

# Meet the Mentors – IEEE VR 2026



[Dr. Ekaterina Prasolova-Førland](#) is Full Professor and Head of the Innovative Immersive Technologies for Learning research group and lab at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. With over 140 publications, she has worked with educational virtual worlds and immersive technologies since 2002. She has helped develop educational XR simulations for stakeholders, including industry, hospitals, Norwegian Armed Forces, and Labour and Welfare Administration. She is co-organizing the KELVAR workshop at IEEEVR and is Norway's ambassador for Women in Industries of Tomorrow (WIIT).



[Dr. Christos Mousas](#) is an Associate Professor and Director of the Virtual Reality Lab in the School of Applied and Creative Computing at Purdue University, and a core faculty member of the Applied AI Research Center. His research focuses on virtual reality, intelligent virtual agents, and human-computer interaction. He previously held a postdoctoral position at Dartmouth College. He earned his PhD in Informatics from the University of Sussex. He serves on editorial boards and program committees across leading venues in virtual reality and HCI.



[Jiaxuan "Olivia" Yin](#) is an award-winning game designer and XR developer with professional experience in the AAA game industry. She has an MA from NYU Interactive Telecommunications Program and a BA in Interactive Entertainment from USC's School of Cinematic Arts. She employs XR technologies to create immersive virtual experiences that blend spatial design and interactive storytelling, with smell serving as the core component of interaction and narrative systems. Her project, Smell Like Home, explores autobiographical memory through olfactory-driven VR and her practice has been exhibited internationally and recognized by BAFTA, SXSW, GDC, and film festivals.



[Dr. Shohei Mori](#) is a Junior Research Group Leader of the Mediated Reality Group at VISUS and EXC IntCDC at the University of Stuttgart, Germany, and a Guest Associate Professor (Global) at Keio University, Japan. His research focuses on 3D vision and perception for XR, exploring human-centered vision and graphics. He has received multiple notable awards, including best paper and demo awards at IEEE VR and IEEE ISMAR. He served as Associate Paper Co-Chair for IEEE ISMAR 2025 and is Program Co-Chair for IEEE VR 2026.



[Mayra Donaji Barrera Machuca](#) is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Computer Science at the University of Calgary. Her current research areas include using multimodal interactions for 3D sketching and understanding human spatial thinking in the design of 3D objects. She also proposes new user interfaces to improve the accuracy of people working inside virtual environments and studies skill transfers between virtual reality and real life. Dr. Barrera Machuca's work has won the Dalhousie FCS Dean's Award - Research Excellence 2024, and the 2021 VGTC Best Dissertation Award.



[Regis Kopper](#) is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Iowa State University. He studies extended reality (XR) and user experience, emphasizing interaction design, simulation, training, and 3D user interfaces for public safety and healthcare. His work has been recognized with several awards, including the IEEE 3DUI Best Paper Award and the IEEE VR 3DUI Grand Prize. Before Iowa State, he held appointments at Duke University, UNC Greensboro, and the University of Florida. He has a BA and an MS in Computer Science from PUCRS (Brazil) and PhD in Computer Science from Virginia Tech.

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[Almira Osmanovic Thunström](#) has a multidisciplinary background spanning technology, life science, and medicine. She is also an artist experimenting with immersive media and biosensors. She began her research career in 2011, but has practiced as an artist since 1998. She balances scientific rigor with artistic intuition, bridging analytical methods and poetic expression. Through this hybrid approach, her work explores perception, embodiment, and the relationship between humans and emerging technologies, creating experiences that invite reflection, curiosity, and new ways of understanding complex systems.



[Dr. Richard \(Rick\) Skarbez](#) is a computer scientist and a Senior Lecturer at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. His research focuses on understanding the psychological, social, and cultural impacts of emerging technologies, particularly virtual reality but also augmented and mixed reality (AR/MR), artificial intelligence, and related human-computer interaction (HCI) topics. His research has received several awards, including the 2018 IEEE VGTC best dissertation award (sole honorable mention) and a best paper award (Top 1%) at ACM CHI 2025. He has a PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



[Yan Hu](#) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Science at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden, where she leads the Game and Interactive Systems team. She has a PhD in Computer Science from Blekinge Institute of Technology and began her VR research during her postdoctoral studies. Her research interests include human-computer interaction, XR interaction, and biometric research in behavior and interaction. She has co-authored publications in TVCG, IEEE VR, and ISMAR. Yan currently supervises two PhD students as the main supervisor and two as a co-supervisor in the area of XR.



[Daniel Munoz](#) is an Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Baptist University specializing in immersive technologies, creativity, and human-centered design. He has a PhD in Design. With over 12 years' experience across academia and industry, he has led XR research, developed VR frameworks, launched AI-driven products, and managed multidisciplinary teams from concept to deployment. His work bridges cognitive research, interactive storytelling, and product strategy, supported by extensive mixed-methods research, large-scale user testing, and grant-funded innovation initiatives in VR, AI world-building, and interactive media.



[Dr. Alexandra Kitson](#) (she/her) is an interdisciplinary researcher in the VIXI Lab at the University of Victoria in Canada. Her work focuses on designing, developing, and evaluating emerging technologies—including XR, AI, and wearable systems—to promote health and well-being. Driven by a passion for social impact, she applies her expertise to real-world applications through community-engaged research. Check out her TEDx talk, "How we can use virtual reality to support our mental health."



[Ganesh Sankaranarayanan](#) is an Associate Professor of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering at UT Southwestern Medical Center and director of the Artificial Intelligence and Medical Simulation (AIMS) Lab. His research focuses on virtual reality simulation, haptics, and human machine interaction for surgical training. He develops immersive VR systems that integrate force feedback, robotics, and AI-based skill assessment to improve training and patient safety. His work explores how multisensory feedback and intelligent systems can enhance learning in complex procedural environments.

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[Ali Haskins](#), Ph.D., is Director of Development and Operations for the NSF-funded Virtual Experience Research Accelerator at the University of Central Florida. She leads cross-functional teams that support software development, legal and policy frameworks, and business development strategies to enable VERA's growth and impact. Ali has extensive experience in UX consulting for industry, academic, and government clients, plus prior roles in industry research analytics and engineering education at Academic Analytics and Virginia Tech. She has a BS, MS, and PhD in Industrial & Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech with a focus in Human-Computer Interaction.



[Pablo Figueroa](#) is an Associate Professor at Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, South America. He has been doing research in Mixed Reality for over 20 years, leading several initiatives to spread the use of MR and the video game industry in South America. He leads the Imagine research group, and the Colivri Lab, where faculty members from more than three departments develop novel solutions based on Visual Computing and Robotics. He has been an active member of the IEEE VR community since 1999.



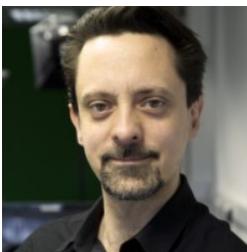
[Manuela Chessa](#) is Associate Professor at the University of Genoa. Her research focuses on natural human-machine interfaces based on VR/AR/XR, combining the study of biological and artificial vision systems with bioinspired models to improve XR effectiveness and achieve societal impact. She is involved in several projects developing XR and HCI solutions for rehabilitation, teaching, and training. Principal Investigator of the Perception & Interaction Lab, she has authored over 120 peer-reviewed papers and 3 patents, and serves on the committees of major VR/AR/XR conferences.



[Dr. Jean Botev](#) is Head of the VR/AR Lab and the Collaborative and Socio-Technical Systems (COaST) research group at the University of Luxembourg. His research focuses on collaborative distributed virtual environments, advanced interaction techniques, and user-centered mediated reality connecting physical and digital spaces. Author of over 100 peer-reviewed publications, he serves on the editorial board of Empathic Computing and the steering committees of IEEE ACSOS and ACM MMVE, advocating for ethical, inclusive, and human-centric immersive technology research and education.



[Ye Pan](#) is an Associate Professor with Tenure at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, specializing in the use of virtual environments and computer graphics technologies to enhance character animation and avatar performance, ultimately improving user experiences. Previously, she worked at Disney Research Los Angeles and earned her Master's and PhD in Computer Science from University College London. She has also served as an Associate Editor for the *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* and is a regular member of the IEEE Virtual Reality program committee.



[Marco Gillies](#) is a researcher and educator in virtual and augmented reality. He co-leads the Goldsmiths Masters in Virtual and Augmented Reality and the Social Embodied and Empathic Virtual Reality (SeeVR) research group. His specialties include: Virtual Reality, Augmented and Mixed Reality, Full Body Interaction, Virtual Characters, Interactive Machine Learning, Human-Centred AI, Social VR. He has a PhD in Computer Science from the University of Cambridge. He co-founded the BSc Creative Computing degree at Goldsmiths, which helped establish Goldsmiths Computing as a key centre for applying computing to the arts and creative sectors.

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[Dr. Cassidy R. Nelson](#) is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Games at the University of Utah. Her PhD is in Human Factors Engineering and she studies augmented reality HCI for training, rehabilitation, education, and games. Cassidy co-founded the Future Faculty Forum at IEEEVR and ISMAR, as well as the IDEATEXR workshop. She is eager to chat about academia, application materials for professor jobs, interdisciplinary research, how to get involved in conference organization, networking within the XR community, or even the PhD research process itself.



[Tim Dwyer](#) is Professor and Director of Research in Human-Centred Computing at Monash University, leading the Embodied Visualisation and Immersive Analytics groups. He earned his PhD at the University of Sydney and worked at Microsoft. His work spans information visualisation, visual analytics, and VR/AR interaction, blending optimisation algorithms with human-centred design and evaluation. Tim has published 100+ peer-reviewed papers (including 20+ at IEEE VIS), earned multiple best-paper awards across IEEE VIS, CHI and PacificVis, and delivers keynotes and community leadership, including IEEE VR General Chair.



[Dr. Tabitha C. Peck](#) is an Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Davidson College. She is head of the Davidson Research in Virtual Environments (DRIVE) lab investigating theory and applications of self-avatars in virtual environments. She received a CAREER award from the National Science Foundation to investigate the impact of self-avatars to foster inclusive STEM classrooms and has received numerous honorable mentions for best papers at IEEE VR. She is actively involved in the virtual reality research community and has served in numerous conference chair roles and as an associate editor. She is currently a member of the IEEE VR Steering Committee.



[Kiyoshi Kiyokawa](#) is a Professor in the Cybernetics and Reality Engineering (CARE) Laboratory at Nara Institute of Science and Technology (NAIST), Japan. His research interests include virtual reality, augmented reality, human augmentation, 3D user interfaces, CSCW, and context-aware systems. He has an MS and a PhD in information systems from NAIST.



[Dr. Kyle Johnsen](#) is a Professor at the University of Georgia. He serves as Director of the Georgia Informatics Institutes for Research and Education, Associate Director for Research and Outreach at the Institute for Artificial Intelligence, and Co-Director of the Center for Advanced Computer-Human Ecosystems. He focuses on integrative team science, building large-scale, collaborative extended reality and AI ecosystems for real-world field deployment by blurring the line between prototypes and usable technology, translating core engineering principles into industry-ready solutions like clinical VR platforms for phantom limb pain, multi-user mixed reality environments for emergency management, and virtual robotics trainers. He served as General Chair for IEEE VR and the 3D User Interfaces conference in 2020 and 2021, employing collaborative VR to make the historic pivot to remote participation.