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: branyang@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

Advisor: Prof. Yen-Ling Kuo

Aug 2024 - Present

o 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 (Received \$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

 $\circ~$ University of Virginia Spring Thornton Society Dinner, Charlottesville, VA

September 2023

 $\circ~$ 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 overall at VTHacks11 (3/393).
- 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