* As technology improving, there are more and more application of autonomous mobile robots in different fields, such as in factories, logistics and hospitals. One of the biggest advantages of mobile robots is the ability to transport items and move automatically without direct human control. This not only saves on labor costs but also reduces so much tedious work that people have to do. Because of this, improving the autonomy of AMRs can greatly expand their use, allowing more people to benefit from their capabilities. So, to achieve this, I focus on Motion planning for AMRs, which plays a crucial role in enabling their autonomy.
* What is Motion planning in the field of robotics? Typically, it finds a continuous sequence of valid configurations that safely and efficiently guide a robot from start to goal. There are two critical parts: global planning and local planning. My research mainly focuses on local planning, but I need to introduce both first.

Global planning is like navigation in Google Maps; it creates a clear route from the starting point to the goal, telling robots how to avoid static obstacles. On the other hand, local planning must handle all emergencies in real time. It generates a motion command in every short time period that helps robots evade dynamic objects, just like a driver constantly making decisions on the go. Therefore, a better local planning system should help AMRs navigate highly dynamic and complex environments, consequently improving their autonomy.

* There are several methods for solving local planning problems. Artificial Potential Fields (APF) model obstacles as repulsive forces and goals as attractive forces, allowing mobile robots to avoid obstacles in real time. However, they often struggle with local minima issues.

Dynamic Window Approach (DWA) samples velocity commands within dynamic constraints and scores them based on clearance, velocity, and heading. While effective, it struggles with continuously moving obstacles. In fact, one of our former lab members focused on addressing this issue.

Velocity Obstacles (VO) predict collision regions in velocity space and select safe velocities. This method is highly effective for multi-agent systems but struggles to avoid moving obstacles without prior knowledge of their intentions.

Model Predictive Control (MPC) optimizes trajectories over a short horizon while respecting dynamic constraints. It effectively handles robot dynamics and obstacle avoidance but can become computationally expensive as the planning horizon increases.

My research aims to combine the Velocity Obstacle method with the concept of MPC to enhance the avoidance capabilities of autonomous mobile robots (AMRs).

* Specifically, I seek to determine the optimal sequence of motion commands within a short time horizon to handle obstacles with unknown intentions. This process is structured into two key components: **Prediction and Optimization**, each playing a crucial role in improving AMRs’ navigation performance in dynamic environments.
* In the prediction step, we want to guess the movements of surrounding obstacles, where they will be and how fast to which direction. To achieve this, I suppose all obstacles’ position and velocity could be measured and model every observed obstacle as a constant acceleration agent, assuming that they will not change their acceleration in a short time period. Following this, Kalman Filter is applied to estimate the confidence ratio of those models’ prediction. Typically, the variance of longer prediction will be larger. Therefore, the more future of the obstacle prediction, the size is bigger, indicating their danger region is larger.