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 user/human 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, developers, and designers.
- Expert qualitative and quantitative data visualizations (Power BI) illustrating research insights for a broad audience.
- Secured over $2,200,000 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
- o Principal investigator and program evaluator for multiple cross-disciplinary research projects.
- o Conducts quasi-experimental evaluative research designs to assess program treatment effectiveness.
- o Conducted quantitative (survey) and qualitative (ethnographic, participatory-action, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups) research designs to generate insight into perspectives and practices.
- o Lead Power BI expert providing support to faculty and staff who need support with dashboard development.
- o 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)
- o Led exploratory market research on cutting-edge AI technologies, ensuring alignment with industry trends, user expectations, and concerns, and ethically responsible product design.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- o 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
- o Principal investigator for research portfolios using various methodologies in urban education research.
- o Collaborated with co-investigators and practitioners to democratically develop research designs.
- o Managed concurrent data sets: protected, organized, cleaned, prepared, coded, and thematized data.
- o Synthesized data to draft findings, recommendations, reports, and publications for diverse stakeholders.
- o Presented research at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals and books.
- o 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
- o Principal investigator for studies that included multiple methodologies across academic disciplines.
- o Conducted quasi-experimental research designs to evaluate treatment for retention.
- o Conducted quantitative (survey) and qualitative (ethnographic, participatory-action, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups) research designs to generate insight on perspectives and practices.
- o Presented research at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals and books.
- o 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
- o 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.
- o Developed and conducted evaluative research for program evaluation data collection and analysis.
- o Facilitated focus groups, in-depth interviews, and contextual inquiries.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Social Science Research Methods, Sociology, Social-Psychology, Cultural Anthropology, & Social History
Subject Matter Expertise: Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction, Social-Psychology of Learning, Cognitive Science, Sociology of Knowledge/Education, Student Development in the Digital Age, Society and Technology (AI)
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, Power Automate, Tableau, Amplitude, R Studio, SPSS, User Zoom, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, NVivo, DeDoose, EnjoyHQ, Figma, Miro, Microsoft Office, Adobe Illustrator, Slack, Monday

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

PhD	Cultural Studies in Education Curriculum & Instruction	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