UC Irvine launches master's program in applied artificial intelligence for science

Timely degree equips scientists with industry-relevant AI skills.
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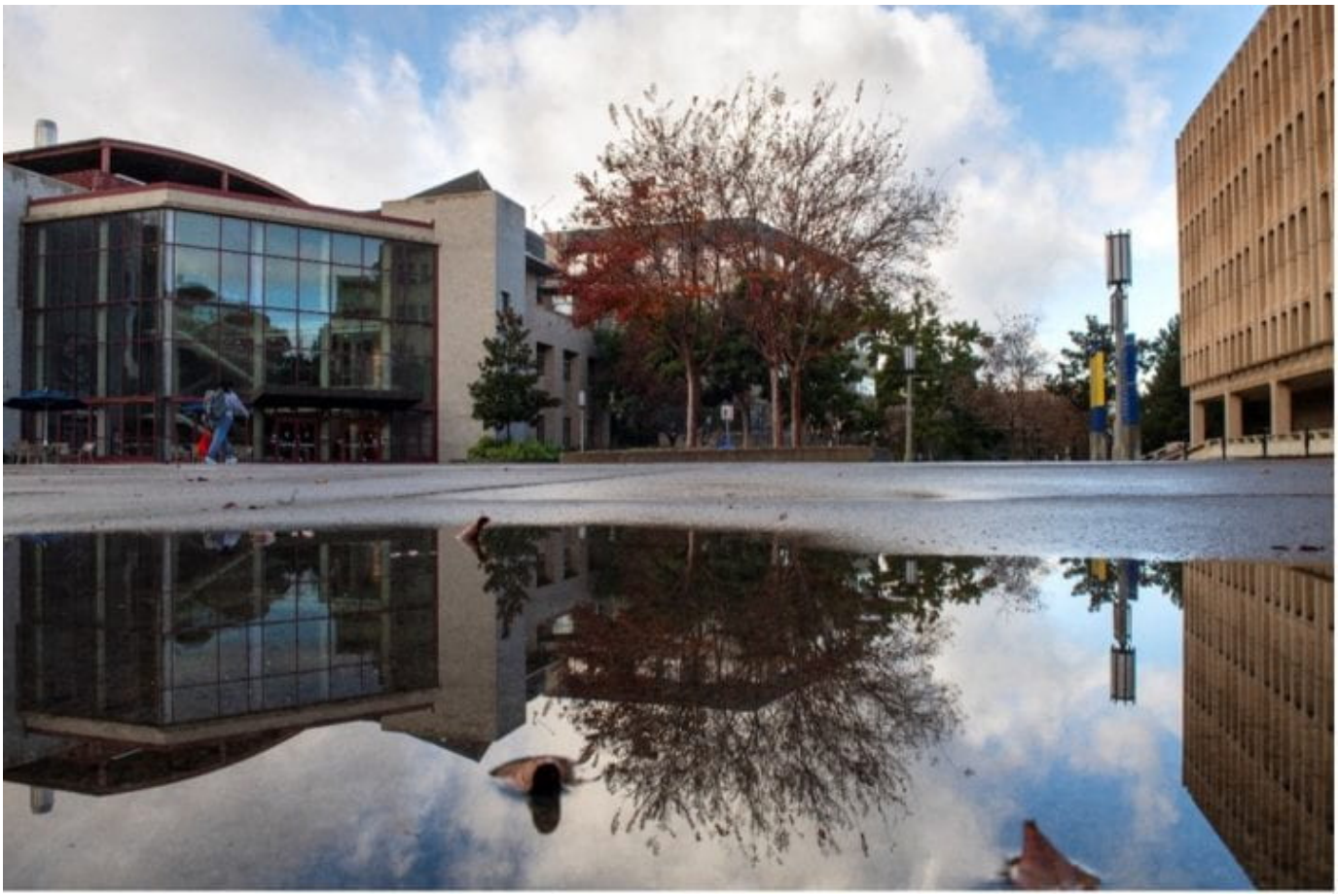

The first Master of Applied Artificial Intelligence for Science cohort will be enrolled in fall 2026 and take courses in School of Physical Sciences buildings, including Croul Hall (left) and Rowland Hall. “We expect graduates to find opportunities across sectors, from energy and biotech to national labs and government agencies,” says David Kirkby, program director and UC Irvine Chancellor’s Professor of physics and astronomy.

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- Designed for scientists, the Master of Applied Artificial Intelligence for Science program fills critical gap in AI education.
- Students will gain hands-on experience with real-world data and industry-relevant AI tools to advance their careers.
- First cohort will start nine-month, in-person program in UC Irvine's fall 2026 quarter.

Irvine, Calif., Oct. 3, 2025 —The University of California, Irvine is launching a Master of Applied Artificial Intelligence for Science, a professional degree designed to equip scientists with cutting-edge AI tools for real-world impact in multiple fields. The first cohort will enter the nine-month, in-person program in fall 2026.

"This program builds on UC Irvine's global reputation for innovation by offering scientists, not programmers, a direct path into the world of applied artificial intelligence," said Kieron Burke, interim dean of the School of Physical Sciences and Distinguished Professor of chemistry and physics & astronomy. "It's a rigorous, focused degree that will prepare graduates for high-impact careers across industries where AI is rapidly transforming how science is done."

The Master of Applied AI for Science addresses a gap in traditional data science programs, which primarily serve computer science and engineering students aiming for tech careers. Instead, the degree is designed for scientists who want to lead AI adoption in research and industry.

David Kirkby, program director and Chancellor's Professor of physics and astronomy, noted that the Master of Applied AI for Science was inspired by the rapid growth of AI in labs at UC Irvine and the technology's transformative potential for future research. AI is increasingly used to analyze complex datasets, model natural phenomena and optimize experiments.

"AI is helping scientists find better solutions to old problems and even solve new problems," Kirkby said. "Now is the time to formalize education and career development at the critical nexus between AI and the physical sciences."

Students will progress from Python programming and data handling to advanced AI methods such as deep neural networks, large language models and generative AI. Along the way, they will strengthen their math and statistics foundations, master data engineering and visualization, and learn to deploy AI ethically and effectively in scientific contexts. Through hands-on projects, participants will apply these skills directly to industry issues, graduating with a portfolio that bridges their science background and AI expertise.

“This new master’s program is designed for professional development, with a strong focus on real-world data and industry-relevant challenges,” Kirkby said. “We expect graduates to find opportunities across sectors, from energy and biotech to national labs and government agencies.”

UC Irvine’s location in the heart of Southern California’s innovation corridor makes it a top destination for this kind of program. Surrounded by leading science and technology companies and with strong relationships within Irvine’s industry ecosystem, the School of Physical Sciences is positioned to connect students with employers eager to hire scientists skilled in AI.

The Master of Applied AI for Science program will be open to domestic and international students with a bachelor’s degree in physical or biological sciences or the equivalent. Applicants do not need a background in programming or prior work experience.

About the University of California, Irvine: Founded in 1965, UC Irvine is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities and is ranked among the nation’s top 10 public universities by *U.S. News & World Report*. The campus has produced five Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UC Irvine has more than 36,000 students and offers 224 degree programs. It’s located in one of the world’s safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County’s second-largest employer, contributing $7 billion annually to the local economy and $8 billion statewide. For more on UC Irvine, visit www.uci.edu.

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