

Natalie Collina's CV of Failures

Things don't always work out. Failure in academia can feel demoralizing and deeply personal, whether it comes in the form of a rejection or a missed deadline. But most people who look impressive are getting tons of setbacks underneath the surface; you can't get acceptances without some rejections mixed in! Trying to do something hard is necessarily messy, and this CV is my small contribution to normalizing that.

Note: This CV only consists of things I remember as I write it in September 2026. There were probably other setbacks which felt quite tragic at the time, which I have now forgotten.

Ph.D. Programs I was rejected from

Stanford University
University of California, Berkeley
Princeton University
MIT
Cornell University
Carnegie Mellon University
Columbia University

Conference Non-Publications

In case some of my co-authors are not as charmed by the idea of publicizing rejections in detail, I will list the years and conferences in lieu of specific paper titles. :)

Two papers rejected	NeurIPS 2026
One paper rejected	FOCS 2026
One paper rejected	STOC 2026
One paper rejected	ICML 2026
Two papers rejected	ICLR 2026
One paper rejected	FOCS 2025
One paper desk rejected because I forgot to change the title from TBD by the abstract deadline	NeurIPS 2025
One paper rejected	ICML 2025
One paper rejected	ITCS 2025
One paper withdrawn before reviews b/c we decided it wasn't ready	STOC 2025
One paper rejected	FOCS 2023
One paper rejected ¹	WINE 2023
One paper rejected	EC 2023
One paper rejected ²	WINE 2022
One paper rejected	EC 2020
One paper rejected	SODA 2019

¹ The WINE 2023 and EC 2023 rejects were the same paper, which never ended up accepted anywhere. I spent much of the second year of my PhD bashing my head into the wall for this project, which in the end had neither a compelling enough model nor strong enough results to see the light of day.

² This was my first paper of my PhD, and the rejection really stung. In the end it was published, but more importantly the ideas I developed while writing this paper informed many future papers.

Awards & Honors I wasn't selected for

Apple PhD Fellowship (nominated by institution, but did not receive)	2025
Cooperative AI Foundation PhD Fellowship	2025
Jane Street PhD Fellowship	2025
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship	2023
NDSEG Fellowship	2023
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship ³	2022
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship	2020

³ Technically, I didn't actually get rejected in 2022; I failed to even apply. I spent weeks compiling my application, and then in some mysterious and catastrophic failure of time management, missed the submission deadline by half a minute.

Postdoctoral Fellowships / Positions I wasn't selected for

Kempner Institute Postdoctoral Fellowship, Harvard University	2026
Postdoctoral position, Microsoft Research New England	2026

Faculty Positions I wasn't selected for

MIT EECS	2026
MIT Sloan/EECS joint position	2026
Cornell Tech CS	2026
Cornell CS	2026
UPenn CS	2026
JHU CS	2026
Georgetown CS	2026
Michigan CS	2026
UChicago CS	2026
NYU CS	2026
CMU CS	2026
Columbia CS	2026
Columbia IEOR	2026

Research Internships I wasn't selected for

Google Research Internship, Market Algorithms Group ⁴	Summer 2025
Google Research Internship, Market Algorithms Group	Summer 2024
Microsoft Research Internship, Economics and Computation Group	Summer 2024
Amazon Applied Science Internship	Summer 2024
Apple AI Research Internship	Summer 2024
Google Research Internship, Market Algorithms Group	Summer 2023
Microsoft Research Internship, Economics and Computation Group	Summer 2022
Microsoft Research Internship, FATE Group	Summer 2022
Google Research Internship, Market Algorithms Group	Summer 2022

⁴ Despite this rough track record applying to Google Research, I have enjoyed collaborating closely with a researcher there for many years! There are perhaps two takeaways from this: 1) if what you really want is to collaborate on research, there are sometimes ways to do it without having to be accepted for an internship, and 2) internships can be really hard to get, even if you know someone! Don't get down on yourself!