URI's Artificial Intelligence Lab is Open for Business

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By Courtney Gabrielson

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The University of Rhode Island has opened a new lab, the school announced.

Launched at the end of September, the school's Artificial Intelligence Lab is a "cross-disciplinary facility" housed in the Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons. It utilizes an artificial intelligence supercomputer and boasts six specialized laptops for running open-source software and unwieldily data sets; a conference room, and a space with a viewing window are also a part of the new area. Additionally, it incorporates technology from the library that hosts it, such as 3D printers and other virtual reality tools.

Both funding from the University and a Champlain Foundation grant helped establish the lab.

"This laboratory and the faculty and staff who came together to make this lab happen represent the best the University has to offer," said URI President David Dooley. "We are grateful that this lab will be more than just a technology center. It will be a place of ideas, discussion and debate. Society, families, the workplace, hospitals, schools, research enterprises and many more aspects of the 21st century are going to be affected by artificial intelligence in ways we can barely imagine."

The lab will also serve as a place for both students and faculty to pursue research opportunities in the robotics, wearable tech and related industries, as well as a meeting spot where the community at large can discuss the challenges, ethics and goals associated with these sciences.

URI emphasized that while headquartered on campus, the lab was truly for everyone.

"Part of our mission at the University is to support the economic development of the state, and this facility can play a key role," said Karim Boughida, dean of University libraries and member of the lab's founding team. "So business people, industry leaders and entrepreneurs will be welcome here."

URI's Kunal Mankodiya, assistant professor of electrical, computer and biomedical engineering, is heading the lab, with a founding team comprised of other URI faculty (Boughida, Cheryl Foster, professor of philosophy; Joan Peckham, professor of computer science and statistics and head of URI's Big Data Initiative and Data Science Programs; Harrison Dekker, associate professor and data services librarian; Angel Ferria, media curator in the library; Indrani Mandal, a computer science instructor; and Bohyun Kim, associate professor of URI libraries).

Library and lab faculty are also in the process of developing a relevant curriculum and subsequent workshops for the lab, as well.

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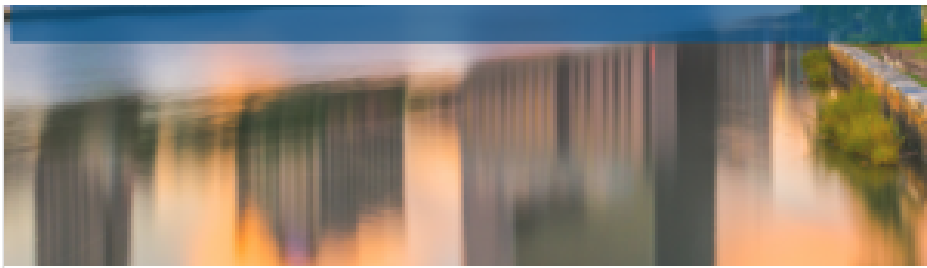### RI partners with CVS Health, Fidelity on workforce training center

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