KAORU SEKI

HCI Researcher

kaoruseki415@gmail.com ✉

kaoruseki.com 🌐

www.linkedin.com/in/kaoru-seki415 in

PROFILE

My research focuses on designing data-driven pedagogical systems that integrate emerging technologies like AI and VR to enhance learning. I aim to design technologies accessible that empower all the stakeholders to engage equitably in diverse educational contexts.

EDUCATION

M.S. in Human-Centered Computing | May 2024- December 2025
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Master Thesis: Student-Driven Recommendations for AI Policy in a Design Classroom

B.A. in Business Technology Administration | May 2021- May 2024
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

PUBLICATIONS

Conference
- **"Hypocrisy in Faculty Use": Student-Driven Recommendations for AI Policy in a Design Classroom** (2026) Seki, K*., Vijay, M*., Kotturi, Y.; ACM Conference on Computer Human Interaction. *Under Review* * Equal Contributions

Poster Presentation
- **"I Wish I Had More Time": Investigating User Onboarding Methods in VR Immersive Analytics** (2025) Rajasagi, P., Chelluri, H., Seki, K., Tondreau. A, Zuber, R., Boot, L., Komlodi, A.; ASIS&T'25 Annual Meeting

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant | September 2024 -Present | UMBC, Baltimore MD
Advisor: Dr. Yasmine Kotturi
Student-Driven AI Policy
- Led three-part participatory design workshops and semi-structured interviews with 10 students from the graduate design studio course to inform student-driven AI policy recommendations
- Created interview protocol, collected and analyzed qualitative data (audio recording), such as thematic analysis and affinity diagramming
- Redesigned user interfaces of generative AI technologies to improve learning outcomes in design education
- Presented findings to diverse stakeholders, including faculty and administrators across UMBC campus.
- First-authored a CHI 2026 full paper and developed a master's thesis based on this study

Bizchat
- Conducted a literature review of 14 peer-reviewed papers on generative AI and entrepreneurship, synthesizing findings into themes on digital skills, community-based participatory research, and co-design for marginalized entrepreneurs.
- Conducted semi-structured participant interviews to gather feedback on BizChat's usability, challenges, and potential benefits for business plan creation. Collected insights on feature usage, onboarding experience, and comparisons with other generative AI tools to inform design improvements

UX Researcher| February 2024 - Present | UMBC Imaging Research Center, Baltimore MD
Advisor: Dr. Anita Komlodi

- Investigate how sensemaking and learning occur within an immersive VR application called System Exploration and Engagement Environment (SEEe).
- Capture and edit video recordings of participant interactions within VR to analyze human behavior, focusing on how users navigate, respond, and engage with the virtual environment.
- Conduct data collection through video sampling, participant interviews, and observational methods to build insights on user behavior patterns.
- Analyze collected data to identify key behavioral trends, which inform recommendations for enhancing user experience within VR systems.

ACADEMIC PROJECTS

EZfix Web application Graphic Design | August 2024 - December 2024 | UMBC, Baltimore MD

- Collaborated with a cross-functional team to design a user-friendly web application for the housing industry, focusing on service providers such as handymen and plumbers.
- Built interactive prototypes in Figma and improved accessibility, navigation, and visual hierarchy based on user feedback.

TracCloud System Redesign | February 2024 - May 2024 | UMBC, Baltimore MD

- Conducted a comprehensive analysis of the TracCloud tutoring system used at UMBC, focusing on enhancing user experience for students, tutors, and administrators.
- Redesigned the system using human-centered design principles, identifying usability issues through interviews, surveys, and heuristic evaluations.
- Created low- and medium-fidelity prototypes with Figma to address key problems such as affordance and navigation, resulting in a more streamlined experience for all users.

SKILLS

Software: Figma, Adobe InDesign, Canva, JGrasp, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Adobe Acrobat
Research/Analysis:

- Research design, interview protocol creation, and participatory design workshop facilitation
- Semi-structured interviewing, observational research, and field documentation
- Transcription, qualitative coding, and thematic analysis
- Literature review and synthesis of academic research
- Usability testing, heuristic evaluation, and cognitive walkthroughs

Professional Development Skills: Time-Management, Problem-Solving, Collaboration, Team-Leadership, Attention to detail
Language: Japanese (Native), English (Fluent)

CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) | January 2025
- CITI-Social/Behavioral Research | January 2024
- CITI-Researchers conducting no more than minimal risk research | December 2024
- Digital Tech Credential | December 2023

AWARDS/COMPETITION

- NSF I-Corps Fellowship | October - December 2025, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
- 2nd Place, Social Impact Track - Idea & Innovation Challenge 2024 UMBC, Baltimore MD
- Magna Cum Laude | May 2024 UMBC, Baltimore MD
- Outstanding Senior | May 2024 UMBC, Baltimore MD