

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Full time research assistant at Microsoft Research, New England in Cambridge, MA under the supervision of Susan Athey, Greg Lewis, Markus Mobius, Justin Rao, Glen Weyl, Sebastian Lahaie and Paul Oka. Tasks include providing empirical research assistance to economists affiliated with Microsoft Research, especially visiting researchers who are typically full-time faculty at top U.S. economics departments. The position is ideal for a recent graduate wishing to gain research experience prior to pursuing a Ph.D. in economics, information systems, or computer science (with a focus in algorithmic economics or something similar). The RAs who graduated this past year have entered economics Ph.D. programs at Stanford and MIT. Many of our research assistants have taken classes at Harvard to augment their preparation for graduate school.

TIME PERIOD: Start in June of 2016, for a period of two years.

SALARY: \$50,000 for twelve months, with opportunity for somewhat higher salary for work experience beyond a bachelor's degree.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Applicants must be either U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Applicants must have strong programming and quantitative skills. Excellent grades are required in econometrics or statistics as well as microeconomic theory coursework. We will consider applicants with a bachelor's degree (completed by May 2016), provided they have substantial experience with empirical research assistance. Applicants with a few years of experience doing empirical research at an economics consulting firm or government organization are also desirable.

Specific programming skills required: Experience with general purpose languages like Java, C#, C++, or Python, as well as substantial experience with a numerical/statistical language like Matlab, R, Stata, or SAS. Prior experience with a database language like SQL is preferred but not required.

We do not require a specific undergraduate major, though successful applicants tend to major in quantitative fields such as mathematics, statistics, physics, economics, or computer science. A deep love of “playing with data”—cleaning it, understanding it, describing it, merging different data sources together, reshaping it with different units of analysis, and presenting it in enlightening ways—is essential for this job. A interest in and aptitude for relating theory and intuition to empirical facts is also very important. The job requires the ability to work independently and to translate high-level objectives into specific programming tasks using a variety of resources (web research, manuals, sample programs, asking colleagues).

LOCATION/ORGANIZATION:

RAs hold time-limited contingent staff positions at Microsoft Research – New England, located at One Memorial Drive in Cambridge, MA (next door to the MIT economics department) or Microsoft Research – NYC, located at 20th and 6th Ave. in New York, NY. Both research labs focuses on academic research designed for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The groups include about 50 full-time and visiting senior scholars, where visitors are typically professors at top U.S. universities, as well as a few dozen interns and post-doctoral fellows. We currently have 6 economic research assistants on staff, providing an interactive and collaborative environment. In addition, the lab hosts regular academic seminars open to the broader Cambridge community. Since the work involves confidential data, a non-disclosure agreement is required.

Economists visiting MSR for short-term or long-term visits in 2011-2014 include Daron Acemoglu (MIT), Amitabh Chandra (Harvard), Stefano DellaVigna (Berkeley), Glenn Ellison (MIT), Matt Gentzkow (Chicago), Michael Grubb (MIT), Ben Handel (Berkeley), Igal Hendel (Northwestern), Ken Hendricks (Wisconsin), Ali Hortascu (Chicago), Matt Jackson (Stanford), Jon Kolstad (Wharton), Greg Lewis (Harvard), Denis Nekipelov (Berkeley), Paul Niehaus (UCSD), Rajiv Sethi (Columbia), Alan Sorensen (Wisconsin), Scott Stern (MIT), Michael Whinston (Northwestern) and Nageeb Ali (UCSD). Many of these researchers will return on a part-time basis in the coming year.

POTENTIAL RESEARCH TOPICS:

We have several positions focusing on online advertising auctions, health economics, consumer search behavior, learning in social networks, and behavioral finance.

For some recent theoretical research by Susan Athey on auctions and online advertising, see:

<http://kuznets.fas.harvard.edu/~athey/position.pdf>

http://kuznets.fas.harvard.edu/~athey/cpa_draft_aea.pdf

For some examples of empirical research, see:

http://kuznets.harvard.edu/~athey/papers/Structural_Sponsored_Search.pdf

<http://kuznets.fas.harvard.edu/~athey/EmpiricalModels.pdf>

For background on the health economics project, see:

http://emlab.berkeley.edu/~bhandel/wp/Handel_ASIN_82012.pdf

For background on the social network projects, see:

<http://karlan.yale.edu/p/socialcollateral.pdf>

TO APPLY:

Please email the following to msrnerajobs@microsoft.com. Use “MSR-NE RA Position” as the subject line to ensure that your application is filed properly. Decisions are made on a rolling basis starting December 2015. Be sure to include the following:

1. A cover letter that includes:

A description of your familiarity with various statistical and computer packages.

A brief description of your experience as a research assistant and with any independent research (e.g. thesis or other research projects).

The names of two or three references (and their contact information). At least one reference must be someone for whom you have worked as a research assistant or someone who has supervised your empirical work.

- Your immigration status (U.S. citizen or permanent resident).
2. A current CV.
 3. All relevant academic transcripts (unofficial is fine).