# Brandon (Yifan) Yang

brandonyifanyang.com

#### **EDUCATION**

#### University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA

B.S. in Computer Science; Major GPA: 3.98/4.00; Cumulative GPA: 3.91/4.00

Aug. 2021 - May. 2025

Email: jqm9ba@virginia.edu

• Relevant Coursework: ML, RL (G), NLP (G), Probabilistic ML (G), Human-Robot Interaction (G), Optimization, Data Structures & Algorithms, Theory of Computation, Computer Systems Organization, Software Engineering

#### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

## Learning and Interactive Robotics, University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA

Aug 2024 - Present

Advisor: Prof. Yen-Ling Kuo

• Ongoing Senior Capstone: Vision-Language-Action (VLA) model for robotic manipulation.

• Investigating VLA model outputting both language and corresponding actions within a unified transformer output space, grounding both domains simultaneously at each timestep.

## University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Advisor: Prof. Jia-Bin Huang

May 2024 - Present

- Semantically Aware 3D Gaussian Splatting
  - \* Developed novel method to inject semantically aware embeddings into 3D Gaussian Splatting (3DGS) scenes for 3D understanding and segmentation tasks.
  - \* Leveraged video segmentation from SAMv2 to maintain temporal consistency in injection of CLIP features from 2D training set to 3DGS scene, ensuring stable and accuracte 3D embeddings.

### Collaborative Robotics Lab, University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA

Advisor: Prof. Tariq Iqbal

May 2022 - May 2024

## o Grounded Location for Object Manipulation (GLOMA)

- \* Zero-shot image-editing model grounded by language instructions for object relocation and manipulation tasks, designed for downstream robotic applications using goal-conditioned RL.
- \* Integrated language grounding with visual perception using bounding box guidance from pre-trained language models, enabling precise object relocation without external supervision.
- \* Collected and annotated custom dataset for fine-tuning pre-trained language and vision models.

#### o Centralized multi-agent RL for Collaborative Tasks

- \* Developed long-horizon on/offline centralized MARL for robotic bolt screwing tasks.
- \* Designed and optimized custom reward functions in multi-agent framework for task completion and agent collaboration.
- \* Deployed and tested custom simulated environments in IsaacGym for training and evaluation.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

#### Teaching Assistant

Machine Learning w/ Prof. Rich Nguyen

Aug 2024 - Present

o Authored comprehensive course notes to support student learning and understanding.

#### Teaching Assistant

Theory of Computation w/ Prof. Mark Floryan

Jan 2024 - May 2024

 $\circ~$  Held weekly office hours and review sessions to assist students with course material.

#### Lab Lead Teaching Assistant

Computer Systems Organization w/ Prof. John Hott

Jan 2023 - May 2023

• Led weekly lab sections with short lectures and hands-on activities for 70+ students.

### Honors

• Dean's Engineering Research Scholarship (\$5000): University of Virginia May 2023

• University of Virginia Research Computing Exhibition Finalist: University of Virginia April 2024

• Entrepreneurship Cup Winner (Given \$1000 in funding): University of Virginia November 2023

• Dean's List: University of Virginia

#### Presentations

#### • Mechanistic Interpretability in Large Language Models

o University of Virginia Research Computing Exhibition, Charlottesville, VA

April 2024

## • GLOMA: Grounded Location for Object Manipulation

o University of Virginia Fall Engineering Research Expo, Charlottesville, VA

October 2023

o University of Virginia Spring Thornton Society Dinner, Charlottesville, VA

September 2023

o University of Virginia Summer Research Symposium, Charlottesville, VA

July 2023

## • Robot Tool Grasping with AprilTag

o University of Virginia Engineering Open House, Charlottesville, VA

November 2023

o University of Virginia Engineering Open House, Charlottesville, VA

November 2022

## SOFTWARE PROJECTS

- notie-markdown: Open-source React component for Markdown rendering, built with TypeScript.
- SmartOH: AI-assisted office hour queueing system, built with Python, PyTorch, and TypeScript. Placed 3rd at VTHacks11.
- Voy: Volunteer and driver management platform for non-profits, built with Python and TypeScript. Received funding from UVA's Entrepreneurship Cup.

## Programming Skills

- Languages: Python, C/C++, Java, JavaScript, TypeScript, HTML/CSS
- Technologies: PyTorch, TensorFlow, Linux, Git, Docker, LATEX
- Web Technologies: React, Node.js, Express, Django