

Kaleb Bishop

Kaleb Bishop (they/them) is a first-year PhD student working with Drs. Alessandro Roncone and Brad Hayes working on human-robot collaboration. They moved to Boulder this past August from New England, and I got recommended to talk to Kaleb through Layne Jackson Hubbard, and I am so thankful for Layne's recommendation as this was such a fun conversation, and my first time meeting Kaleb.



What is your path to CU Boulder?

Kaleb studied cognitive science as an undergraduate and has interests in computational models of human cognition, where their interests led them to work in a social robotics lab. While working in that lab, they met Dr. Roncone, who was a postdoctoral researcher with the group at the time, and brought CU onto the radar. When visiting, they loved the people at CU and really clicked with folks in the department, especially in the robotics lab. They noted “I got good vibes.”

How would you explain your research to a ten-year-old?

Generally, Kaleb wants to know “How do we make robots socialize more like people?” Currently, they are working on making robots better tutors and partners in educational settings. Generally, Kaleb is interested in socially assistive robotics and is currently focusing on education as a very interesting special case in conjunction with our new AI Institute, which is doing a lot of work on student-AI teaming.

Who is someone that has helped you in some way? How?

This was a hard one to choose; “I’ve been very lucky. I have a lot of people who’ve been very supportive.” Kaleb actually has a close friend from high school who coincidentally started his MFA at CU this year. They’ve been able to reconnect this year living in the same town again, talking through recent events and being able to enjoy the other person’s company.

If you could have an alternative career, what would it be?

Kaleb would be some sort of creative, probably a musician. They play guitar in their spare time to recharge, and has done digital music production on and off since childhood. There is a little hesitation

however, about crossing the line from hobby to profession with music, relating this scenario to when they moved from programming as a hobby to programming for research and had to learn to balance hobby and work.

If you could make sure everybody in the world knew one thing, what would it be?

Kaleb wishes everyone had a more realistic perception of AI and machine learning so that folks are better able to hold algorithm developers responsible for their work and design and think a more realistic understanding of AI concepts would help. They sometimes get frustrated with pop-tech articles scaring folks about a robot takeover, so they also would love if everyone knew the basics of probability theory to better understand these risks and how to critically interpret statistics in such articles.

What about what you do makes you most excited?

Kaleb loves seeing the discussions with people and theorizing turn into an implementation with a really positive result, even in a qualitative way. Seeing the way kids' faces light up when a robot interacts with them in a way they see as being very alive is the most rewarding part for them. *"When you spend so long talking about something, it's easy to get into that headspace of being burnt out on details that seemingly don't matter, but humans pick up on subtle social cues. When you take the time to be thoughtful about these details, it really does help and have a good impact."*

What are some of your hobbies?

Kaleb generally enjoys showing their creative side, spending time on music. They are friends with lots of singers and they often help these friends produce covers and song ideas that they have. They're also working on becoming a more outdoors-y person since moving to Boulder, hiking and generally spending some time outside, especially when there is no reason to leave the apartment while working from home in a new town. They also like to draw or paint as a way of relaxing after a long day!

What are three improbable facts about you?

Kaleb speaks a bit of Korean-- they spent some time in Seoul in college, and that's their first post-COVID international travel destination. Kaleb is also in the first generation in their family to graduate from college. Finally, Kaleb claims to be better at cooking than baking, but generally feels like baking is more rewarding. Bonus fact: Their favorite thing to cook recently has been Birria tacos.

Icebreaker suggestions

Inspired by a recent re-playing of Pokemon, they would suggest asking *"What kind of Pokemon trainer would you be and why?"* This can be a question of aesthetic, values, or both!

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