

Daniela M. Markazi

dmarkaz2@illinois.edu | linkedin.com/in/danielamarkazi | danielamarkazi.com

Research-trained product practitioner translating complex real-world insights into deployed human-centered & AI systems.

EDUCATION

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Ph.D. in Informatics

May 2027

- GPA 4.0/4.0; 30 Awards: Graduate Leadership Award (Sole PhD Winner, 2023); ACM Computational Fellowship (2021 - 2025, 1 of 11 awarded globally for exceptional work in HCI and computing systems); Generation Google Scholarship (2021)

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, B.S. and B.S.A.G. in Agricultural and Biological Engineering

December 2019

- 28 Awards: Knights of St. Patrick (2019, Highest Engineering Honor); Senior 100 Honorary (2019); Convocation Speaker

SKILLS

- **Research & Synthesis:** IRB-approved human subjects research, qualitative/mixed-methods analysis, persona development, usability testing, custom study design, A/B testing, user stories, journey mapping, end-to-end framework execution
- **Technical & AI/ML:** Python (Pandas, NumPy), ML model development, robotics systems integration, C, SQL
- **Product Tooling:** Figma, Jira, Airtable, Dovetail, UserTesting, Tableau, Excel, Miro, Asana, Qualtrics, Visual Studio Code

PRODUCT & TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE

Coding it Forward, General Services Administration (GSA)

Remote / Washington, DC

UX Researcher & Product Fellow

June 2024 - August 2024

- Selected from 4,500+ applicants (2% acceptance rate); sole recipient of the 2024 Courtney Brousseau Community Builder Award and only project invited to presentation at GSA Research Guild for driving cross-organizational team impact.
- Defined product strategy for GSA's first cross-organizational research system; scoped MVP, aligned engineering, design, and product stakeholders, and created a scalable insights library blueprint reducing duplicated primary research initiatives.
- Uncovered stakeholder needs via 27 in-depth interviews, competitive analysis, literature reviews, and persona development.
- Chosen as 1 of 12 cohort projects nationally to present to federal agency leadership at Coding it Forward Demo Day.

John Deere

Champaign, IL

Software / Robotics Engineer (Part-Time Student Program)

January 2018 - April 2023

- Engineered autonomous lawnmower software deployed by 5 UIUC design teams; presented architecture and system efficiency data directly to C-Suite executives, leading to global rollouts across autonomous product lines.
- Developed and deployed ML classification models for autonomous mowing trained on field data; integrated outputs into robot decision logic and surfaced operator-legible system feedback to translate confidence thresholds into user states.
- Designed user-friendly tire monitoring tractor UI using VS Code and C, bridging ML insights with UX considerations.

University of Illinois Extension / BioMASS Laboratory

Urbana, IL / Puerto Rico

Climate Resilience Intern & UX Researcher

January 2020 - Present

- Product owner for the Illinois Climate Action Plan Database; scoping features and managing the end-to-end lifecycle of a free, open-access municipal digital resource that catalogs state and local-level plans and policies related to climate resilience.
- Co-secured a \$750,000 federal NIFA grant; managed 11 cross-institutional engineering projects for 50+ young researchers.

INFEWS-ER Program (NSF-Funded Academic-NGO Resilience Initiative)

Remote / Urbana, IL

Product Lead & Strategy Advisor

October 2020 - August 2023

- Defined product vision and roadmap for a literature database; led a 17-person global team and cross-cultural NGO partnership via scoping and feature prioritization, transforming field data into 8 core themes for a data-backed framework.
- Directed 14 graduate students prototyping a virtual resource hub in Figma; instituted need-finding interviews, design thinking workshops, and iterative A/B testing to validate user feature workflows.

Social Computing Systems Laboratory

Champaign, IL

Product & UX Researcher – AI Systems

January 2020 - October 2021

- Oversaw end-to-end development of PocketBot AI chatbot; synthesized pilot metrics and field trials with 29 participants to iterate workflows, increasing engagement scores; results published/presented at a top HCI conference (ACM CSCW).
- Executed 2 qualitative UX studies on AI trust/privacy; delivered design recommendations for high-stakes voice systems.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

- **UIUC Puerto Rico Disaster Relief Program (Co-Lead | 2018 - Present):** Mentors 100+ students on design, engineering, and computer science projects in Puerto Rico; created a university course on Community-Based Design and Management.
- **NCWIT (Central Illinois Chapter Chair | 2015 - Present):** Manages an online community of 4,000+ members, increased Illinois chapter participation by 50%, and recognized with the 2024 NCWIT Impact Award due to leadership efforts.