

Can Faith and AI Coexist? Christian University Thinks So

Biola University has launched a groundbreaking AI Lab rooted in biblical values. The initiative aims to ensure that Christians are not left behind in the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence.

“The AI Lab at Biola University is a dedicated space where students, faculty and staff converge to explore the intricacies of artificial intelligence,” Dr. Michael J. Arena, dean of the Crowell School of Business at Biola University, told Fox News Digital.

The lab seeks to provide education, foster dialogue and lead innovative AI projects grounded in Christian beliefs. Arena stresses the importance of embracing AI in educational institutions, warning that failure to do so could lead to significant setbacks.

“If we don’t engage, we risk falling asleep at the wheel,” he said, drawing parallels to the adverse effects of social media on human interaction.

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Arena highlighted the decline in face-to-face engagement, especially among teenagers, due to social media, noting that nearly three-fourths of Gen Z individuals report experiencing loneliness at times. “Without proactive involvement in guiding AI’s development, there’s a risk that we will replicate this story,” he warned.

What sets Biola’s AI Lab apart is its focus on moral and

ethical values rather than technical skills alone. "Our focus extends beyond creating AI to nurturing responsible, ethical and socially beneficial AI," Arena explained. The lab prioritizes ethical discernment to mitigate potential biases, promote transparency and uphold human dignity within AI.

The lab's approach is deeply rooted in core Bible-driven tenets, such as believing humans are created in the image of God, which confers unique inherent value. "This means integrating AI within a framework that aligns with Christian values," Arena said, referencing Genesis 2:15, which speaks to humanity's role as stewards of creation.

The technologies developed in the lab will adhere to sustainable practices, avoid exploitation and positively contribute to the well-being of individuals and the environment.

Part of the lab's mission includes creating AI applications specifically for Christians. One notable project is the development of a comprehensive database of Christian resources to facilitate open access for research purposes.

Other initiatives include AI-driven chatbots to assist prospective students, tools to aid in academic advising and AI-powered career planning sessions. "Each of these experiments aim to explore the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing AI solutions to enhance student experiences and support services," Arena said.

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Arena likens the current state of AI to a "rebellious teenager, eager to explore and push boundaries." He highlights the importance of instilling a strong value system to guide AI's development. "Just like teenagers who can stray without proper guidance, AI risks ethical missteps without a solid

moral foundation,” he noted.

Christians working with AI are working toward the preservation of human dignity and ethical considerations. This includes addressing potential biases in algorithms and implementing measures to uphold ethical standards.

“Our lab engages in research, disseminates findings and supports projects aligned with its mission, aiming to advance AI integration in the Christian community while promoting meaningful social change,” Arena said.

Dr. Arena is optimistic that the school’s commitment to Christianity will enable the lab to advance moral discernment within the realm of AI.

“With its robust Christian identity, the AI Lab has the potential to serve as a beacon for ethical AI development, integrating theological principles to ensure technology development and use aligns with Christian beliefs and values,” he said.

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