GINA E. TILLIS, Ph.D.

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RESEARCH PROFILE

- Over 15 years of UX/CX research and design experience, program evaluation, and program/product management.
- Deep understanding of UX design theory for visually impactful interfaces and meaningful experiences.
- Proven ability to plan, design, and lead end-to-end formative, foundational, and evaluative research studies.
- Proficient in conducting rapid iterative testing (RITE) and delivering high-quality, quick-turnaround research reports.
- Exceptional communication with cross-functional teams, including product managers, designers, and marketers.
- Expert qualitative and quantitative data visualizations (Power BI) illustrating research insights for a broad audience.
- Secured over $2,100,000 in social-behavioral research awards and data-informed program development grants.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Associate II | Center for Research in Education Policy, University of Memphis | Aug. 2024 - Current
- Principal investigator and program evaluator for multiple cross-disciplinary research projects.
- Conducts quasi-experimental evaluative research designs to assess program treatment effectiveness.
- Conducted quantitative (survey) and qualitative (ethnographic, participatory-action, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups) research designs to generate insight into perspectives and practices.
- Lead Power BI expert providing support to faculty and staff who need support with dashboard development.
- Presented research at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals and books.

Senior UX Researcher | CrowdStrike Holdings, Inc | Jan. 2023 - Oct. 2023 (due to company-wide layoffs)
- Led exploratory market research on cutting-edge AI technologies, ensuring alignment with industry trends, user expectations, and concerns, and ethically responsible product design.
- Facilitated in-depth user interviews and moderated usability tests to support the seamless integration of AI features into the formation of de-risked product design features, aesthetics, and functionality.
- Partnered with product managers, legal, data science, and data analytics to inform the product development and design direction to align with user needs and business objectives.
- Translated research findings into actionable insights, reducing product development time and significantly increasing customer satisfaction and retention.

Professor, Urban Education | The University of Memphis | Aug. 2019 - Jan. 2023
- Principal investigator for research portfolios using various methodologies in urban education research.
- Collaborated with co-investigators and practitioners to democratically develop research designs.
- Managed concurrent data sets: protected, organized, cleaned, prepared, coded, and thematized data.
- Synthesized data to draft findings, recommendations, reports, and publications for diverse stakeholders.
- Presented research at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals and books.
- Awarded research grants from the Library of Congress, Spencer Foundation, and the University of Memphis.

Research Fellow & Research Assistant | The University of Texas at Austin | Aug. 2016 - May 2019
- Principal investigator for studies that included multiple methodologies across academic disciplines.
- Conducted quasi-experimental research designs to evaluate treatment for retention.
- Conducted quantitative (survey) and qualitative (ethnographic, participatory-action, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups) research designs to generate insight on perspectives and practices.
- Presented research at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals and books.
- Awarded the Lozano-Long research fellowship (twice) and UNCF Career Pathways faculty research grant.

Research Analyst I | National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development | Aug. 2018 - Aug. 2019
- Collaborated with stakeholders (program administrators and practitioners) to identify and prioritize faculty professional development (PD) needs and services in the fast-changing field of higher education.
- Developed and conducted evaluative research for program evaluation data collection and analysis.
- Facilitated focus groups, in-depth interviews, and contextual inquiries.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Sociology, Social-Psychology, Cultural Anthropology, Social History & Social Science Research Methods

LeMoyne-Owen College | Aug. 2024 - Current

Huston-Tillotson University | Aug. 2016 - May 2019

- o Facilitated lessons on how to conduct qualitative, quantitative, and evaluative research designs.
- o Designed research projects for sociology, psychology, anthropology, and HCI/UX research students.
- o Facilitated lessons on improving the validity and reliability of research designs using data triangulation for communicating findings to stakeholders within and beyond the academy.
- o Developed research project evaluation metrics to evaluate the research competency of college students.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT & CX RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Coordinator, First-Year Experience | Huston-Tillotson University | Aug. 2013 - Aug. 2016

- o Managed a team of 20-25 staff members and reduced employee turnover by 15%.
- o Implemented systemic support for employees to develop their skills and reach their full potential.
- o Led the execution of comprehensive internal quantitative, qualitative, and quasi-experimental assessments, gauging the program experience's influence on customer (first-year students) retention.
- o Implemented data-informed academic interventions to increase the retention rate by 12%.
- o Cultivated business partnerships, boosting external funding support by 23% for student scholarships.
- o Garnered $1.4 million in development grants from UNCF Career Pathways and St. David's Foundation.

Associate Director, Student Leadership | Tidewater Community College | Oct. 2011 - Jan. 2013

- o Revitalized leadership development programs, contributing to a 20% increase in students reporting improved student life engagement and leadership skills in post-program assessments.
- o Developed a cohort of student leaders, leading to a 17 % increase in successful event execution.
- o Implemented community outreach program resulting in a 20% rise in engagement with local non-profits.
- o Spearheaded initiatives that fostered cross-disciplinary collaboration, leading to a 15% growth in students participating in interdisciplinary projects.

RESEARCH METHODS & RESEARCH SOFTWARE FLUENCY

Formative	Concept Testing, Contextual Inquiry/Ethnography, Competitive Analysis, Literature Review/ Trends Analysis, Diary Studies, In-depth Interviews (remote & in-person), Personas, Journey Mapping, Focus Groups, Survey
Evaluative	Rapid Iterative Testing (RITE) with low and high-fidelity prototypes, A/B Testing, Quasi-Experimental Evaluative Testing, Accessibility Testing, Tree-testing, Cognitive Walkthroughs, Survey
Software	SQL, Power BI, Tableau, Amplitude, R, SPSS, User Zoom, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, NVivo, DeDoose, EnjoyHQ, Figma, Miro, Microsoft Office, Adobe Illustrator, Slack, Monday

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

PhD	Cultural Studies in Education	University of Texas at Austin	May 2020
MA	Sociology	University of Memphis	Dec 2025
MA	Teaching Social Science	Grambling State University	July 2005
BA	History with a minor in Sociology	Grambling State University	Dec. 2002
Certificate	Data Analytics & Power BI	Tech 901	Apr 2024
Certificate	Advanced UX Research	LinkedIn Learning	Aug 2023
Certificate	UX Research Methods	Coursera: University of California, San Diego	Aug 2022