

# AI Due Diligence | Mentor | Advisor



# Invented, Implemented, Scaled AI Globally



*Ph.D. in Statistics*



**Jet Propulsion Laboratory**  
California Institute of Technology



**slalom**

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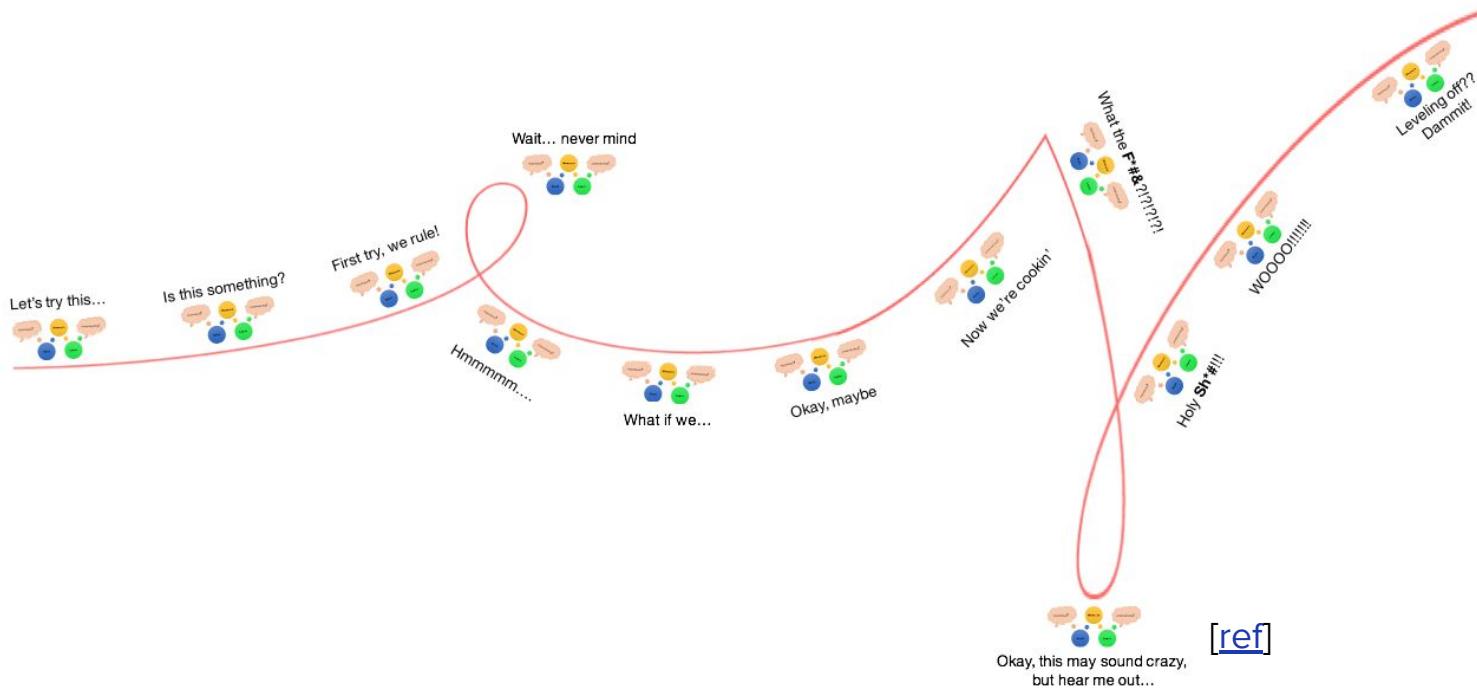
**Jet Propulsion Laboratory**  
California Institute of Technology

FashionTech  
eCommerce  
Hospitality  
FinTech  
SaaS  
IoT



**slalom**

# My Career Journey





# Choose Your Own Adventure: Designing your Non-Linear Career Path

Dr. Irina Kukuyeva

January 30, 2026





[\[ref\]](#)



[\[ref\]](#)

# Career #1: Employee (IC)

**<action verb> X in <client> industry**  
**~X <another>**

# Career #1: Employee (IC)

<action verb> X in <client> industry  
~X <another>

**EX: AdTech → Healthcare**

# Career #1: Employee (IC)

<action verb> X in <client> industry  
~X <another>

**EX: FashionTech → FinTech**

# Career #2-a: Freelance Consultant



Data Consultant ([Take #1](#))

1st Client from [Women Who Code](#) newsletter

# Career #2-b: Fractional Executive



Fractional Chief Data Officer

Pivot #1

# Career #2-b: Fractional Executive



Fractional Chief Data Officer

Pivot #1



+



Girls in Tech Meetup

Ladies Get Paid

# Career #2-c: Mentor



Fractional Chief Data Officer  
Pivot #1

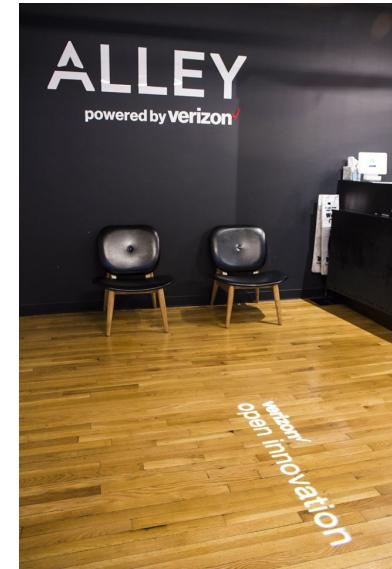


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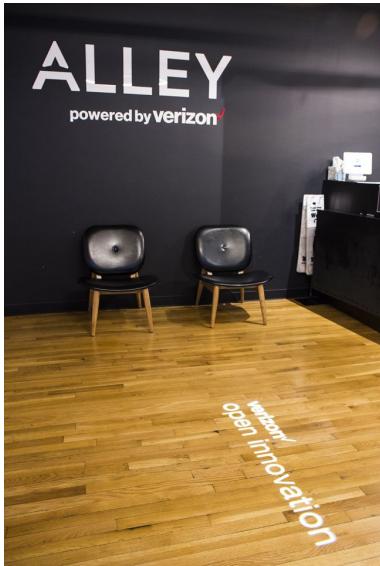
Girls in Tech Meetup

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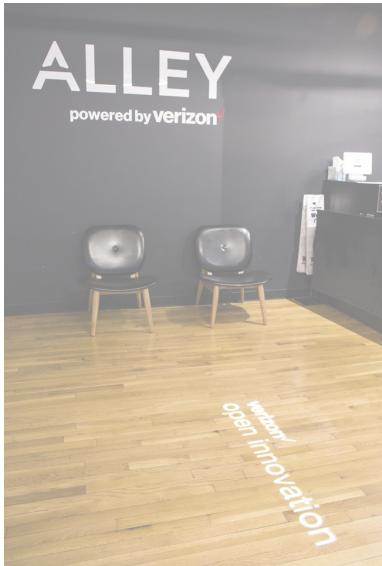


→ Raise Hand

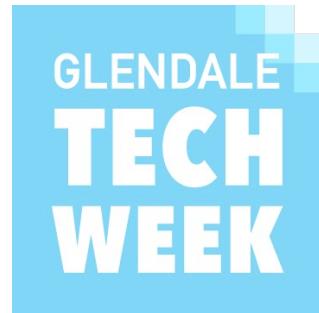
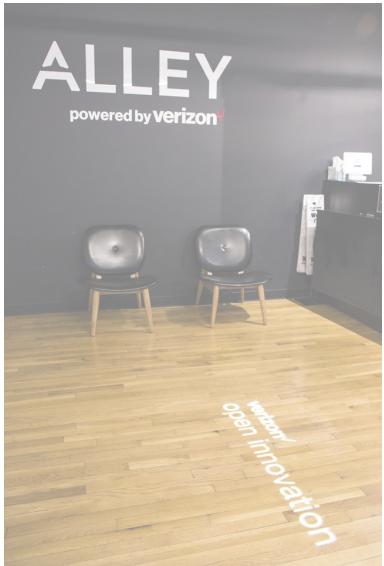
# Career #2-c: Mentor



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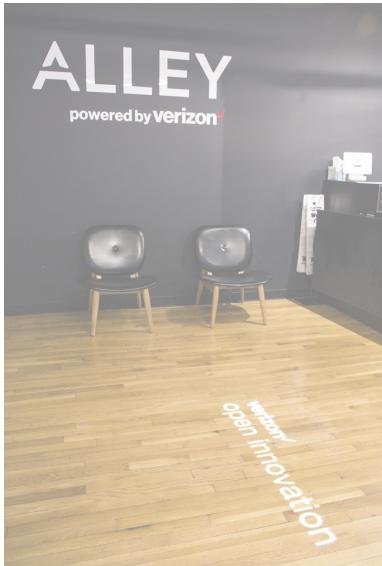


City of Glendale Newsletter



Newsletter +  
Raise Hand

# Career #2-c: Mentor



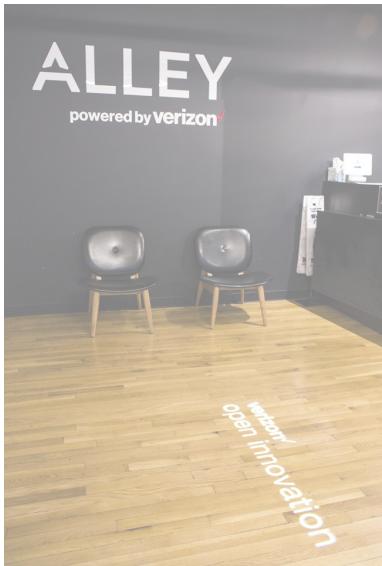
City of Glendale Newsletter



Newsletter +  
Raise Hand

**techstars**

# Career #2-c: Mentor



City of Glendale Newsletter



Newsletter +  
Raise Hand

**techstars**

# Career #3: Operating/Venture Partner



AI DD

Pivot #2 ('23)

# Aside: Path to this Talk



LinkedIn (2018)

# Aside: Path to this Talk



LinkedIn (2018)



STEMverse mentor (2018-)

1st Keynote: March 2024

# Aside: Path to this Talk



LinkedIn (2018)



Mentor (2020-)



Mentor (2022-)



Graduate Women  
in Science  
*Los Angeles Chapter*

STEMverse mentor (2018-)

1st Keynote: March 2024

# Aside: Path to this Talk



LinkedIn (2018)



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→ Raise Hand



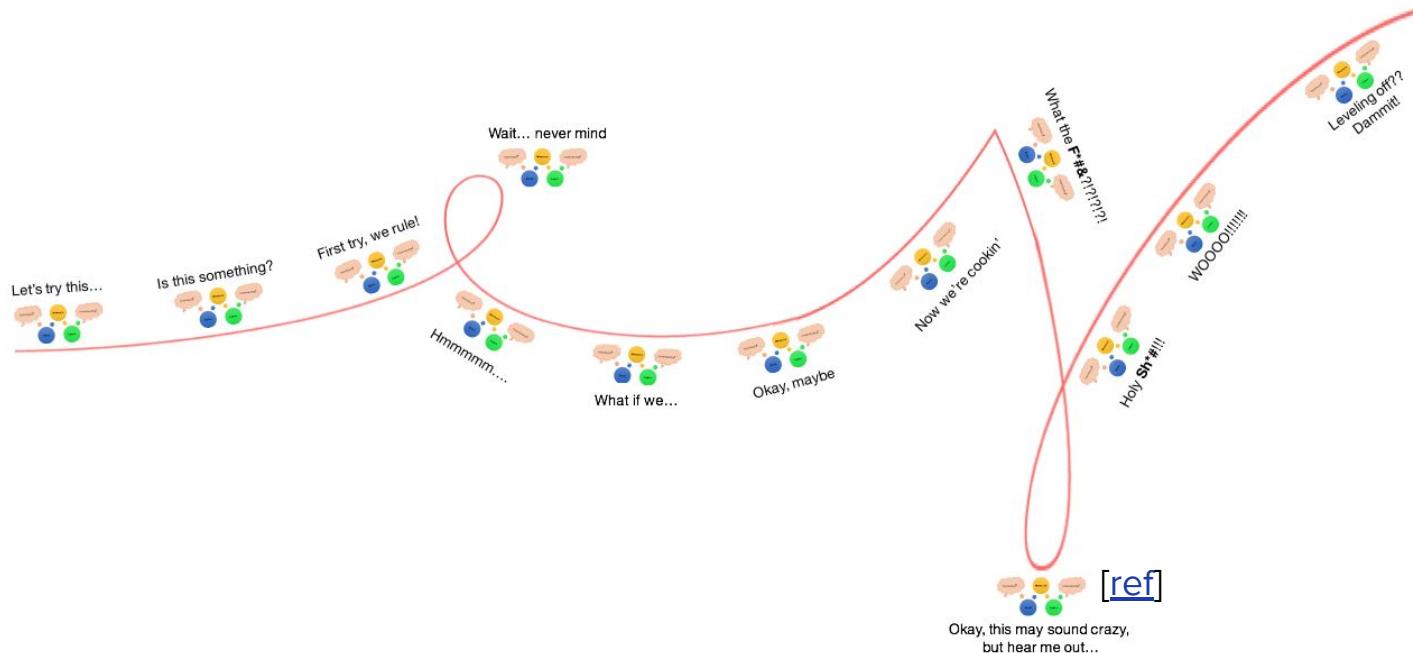
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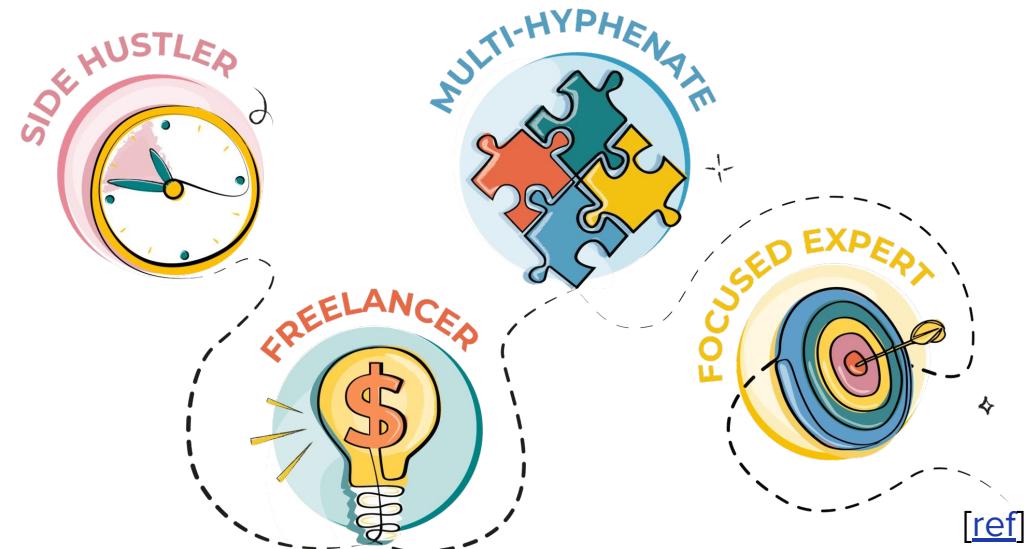
# Takeaways

# #1: Career Path Portfolio



## #2: Find/Create Own!

- Enjoy?
- Others ask of you?



Advice on how to be your own mentor + Appendix

# #3: Newsletters!



WOMEN  
FOUNDERS  
NETWORK



# #4: Growth: Outside Comfort Zone!

- Raise Hand!

# #4: Growth: Outside Comfort Zone!

- Raise Hand!
- Miss 100% of shots you ***don't*** not take!

*note to self*

[ref]

# Questions?

[ikukuyeva.com/community/presentations/Talk-nonlinear-career-path](http://ikukuyeva.com/community/presentations/Talk-nonlinear-career-path)

# Appendix: Additional Resources

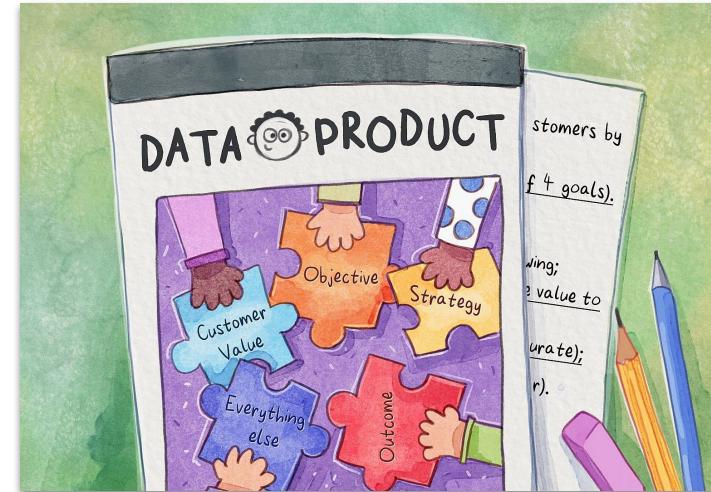
Apply!

# Where to Find Full-Time Roles

- Industry
  - Start-ups\* ([AngelList](#), Accelerators such as [Techstars](#), VC's portfolio of companies such as [a16z](#) and [Alumni Ventures](#))
  - Job Boards (LinkedIn, [Tech Ladies](#))
  - Job Fairs ([AnalyticsClub](#), [WomenHack](#), Conferences, e.g., [JSM 2026](#))
  - My [blog post with more resources](#)
  - Newsletters
- [Government](#)\*
- [Non-profit \(\[tax filings\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [H1B Salary Database](#): salaries + companies hired w/visa

# Advice to Break-in

- Tailor project to answer business question
- “Academia to Industry” panel, by Locally Optimistic (2021)
- **Mentorships (free):**
  - <Your school's> Alumni Association
  - Learn Teach Code (monthly)
  - Advice on how to be your own mentor
  - <Professional Organization>
- Networking (slides)



# Advice to Break-in: VC

- Opportunities
  - UCLA Tech Transfer Office: TDG ([Careers page](#))
  - [Women Founders Network Due Diligence Analyst Program](#)
  - [Venture Partners Fellowship\\*](#)
  - Ivelina Dineva's [list](#) of 150 VC fellowships
  - [PledgeLA's VC Fellowship](#) for grad students
- Girls into VC at UCLA ([LinkedIn group](#))
- [Where to Find Roles](#)

# Networking Advice

- Goal: Build relationships
- Where to Meet People
  - This event!
  - DataFest mentor
  - Newsletters → Events
  - Conference volunteer
  - Accelerator mentor/employee
  - LinkedIn

# Networking Advice: Events



Newsletters



[lu.ma/la](http://lu.ma/la)

<Professional Org> Conferences

# Networking Advice (cont'd)

- Ask specific question → Easier to help async
- Informational coffee goal: learn → NOT to ask for job
- Follow-up/thank
- Book: “Networking for People Who Hate Networking”
- Opt-in