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HRI Conference Reflection

This semester, I was given the opportunity to attend the 2024 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI). The conference took place from March 11th to March 14th in Boulder, Colorado, on the campus of The University of Colorado Boulder. I was accepted into the conference as an author on submissions to the conference's Student Design Challenge and Demo sessions. During each session, I was given the invaluable opportunity to engage with other researchers from around the world and receive enlightening feedback on my research. My experience at HRI was truly inspiring and has given me a new perspective on the potential for future work in the discipline of human-robot interaction.

Our team's presentation of the Emotibot system during the Student Design Challenge was incredibly well-received by other attendees of the conference. Although I didn't necessarily anticipate non-positive feedback, the immense praise given by others was a pleasant surprise to me! Alongside this praise came invaluable feedback and ideas for additional improvements and use cases for the system, which will undoubtedly inform our team's future research efforts. At the end of the conference, our team was given the title of Best Design for our submission to the Student Design Challenge! This award was an incredible honor for us, and it was truly validating for me to see that others valued my research contributions and ideas for further investigation into non-verbal robotic affect. Similar praise culminated within the Demo session of the conference, where I assisted with a demonstration of the Therabot robot. I was particularly able to showcase my independent research within the project, which entails the development of a simulated vibrotactile heartbeat that can adapt to a user's physiological state, which is detected through a wireless wearable PPG sensor.

Outside of our lab's demonstrations, I was also able to learn from other researchers during many exciting paper talks and poster sessions. The field of human-robot interaction is growing more diverse and innovative by the day, and I felt inspired by the conference and my newfound knowledge of how robots are being further integrated into everyday use contexts. I am incredibly grateful for the support provided by the Shackouls Honors College that enabled me to participate in this amazing conference, as well as their encouragement that has inspired me to conduct undergraduate research during my time at Mississippi State University. My undergraduate experience has undoubtedly benefited from the research opportunities I have taken part in, and will continue to do so for the remainder of my time at MSU!