

# Nikole Grad Pool—Lead Product Designer

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## ABOUT

Grounded in research and user needs, I help guide product teams in developing sustainable processes to build and test software, using data-informed decisions to deliver measurable business results.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### *Independent Product & Brand Designer*

April 2025–Present, Burlington, VT

- Utilized AI prototyping tools to design and launch a professional website for an early-stage cybersecurity firm, strengthening client credibility and contract opportunities, while designing AI-driven, agent-informed brand and campaign workflows for mission-driven organizations that increased community engagement and raised \$3.8K for local initiatives.

### *Staff Product Designer & Manager—Broadcom*

August 2016–April 2025: Pivotal acquired by VMware in 2020, VMware acquired by Broadcom in 2023; Washington DC & Hybrid

#### *Product Design Practice Lead—Defense Innovation Unit (2021-2025)*

- Leveraged experience navigating complex workflows in enterprise B2B contexts to drive mission-focused outcomes in government, delivering solutions that balanced compliance, user needs, and operational impact.
- Led strategic design across 14 balanced product teams within the Department of Defense for over 3 years, shaping UX strategy and prioritizing high-impact initiatives while driving MVPs from concept to launch—enabling rapid validation and iteration.
- Built and scaled a cohesive product community of up to 20 product designers grounded in 508 compliance, modular design systems, and shared workflows, improving consistency, cross-functional collaboration, and quality across distributed teams.
- Championed early ChatGPT adoption as Product Design Practice Lead for the Department of Defense, defining privacy-compliant usage standards and guiding cross-functional teams in secure AI practices.
- Partnered with product, engineering, and ops leadership to scale teams by embedding core practices through a recurring workshop, enabling new ICs to make autonomous, collaborative decisions within our balanced team model.

### *Product Design Manager* — **Pivotal Labs, Public Sector** (2017–2021)

- Strengthened team and client outcomes by coaching designers on complex problem spaces (where multiple workflows, users, and data layers interact), improving product clarity, cross-functional collaboration, and client trust during high-pressure engagements.

### *Staff Product Designer*—**VMware Tanzu Labs, Select Clients** (2016–2025)

- Led a design initiative to scale a contract reporting tool using AI rapid prototyping and designing a WCAG 2.1 compliant and complex user-validated navigation which increased users by 100%.
- Drove discovery research and product definition for a mission reporting tool of a team of designers, engineers, and data scientists. I balanced stakeholder and user goals with technical input by creating user personas, building complex user flows, and running lean experiments which reduced processing time from 20 hours to less than 1 hour.
- Led a cross-functional team in product discovery for a large credit union membership application, driving research, problem prioritization, and mobile-first experimentation; designed a WCAG 2.1-compliant component library that increased desktop conversions 70% and mobile conversions 530%.
- Led a 14-person cross-functional team (engineering, design, product) to deliver a real-time aviation data platform for the Federal Aviation Administration, reducing analysis time from days to under 2 hours and transforming Traffic Manager Officers from passive reporters into decision influencers through rapid drill-down into complex data for faster, more informed airline delay decisions.
- Designed a collaborative cross-portfolio effort to determine the process for scaling products for mission-critical, Department of Defense Enterprise systems; led discovery and cross-functional tradeoff conversations for spinning up new code bases between stakeholders and engineers.

### *Senior Product Designer* — **Oracle**

July 2015–July 2016: Oracle acquired Opower in 2016, Washington DC

- Led design and cross-functional collaboration with designers, engineers, product marketing, and content to rebrand Opower and launch a new website and user conference which helped enable Oracle's attraction to buy Opower in summer 2016.

### *Senior Product Strategist* — **Downtime**

March–September 2018, Washington DC

- Led user research, product strategy, and MVP scope for community expansion, validating a successful shift into in-person experiences across six major U.S. cities.

## ***Product Designer—Sunlight Foundation***

January 2014–June 2015, Washington DC

- Drove design, problem space discovery and product strategy on a cross-functional team for various political visibility tools.

## ***Product Designer—NAV***

December 2012–December 2013, Washington DC

- Led design and user testing for websites and digital products across wellness startups, global nonprofits supporting women's advancement, and financial integrity organizations—improving engagement, credibility, and user adoption.

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### **EDUCATION**

Salisbury University 2004–2008; BFA Graphic Design

### **AWARDS**

(June 2021) Recognized with VMware's "At Our Best" award for redesigning navigation in a US Navy acquisition tool, improving scalability and user experience by assessing existing decisions, proposing a new layout, and partnering with engineers and PMs to implement with minimal disruption.

### **SKILLS**

Design Leadership · Systems Thinking · Agentic Design · AI Fluency · Design Systems · Cross-functional Collaboration · Workflow Design · Mentorship · Facilitation · 0→1 Product Design · Workflow Optimization · Research Synthesis · Interaction Design

### **TOOLS**

Figma · FigJam · Miro · Notion

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*Case studies and professional references available upon request.*