

---

## COVER LETTER

I am Keerthana Govindarazan, a second-year PhD Student at the Department of Architecture in Pennsylvania State University. While my resume highlights my background as an Architect and User Experience Designer, I aim to convey a more comprehensive understanding of my academic and professional journey through this personal statement.

Simply put, I am a person who cares deeply about how individuals experience and interact with their environments, whether physical or virtual, and the consequent impact on their mental well-being. My architectural journey began with an unwavering concern for the psychological effects of the built environment during my undergraduate studies. I focused my efforts on integrating *research* and *human feedback* into the architectural design process, a process traditionally and artistically inclined to produce visually attractive buildings. My masters thesis was about utilizing a web-based virtual reality tool for (a) immersive building visualization and (b) user data collection aimed at predicting behavioral and experiential outcomes of architectural designs. In my ongoing PhD pursuits, I utilize mixed reality applications to explore how virtual outdoor restaurant ambiance influences people's food choices and intake. The research findings intend to contribute design insights to the New York City 'Dining Out' program. These experiences underscore my conviction that immersive technology can elucidate the myriad ways our built environment impacts our mental health, motivating me to deepen my engagement with such tools.

As a UX designer at Takeleap, a company that provides interactive marketing solutions, I helped create experiences and user interfaces for Smartphones, Desktops, TV screens, Projection-Mapping, Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and HoloLens. Adaptability, coupled with my spatial understanding as an Architect, enabled me to swiftly transition into the digital medium and become a valuable asset to my team. Within a few weeks on the job, the Creative Head of the company started assigning responsibilities in the concept development/ideation phase for all projects nurturing my talent for design strategy and putting to good use my presentation skills to convey concepts clearly to clients and the technical team. I was also part of a hand-picked team formed by the company's Founder to research, conceptualize, and prototype a HoloLens product meant to provide remote assistance to on-site technicians during field visits.

Throughout my self-guided efforts to advocate for the human voice in the architectural design process, whether pursuing a psychology master's through distance education or working as a UX designer with XR, I increasingly became interested in the psychological effects of communication technology, motivating me to pursue a minor in Mass Communications. I took various courses in the Communications and Information Sciences department and became a member of the Media Effects Research Lab at Penn State. I have conducted various studies employing both quantitative and qualitative methods like online survey, interview, think-aloud studies, cognitive performance and VR human behavior studies investigating various cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects of AI generated photo memories, YouTube shorts and VR navigation techniques.

Beyond my professional endeavors, I am a trained dancer proficient in two Indian classical dance forms. As a lifetime practitioner of an art form (since age 3), as a student, performer and teacher, in addition to learning the power of discipline and commitment, I have adopted a mindset that always thinks about the audience, to delight and instill a sense of awe in the experiences I create. Whether working with developers or artists or nutrition scientists or social science researchers, I thrived as a collaborative and productive member in every multi-disciplinary environment I encountered, constantly inspired by the culturally and professionally diverse people I met. In this job, I will bring the same curiosity and innovative thinking that motivated my design journey, my unique blend of skills and perspectives to deliver exceptional user experiences. Thank you for considering my application.