

LEXIN CAI

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(202) 285-2066

EDUCATION

Expected 2026	Ph.D. in Economics, Cornell University
2015	M.S. in Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania
2013	B.S. in Public Administration, Renmin University of China

FIELDS

Labor Economics, Public Finance

WORKING PAPERS

“The Long-Term Effects of Universal Free School Meal Policies: Evidence from the Community Eligibility Provision”

“Effects of SNAP Work Requirements”
(with Hyewon Kim and Pauline Leung)

“When Free Lunch Is No Longer a Proxy for Student Poverty: Effects of the Community Eligibility Provision on State K-12 Funding”

TEACHING

Spring 2022	TA for Behavioral Economics and Public Policy, Cornell University
Fall 2021	TA for Economics of the Public Sector, Cornell University

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

2025–2026	Ernest Liu '64, Ta-Chung and Ya-Chao Liu Memorial Fellowship, Cornell
2025	Jerry Ellig Award for Best Student Presentation, SBCA Annual Meeting
2023–2024	Jain Family Institute – Cornell Brooks School Fellow
2022	Outstanding TA Award, Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy
2020–2025	Sage Fellowship, Cornell University (x2)
2014	Dean’s Merit Award, University of Pennsylvania
2012	Global KU Scholarship, Korea University
2010–2013	National Scholarship, Renmin University of China (x3, top 5% of class)

RESEARCH GRANTS

2025	Russell Sage Foundation Dissertation Research Grant (\$15K)
2024	MIT Policy Impacts Early-Career Scholars Grant (\$10K)
2024	Cornell Labor Economics Small Grant (\$2.5K)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2026	ASSA Annual Meeting, Institute for Research on Poverty Summer Research Workshop (poster, University of Wisconsin–Madison)
2025	APPAM, Association for Education Finance and Policy, FLX Economics of Education Workshop (Cornell), Policy Impacts Annual Conference (MIT), Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis (SBCA), Symposium on the Frontiers in the Studies of Anti-Poverty Programs (Discussant, Cornell)
2024	APPAM

EMPLOYMENT

2022–2024 Cornell University
Research Assistant to Prof. Pauline Leung and Prof. Zhuan Pei

2015–2020 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Research Analyst (2018–2020), Associate (2016–2018), Intern (2015–2016)

2014–2015 World Wildlife Fund
Intern

SERVICE

2022–2025 Executive Board Member, Diversity in Cornell Economics
2022–2024 Student Representative, Cornell Economics Committee for Student and
Faculty Engagement

2021–2022 Social Co-chair, Cornell Graduate Students in Public Policy
2014–2015 Co-founder, Wonk Tank, Penn Wharton Public Policy Initiative

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Programming Stata, R, SAS, Python, SQL, ArcGIS
Data clearance U.S. Census Bureau Special Sworn Status (2022-present)
Languages English (fluent), Cantonese (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (native)
Citizenship U.S.

Last updated June 2026