLab @ USC — *Los Angeles, CA*
- Co-founded a business that used transformers and contrastive learning for connecting businesses to ideal 3PLs
- Deployed **PyTorch**-based ML model using Railway with a **TypeScript/React/Next.js** full-stack web app
- Partnered with two 3PLs each with **100+** clients as design partners
- Ran sales between businesses and 3PLs and pitched to investors incl. Heads of Product at **Uber** and **Lyft**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Growth, Engineering @ Lightweight Labs — June. 2025 – July. 2025
Lightweight Labs — *New York, NY*
- Organized and conducted over **25** sales calls with top accountants, building superpowers for accounting
- Spearheaded re-development of the frontend and branding design using cursorful and Clojure
- Worked with founders Aaron Iba (former GP at YC) and David Yang (YC acq. founder) in growth engineering

Software Engineer — Oct. 2024 – Feb. 2025
Kardn — *San Francisco, CA*
- Engineered and developed a full-stack web application using **JavaScript**, **React** and **Next.js**
- Spearheaded to GTM plan to launch Kardn's new social discovery application in Southern California

Researcher @ NYU Langone Health — June. 2023 – Nov. 2023
NYU Langone Health — *New York, NY*
- Engineered and fine-tuned NLP models (**Doc2Vec, BioBERT**) to predict early termination of clinical trials
- Used deep learning and **21** unique features to enable trial risk assessments and observe signals of termination
- Constructed data pipelines to preprocess and curate a dataset of **400000** individual trials from clinicaltrials.gov
- Isolated key risk factors for trial discontinuation and delivering semantic insights through feature engineering

Researcher @ the University of Cambridge — June. 2022 – Oct.2022
University of Cambridge — *Cambridge, England*
- Led a **12-week** investigation into bias within word embeddings, generating a whitepaper of insights and recommendations to improve algorithmic fairness
- Collaborated with Professor Mohammed Taher Pilehvar to learn and apply applications of NLP
- Studied bias and attention in 2022-era language models through the research paper Attention Is All You Need