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**Innovations in Technology: UW-Stevens Point’s new undergraduate program blends technical and ethical education in AI**

Written by University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

As artificial intelligence continues to redefine industries and everyday life, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is looking to take the next step towards preparing students for an evolving workforce.

With the launch of the [Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence](https://www.uwsp.edu/programs/degree/artificial-intelligence/) (AI) this fall, the program seeks to blend technical programming education with ethical awareness and practical application of AI. The program will prepare graduates to thrive in a fast, evolving field, where AI is not only a technology but a transformative tool reshaping everything from healthcare to manufacturing.

“It’s a new undergraduate program in computing, so there’s quite a bit of overlap with our existing[computer information systems (CIS)](https://www.uwsp.edu/programs/degree/computer-information-system/) program, but then we are offering completely new courses in AI,” explains Associate Professor Tomi Heimonen. “We’re covering everything from deep learning and neural networks to AI for security and natural language processing.”

Courses will introduce students to foundational and emerging areas within AI, such as machine learning, cloud environments and AI-driven cybersecurity. A strong focus on hands-on learning will ensure that theory is grounded in real-world application. A final capstone course will challenge students to build functional AI systems for local organizations.

Leaders in the program are already teaming up with partners from Central Wisconsin for these projects. One launching this fall will involve a student-built chatbot designed to help a local agency’s customer support team access internal policy information quickly and accurately.

“I think the hallmark of all our courses is that it’s not just theory,” said Heimonen. “There’s a pretty heavy application emphasis in all of them.”

In addition to AI-specific courses, students will complete coursework in data analytics, programming and mathematics.

While artificial intelligence is often misunderstood, the program aims to ground students in a practical, ethical and realistic understanding of what AI is and is not.

“We’re not building terminators,” Heimonen said. “AI are systems that try to imitate human intelligence by taking in data, learning from it and then recommending actions or producing outcomes based on that data.”

These systems are already influencing daily life, whether it’s Netflix recommending your next show, your bank flagging a suspicious transaction or ChatGPT helping draft an email.

Looking forward, AI is expected to become even more integrated into everyday systems, such as smarter and more efficient supply chains, advanced healthcare diagnostics or manufacturing, which is prevalent in the Central Wisconsin region.

The decision to launch the AI program came in response to both institutional direction and market demand. Backed by state workforce development funds, the department seized the opportunity to become a potential leader in AI education among regional universities.

“There’s definitely a gap between the number of trained professionals and what the workforce needs,” Heimonen noted. He adds that UWSP saw a chance to be one of the few institutions in the state training students specifically to work with AI straight out of their undergraduate studies and deliver talents to meet the needs of Wisconsin employers.

One of the program’s defining features is its attention to the ethical implications of AI development. Courses will emphasize responsible use, social responsibility and the necessity of human oversight.

“There has to be some guardrails,” said Heimonen. “If we’re going to trust AI to make decisions, we need to make sure those decisions are accurate, fair and conveyed in a way that can be explained to the user.”

Students will be challenged to critically evaluate whether AI is the right solution for a given problem and to ask tough questions about bias, misuse and unintended consequences.

When it comes to career preparation, the AI degree positions students well for roles such as software developers, computer and information systems managers and computer systems analysts. While “AI Developer” may not yet be a common job title, employers are increasingly seeking candidates who understand AI tools and methodologies.

Graduates will leave with a robust knowledge of ethics, technical proficiency and the ability to communicate complex AI systems to both technical and non-technical audiences.

“This is a step into the unknown, but to now actually have a real AI program is something we’re excited about it,” said Heimonen.

For more information, visit [uwsp.edu/programs/degree/artificial-intelligence](https://www.uwsp.edu/programs/degree/artificial-intelligence/).