

EDUCATION

Viterbi School of Engineering, USC Ph.D. in Computer Engineering, GPA: 3.8/4.00, Advisor: <i>Paria Rashidinejad</i> Relevant courses Probability, Linear Algebra, RL for LLMs, Intro to Abstract Algebra, Intro to Online Optimization	Los Angeles, CA 2025–Current
Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology B.S. in Computer Science & Engineering, GPA: 3.95/4.00	Dhaka, BD 2020–2025

ACADEMIC TRAINING

Eastern European Machine Learning Summer School Google Deepmind	Sarajevo, BA Jul, 2025
Eastern European Machine Learning Summer School Google Deepmind	Novi Sad, RS Jul, 2024

EXPERIENCE

Microsoft Research, AI Frontiers Research Intern, Agentic Foundation Model Team, Advisor: <i>John Langford</i> – Built automatic, scalable data reweighting pipeline for pre-training – Designed SFT-stage data selection pipeline for Magentic Lite	NYC, NY Summer 2026
National University of Singapore Visiting Scholar, Cognitive AI for Science Lab, Advisor: <i>Dianbo Liu</i>	Singapore, SG 2023–2025

SELECTED PAPERS

[1] **Zarif Ikram**, Arad Firouzkouhi, Stephen Tu, Mahdi Soltanolkotabi, and Paria Rashidinejad. “CrispEdit: Low-Curvature Projections for Scalable Non-Destructive LLM Editing”. In: *ICML*. 2026.

[2] **Zarif Ikram**, Harry Zhao, Ling Pan, Alex Lamb, and Dianbo Liu. “World Model Anomaly Detection with a Latent Linear Prior”. In: *TMLR* (2026).

[3] **Zarif Ikram**, Miranda Anna Christ, Ling Pan, and Dianbo Liu. “Small features matter: Robust representation for world models”. In: *7th Robot Learning Workshop, ICLR*. 2025.

[4] **Zarif Ikram**, Ling Pan, and Dianbo Liu. “Evolution guided generative flow networks”. In: *TMLR* (2025). *Best poster award, EEML’24*. ISSN: 2835-8856.

[5] Cristian Meo*, Mircea Tudor Lică*, **Zarif Ikram***, Akihiro Nakano, Vedant Shah, Aniket Rajiv Didolkar, Dianbo Liu, Anirudh Goyal, and Justin Dauwels. “Masked Generative Priors Improve World Models Sequence Modelling Capabilities”. In: *ICLR 2025 World Models Workshop*. *Outstanding paper award*. 2025.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

• USC Capital One Fellowship, Center for Responsible AI and Decision Making in Finance (CREDIF)	2026–2028
• Ensemble Award, USC Thornton School of Music	2026
• Annenberg Fellowship, USC Graduate School	2025
• Outstanding Paper Award, World Models Workshop, ICLR	2025
• Best Poster Award, EEML	2024
• Undergraduate Research Grant, RISE, BUET	2024

ACADEMIC TALKS

• Towards Automatic and Efficient Data Mixtures for Pretraining <i>Microsoft Research AI Frontiers (Talk)</i>	Jul 2026
• Masked Generative Priors Improve World Models Sequence Modelling Capabilities <i>ICLR World Models Workshop (Oral)</i>	Apr 2025
• How to Train Your World Models <i>Invited Lecture, hosted by Riashat Islam, Research Scientist, Microsoft Research</i>	Aug 2024