

Nishanth Jay Kumar

Personal Website: nishanthjkumar.com

Email: njk@csail.mit.edu

LinkedIn: [nishanth-kumar](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nishanth-kumar)

Google Scholar: [Nishanth Kumar](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=NishanthKumar)

GitHub: github.com/NishanthJKumar

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Cambridge, MA

Doctor of Philosophy in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, GPA: 5.00/5.00 2021 - 2027 (expected)

Master of Science in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

- Selected Coursework: Computational Sensorimotor Learning, Robotic Manipulation, Theory of Computation.
- Activities: Graduate Application Assistance Program (GAAP) mentor.

Brown University

Providence, RI

Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering with Honors, GPA: 3.96/4.00

2017 - 2021

- Honors Thesis Title: “You Only Need What’s in Scope: Generating Task-Specific Abstractions for Efficient AI Planning”.
- Activities: Brown Space Engineering, Brown STEAM Club, Brown CS Meta-Undergrad Research Assistant (MURA).

The Indian Public School

Coimbatore, India

IB Diploma Programme, Final Score: 45/45

2015–2016

- Valedictorian, first student in school history to achieve a perfect score in the IB Diploma Programme.
- Activities: Robotics Team, MUN Team, School Newsletter, Basketball Team.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

Cambridge, MA

Graduate Research Assistant

2021 - Present

- Advised by Professors Leslie Kaelbling and Tomás Lozano-Pérez within the Learning and Intelligent Systems (LIS) group.
- Research topics include Neuro-symbolic methods, Task and Motion Planning, Reinforcement Learning, and Imitation Learning for robotics and decision-making.

Brown University Department of Computer Science

Providence, RI

Undergraduate Research Assistant

2017 - 2021

- Worked with Professors Stefanie Tellex, George Konidaris and Michael Littman within the bigAI initiative
- Research topics included Imitation Learning, Reinforcement Learning, Classical Planning, Model-Based Reasoning, Planning under Uncertainty, and Mixed Reality, among others.

Brown University Department of Computer Science

Providence, RI

Meta Undergraduate Research Assistant (MURA)

2020 - 2021

- Responsible for cultivating and promoting Undergraduate Research within the Brown CS Department.
- Held “Research Office Hours”, co-ordinate with faculty to host educational events and increase research opportunities for undergrads.

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

The Boston Dynamics AI Institute

Research Intern

Cambridge, MA

November 2022 - Present

- Working with Research Lead Jennifer Barry on combining learning and planning to solve real-world long-horizon tasks.

Vicarious AI

Research Intern

Remote

May - August 2021

- Research Project on building a toolkit for Probabilistic Graphical Models (PGM's) with Stannis Zhou and Miguel Lázaro-Gredilla.
- First-author journal paper in preparation. Open-source project code release can be found here [\[link\]](#).

Uber Advanced Technologies Group

Summer Research Intern

Remote

May - August 2020

- Research Project on Active Learning under Chief Scientist Prof. Raquel Urtasun.
- First-author conference publication accepted to the Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL) 2021.

Paragon.school

Co-Founder

Providence, RI

February 2020 - December 2021

- Paragon.school was a mentorship and college-consulting company for high-performance high school students.

TEACHING

- **Head Teaching Assistant**, Brown CS Fall 2019
Learning and Sequential Decision Making [Grad Level] (CSCI 2951-F)
- **Teaching Assistant** at Brown School of Engineering Fall 2018
Honors Introduction to Engineering (ENGN 0031)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Best Paper at RSS Workshop on Learning for TAMP 2023
- Qualcomm Innovation Fellowship Finalist 2022
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship 2021
- Berkeley Fellowship (declined) 2021
- Brown Outstanding Computer Engineering Senior Award 2021
- CRA Outstanding Undergraduate Researcher Award Finalist 2021
- Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship 2020
- Member of Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honors Society 2020
- Heidelberg Laureate 2020
- CRA Outstanding Undergraduate Researcher Award Honorable Mention 2020
- 'Best Plenary Presenter', Ivy-League Undergrad Research Symposium (ILURS) 2019
- Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award, Brown University 2019
- Hack@Brown "Best Hardware Hack" 2018
- YHack "Best Finance Hack" 2017
- Google Global Science Fair Regional Finalist 2015
- FIRST Tech Challenge World Championships, Special Judges' "Enabler" Award 2015

INVITED TALKS

Conferences and Symposia

- *Building Intelligent, Collaborative Robots*
 - Invited talk at the second Machine Intelligence Conference (MIC), Boston University. September, 2019
- *Action-Oriented Semantic Maps via Mixed Reality*
 - 1 of 8 Plenary Presenters speakers at the Second Ivy League Undergrad Research Symposium, UPenn. April, 2019

Universities and Research Laboratories

- *Inventing Plannable Abstractions from Demonstrations*
 - Invited talk at the Brown Robotics Group Meeting, May 2023.
- *Task Scoping: Generating Task-Specific Abstractions for Planning*
 - Invited talk at the MIT LIS Group Meeting. February, 2021.
- *What I'm working on now: Task Scoping and Parameterized Imitation Learning*
 - Short talk at Intelligent Robot Lab meeting, Brown University. November, 2019.

Miscellaneous

- *Let's Talk about AI and Robotics*
 - Invited interview for an episode of the interSTEM YouTube channel. November, 2019.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Journal Reviewing

- *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research (JAIR)* (2022)

Conference Reviewing

- *Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL)* (2022, 2023)
- *AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (2022, 2023)
- *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)* (2019)

Workshop Reviewing

- *The International Workshop on Virtual, Augmented, and Mixed-Reality for Human-Robot Interactions (VAM-HRI)* (2019)

PUBLICATIONS

Conference Publications

1. **N.Kumar***, W.McClinton, R.Chitnis, T.Silver, T.Lozano-Pérez, and L.P.Kaelbling, “Learning Efficient Abstract Planning Models that Choose What to Predict”, *Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL)*, 2023.
2. T.Silver*, R.Chitnis*, **N.Kumar**, W.McClinton, T.Lozano-Perez, and L.P.Kaelbling, “Predicate Invention for Bilevel Planning”, *AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)*, 2023.

3. S.Segal*, **N.Kumar***, S.Casas, W.Zeng, M.Ren, J.Wang, and R.Urtasun, “Just label what you need: Fine-grained Active Selection For P&P through Partially Labeled Scenes”, in *Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL)*, 2021.
4. E.Rosen, **N.Kumar**, N.Gopalan, D.Ullman, G.Konidaris, and S.Tellex, “Building Plannable Representations with Mixed Reality”, in *IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems*, 2020.
5. A.Wandzel, Y.Oh, M.Fishman, **N.Kumar**, W.L.LS, and S.Tellex, “Multi-object Search Using Object-oriented POMDPs”, *IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)*, 2019.

Workshop Publications

1. T.Silver*, V.Hariprasad*, R.Shuttleworth*, **N.Kumar**, T.Lozano-Pérez, and L.P.Kaelbling, “PDDL Planning with Pretrained Large Language Models”, *NeurIPS Foundation Models for Decision Making Workshop*, 2022.
2. **N.Kumar***, M.Fishman*, N.Danas, M.Littman, S.Tellex, and G.Konidaris, “Task Scoping for Efficient Planning in Open Worlds”, *AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Student Workshop*, 2019.
3. **N.Kumar***, E.Rosen*, and S.Tellex, “Knowledge Acquisition for Robots through Mixed Reality Head-Mounted Displays”, *The Second International Workshop on Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality for Human Robot Interaction*. 2019.

Misc. Publications

1. **N.Kumar***, W.McClinton, K.Le, and T.Silver, “Bilevel Planning for Robots: An Illustrated Introduction”, *LIS Research Group Website*, 2023.
2. M.Fishman*, **N.Kumar***, C.Allen, N.Danas, M.Littman, S.Tellex, and G.Konidaris, “Task Scoping: Generating Task-Specific Abstractions for Planning in Open-Scope Models”, *arXiv*, 2023.
3. G.Zhou*, A.Dedieu*, **N.Kumar**, M.Lázaro-Gredilla, Shrinu Kushagra, and D.George, “PGMax: Factor Graphs for Discrete Probabilistic Graphical Models and Loopy Belief Propagation in JAX”, *arXiv*, 2022.
4. J.Chang*, **N.Kumar***, S.Hastings, A.Gokaslan, D.Romeres, D.Jha, D.Nikovski, G.Konidaris, and S.Tellex, “Learning Deep Parameterized Skills from Demonstration for Re-targetable Visuomotor Control”, *arXiv*, 2020.

OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE

- *predicators* (Python, PyTorch; over 60 stars on GitHub)
 - Codebase that implements a search-then-sample task TAMP system, as well as several methods to learn the components of a TAMP problem (predicates, operators, etc.) from a handful of demonstrations.
 - Ongoing Ph.D. work.
- *predicators_behavior* (Python, PyTorch)
 - Integrating learning for TAMP with the iGibson simulator and the BEHAVIOR benchmark.
 - Ongoing Ph.D. work.
- *PGMax* (Python, Jax; over 50 stars on GitHub)
 - Framework for easily creating and running efficient inference on factor graphs.
 - Internship project during my time at Vicarious AI.
- *openTAMP* (Python, Gurobi, OSQP)
 - Framework for optimization-based TAMP, along with a custom library to solve motion-planning problems via sequential convex optimization.
 - Ongoing Ph.D. work.