
Maria Teleki

LEADERSHIP, SERVICE AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

I am committed to serving the field and all students. My research asks whether AI is robust to the people it serves, reflecting my commitment to using technology in service of all people.

In this statement, I detail my leadership and service in the research community, with students, and with the public, and then the service I am excited to take on as a faculty member.

Research Community

Community Building via Speech AI for All. I co-organized *Speech AI for All: The What, How, and Who of Measurement* at CHI '26 in Barcelona, bringing together researchers in speech technology, HCI, linguistics, and accessibility. The workshop was participatory, I ran the microphone, and the group of researchers included people who: stutter, are non-native English speakers, d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing, anxious, users of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and more – each shared their experiences about where speech AI fails in small group sessions. Those sessions set the agenda for the position paper, which I then led: *A Cross-Community Agenda for Speech AI* [R1]¹ ([link](#)), with 23 authors across 18 institutions in academia, industry, and nonprofits. Leading it meant keeping 23 authors on one path forward and resolving disagreements – even though we had many opposing viewpoints involved. I am proud of the result: a constructive cross-community agenda.

Opening a New Area at Interspeech. We at Speech AI for All are now working with Interspeech to establish a new permanent area for community-centered, participatory speech research, so the work we discuss in our cross-community agenda has a lasting home in the field's flagship venue.

Peer Review. I review regularly for the communities my research bridges: ACL Rolling Review (six cycles, 2024–2026), ICWSM (six cycles, 2024–2026), Interspeech '26, and IC2S2 '26, and I was an external reviewer for RecSys '24.

Open Tools and Data. I am committed to open science: I post all of my (and my mentees') code, data, and resources publicly on my website ([link](#)) so others can use, check, and extend them. I'll discuss a few examples here: for our FAccT '26 audit of AI governance in U.S. higher education [P2], I released the dataset, the audit instrument, and a public site, ACAI-US79 ([link](#)), so universities can see their own scores and other researchers can run their own audits. Our Uh-Mazing benchmark [P1] will be distributed through the Linguistic Data Consortium ([link](#)), and SpeechSpectrum [R2] includes an open-source tool that gives users control over their own transcripts.

Mentoring

Research Mentoring. I have mentored twelve MS and undergraduate researchers. I scope their projects with them, and hold weekly one-on-ones, and my advisor has stepped back to let me lead. Eleven of my students had no publications before starting research with me; nearly all have since co-authored papers, and six have led a paper as first author (see my Teaching Statement; [link](#)). My students have presented at IC2S2, and locally at the Texas NLP Symposium ([link](#)) and Texas A&M Student Research Week ([link](#)), where two won first place. Three undergraduates interned at Google, Meta, and Target this summer, a graduated undergraduate just started at Cornell Tech (MS), and graduated MS students have gone to Amazon and NVIDIA; the undergraduate at Meta this past summer just accepted a return offer. I keep an open call on my website for students at any experience level. My intro-to-research talk at the Club of Aggie Female Engineers (C.A.F.E.; [link](#)) is how I met Stephanie Birkelbach (UG), who has since led her own paper, given an oral presentation at IC2S2, completed an REU at Rochester Institute of Technology, and is now applying to PhD programs.

Open Resources for Students & The Hidden Curriculum. I'm driven by my belief in the value of having a *growth mindset*: talent is not that important; if a student is of reasonable capability, wants to learn, and wants to make a difference in the world through research, my job is to show up as their coach and get them there. A large part of that job is simply bringing them up to speed on the hidden curriculum of research. For my mentees, I keep a shared repository of research-process guides – *How to Make a Poster/Presentation*, *Q&A Sessions*, *What to Expect at a Conference*, *How to Read/Write a Paper*, *Engineering Notes (Lab Server Use, Common Python Packages, etc.)*, a list of papers, datasets, and metrics that we find interesting, and more – that my students add to and pass around. Beyond my group of mentees, I publish many of these guides openly on my website ([link](#)) – including a review response worksheet, prompting best practices, travel advice, and a *How Can I Learn About AI?* guide for newcomers. I also have list of hidden curriculum resources written by others, e.g., my mentor Allison Koenecke's guide ([link](#)), CRA-E's SPARC pages ([link](#)). I recently started sharing the same advice on Instagram, @maria.teleki.phd ([link](#)), because that is where so many of my students (and other early-career students) go to for advice.

Entering Research Through Teaching. I treat courses as on-ramps to research, because that is how I got involved in it myself. I was sitting in my advisor's class as an undergraduate, fresh off an internship at RetailMeNot where I had noticed that nearly everyone around me held a graduate degree, and I had started to think I should probably do research. I

¹Citations (e.g., [P1]) refer to publications listed in my CV with links available.

thought his work was interesting, he brought one of his PhD students in to speak, and I got involved – the rest is history. I am now a PhD Candidate in his lab, and I have had a great time. So, I design course projects as the seeds of larger research projects, scoped so that a strong final project could potentially go after the semester and grow into a paper. This approach is designed to reach students who would never send a cold email to me to get involved. To me, classes are a more equitable way to show students what research is and to open doors beyond the classroom.

Speaking and Public Engagement

I give talks because they sharpen my thinking, and I value disseminating research to industry and to the public. A talk is another form of teaching, and I see teaching and dissemination as part of the research itself: explaining my work to people outside my fields forces me to figure out what I think is most important in my work. The other reason is that I find it rewarding to make research approachable. Many people are intimidated by (simply) math and by research, and showing them that they can understand it is a way to make a difference in the world. For example, when I spoke at IPT Global – they build safety-critical software that verifies oil and gas well integrity, so a missed failure can mean a blowout – translating my research into something their engineers could use opened up a set of substantive conversations about accountability, that furthered how I'm thinking about it in my research.

I have a speaking page on my website ([link](#)) where anyone can invite me to give a talk: departments and labs for research talks; student organizations, clubs, K-12, and community groups, with no AI background needed; and media and public events. Sikorski Horizon ([link](#)), a neuroscience education community, found me through Instagram (which links to my speaking page), and I am now giving a remote talk to their students in Brazil.

Every talk I give comes out of my research:

- (i) *Who Does AI Work For?* explains why voice assistants and chatbots work better for some people than others, and how accent, gender, and speaking style shape how AI treats you. I discussed this on the MASKulinity Podcast.
- (ii) *The Other AI* is a tour of what AI tools like ChatGPT and Claude can and can't do, designed for audiences with no technical background. At Texas Tech's School of Veterinary Medicine, I built it around veterinary examples so that students left with a working mental model of the technology.
- (iii) *How Does AI Work? & My Research* walks through how language models work, plus what a PhD in this area actually looks like day to day. After my talk at C.A.F.E., the club's president (an undergraduate engineer) wrote:

She was very approachable and amazing at detailing her work and explaining it in a way that anyone could understand... her talk was very informative and one of the most memorable we've had.

I also bring my research to organizations in industry adopting AI. In *Accountable AI* at IPT Global, I talked about where AI strengthens a software process and when to keep a human in the loop; at Revionics, I spoke about how speech and language systems break on real, disfluent speech in social media analysis pipelines. And at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I volunteered with The Hi, How Are You Project to build *Friendly Frog*, an Alexa skill promoting mental health.

Future Service

As a faculty member, I am excited to build on each of these:

- (i) *Growing the research community*: I will keep organizing workshops at the intersection of speech AI, computational social science, and AI governance, with the goal of making Speech AI for All a recurring venue, and I look forward to taking on area chair roles across my home venues.
- (ii) *Open, public audits*: I will keep releasing my benchmarks and audits openly, and grow ACAI-US79 into continuous public monitoring of AI governance.
- (iii) *Undergraduate research on-ramps*: I will bring undergraduates and MS students into my lab through my courses and through partnerships with student organizations like C.A.F.E., and I would be happy to establish an REU site.
- (iv) *Graduate advising and open mentoring infrastructure*: I will advise graduate students with the same structures I have built so far (detailed more in my Teaching Statement; [link](#)), and I will turn that repository into a public lab handbook so that any student or lab can use it.
- (v) *Department and university service*: I would be excited to serve on graduate admissions and curriculum committees, where my experience redesigning courses for the AI era is directly useful, and to help my university shape its own AI policies.
- (vi) *Speaking and outreach*: I will keep my speaking page open to student groups, K-12, and community organizations, and look to give back to programs like the CRA-WP Grad Cohort as a speaker and mentor.