René Capella

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Now a PhD researcher in Human-Centered Design & Engineering at UW, I combine industry leadership experience with award-winning academic research, focusing on how discursive and transition design can shape more thoughtful technological futures. My unconventional path—spanning self-taught programming, DEI initiatives, and formal academic study brings a unique perspective to bridging the gap between technical development and human-centered design.

SKILLS

Research Skills: User Experience Research, Usability Studies, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Interviews, Surveys

Design Skills: Figma, Miro, Wireframing, Prototyping, User Interface Design, User Experience Design

Technical Skills: Frontend Development, Backend Development, DevOps, Full Stack Development, System Architecture, Python, Java, R

Leadership Skills: Cross-Functional Team Leadership, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Co-Design, Agile Project Management, Sprint Planning, Product Roadmapping, Waterfall Methodology

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
August 2024 - Present
- Lead qualitative design education research examining ambiguity in design questioning
- Code and analyze student design project transcripts for question-asking patterns
- Manage Design Research Group developing RPG-based teaching tools
- Support research on design education methodologies

Teaching Assistant
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
April 2023 - July 2024
- Designed curriculum for core design and project management courses
- Implemented learning modules on design models and conflict management
- Integrated diversity and cognitive bias concepts into course materials
- Facilitated student understanding of project management principles

Product Manager and Lead Software Engineer
DispatchBot, Seattle, Washington
September 2017 - January 2021
- Led development team for B2B SaaS enterprise transportation system
- Created and managed product roadmap and sprint planning
- Conducted user research and managed client relationships
- Implemented successful market pivot during pandemic
- Integrated 5+ broker systems into platform
- Managed DevOps operations and system architecture
- Collaborated with C-level executives on strategic initiatives

Product Developer
Onehub, Seattle, Washington
July 2018 - March 2019

- Designed and implemented Microsoft Suite and Google Docs integration
- Created technical documentation reducing setup time
- Migrated company blog to AWS, reducing costs by $7,000
- Developed internal culture program for creativity and psychological safety
- Researched and implemented content sorting features

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Design Research - Research Assistant
University of Washington
Present
- Investigating ambiguity in design questioning behavior
- Analyzing expert and student design processes
- Coding qualitative data for design outcomes

KidsTeam Researcher
University of Washington
Summer 2022 - Winter 2023
- Led co-design sessions with youth participants
- Researched emerging technology accessibility
- Developed inclusive design prototypes

Social Media Research Assistant
University of Washington
Spring 2023
- Conducted qualitative research on misinformation
- Analyzed social media platform data
- Contributed to research methodology development

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Human-Centered Design & Engineering
University of Washington, Seattle
In Progress - Present

Bachelor of Science (BS), Human-Centered Design & Engineering
University of Washington, Seattle
Minor: Digital Arts & Experimental Media (DXArts)

Professional Certificate, Project Management
North Seattle College, Seattle, Washington

AWARDS AND HONORS

Award of Excellence - College of Engineering, HCDE
President's Award Finalist 2024
Martin Honors Scholar
Seattle Foundations Scholar
Top Scholar - HCDE
HCDE DEI Scholarship Recipient
HCDE Alumni Association Recipient

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

HCDE Committee Member
HCDE, University of Washington
May 2023 - December 2024
- Contribute to departmental community initiatives
- Develop programming

- Delegate funding

Design Education Facilitator
Rainier Scholars, Seattle, Washington
October 2024 - November 2024
- Taught Human-Centered Design principles
- Focused on leadership and equity in design

Google Developer Student Club Founder and Lead
Seattle, Washington
June 2020 - January 2023
- Produced 253 technical education events
- Reached 2,000+ global participants
- Achieved highest activity rating among 180 schools
- Provided mentorship and career guidance