

Careers in Artificial Intelligence

Fast growing industry will need workers

Portland Community College recently received an \$800,000 grant which will enable area residents to train for gainful careers in one of the fastest-growing sectors of industry – artificial intelligence (AI).

The appropriation, championed by Rep. Earl Blumenauer of Portland, passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Joe Biden in early March.

“PCC would like to extend a special ‘thank you’ to Rep. Blumenauer for his forward-thinking advocacy for this initiative,” said PCC President Mark Mitsui. “This new funding will democratize access to AI technology and help our students, particularly our students from our most marginalized communities, gain leading edge skills that will lead to good jobs and careers.

The curriculum will also be grounded in principles related to ethics and methods of rooting out



Portland Community College President Mark Mitsui helps usher in the creation of new course offerings in artificial intelligence, one of the fastest growing sectors of the 21st century economy

implicit bias and algorithmic inequities in AI.

The appropriation was part of a more than \$10 million package, secured by Rep. Blumenauer, which will fund community projects in the Portland area.

According to the Oregon Workforce and Talent Development Board, AI education programs in the state are currently overfull and understaffed due to a recent surge of interest in the field.

With the new appropriation, PCC will now be able to enhance the capacity of its AI program by

hiring faculty and staff, while also modernizing its facilities and acquiring AI-capable computers and software systems for student training. The funds will also be used to bring more equity to the AI industry by extending opportunities to students from historically underrepresented communities and to students from across the state by way of remote education.

Artificial intelligence has occupied a portion of the collective imagination for many years, often as part of a doomsday scenario in science-fiction films and novels –

but the reality is far more benign, said Jeremy Estrella, associate vice president of academic and career pathways at PCC. AI can be found in everything from online chat-bots to “smart” home appliances to video games and more.

“Applications for AI in our everyday lives are only expected to grow in the coming decades,” Estrella said. “With that growth we need to build these applications

grounded in ethics and equity, and rooting out the potential for bias in AI. We are building our curriculum with these principles in mind.”

College officials hope to leverage the funding to build new partnerships, and expand existing ones, with technology companies in the area and to help drive growth in AI jobs across the state in an equitable way.

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Democrats Cry Foul



Kathleen Harder (left) and Loretta Smith, two Democratic candidates for Oregon’s new 6th congressional district, stand next to a map showing the district’s boundaries south of Portland to Salem, joining with four other candidates April 12 to criticize the House Majority PAC’s support for supporting a rival and dividing Democrats in the upcoming May Primary. (AP photo)

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Balwit said in an email.

Flynn has worked on pandemic preparedness and biosecurity years before the pandemic and has advised Congress and the White House on pandemic preparedness and the creation of technology jobs, his campaign said. If elected, he plans to focus on the creation of green jobs and pandemic recovery and preparedness.

Also condemning the House Majority PAC’s “unprecedented and inappropriate decision to spend nearly a million dollars in this Democratic primary” were Democratic candidates Matt West, a development engineer at chipmaker Intel who aims to

tackle climate change; Kathleen Harder, a physician in Salem; state Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon; and cryptocurrency entrepreneur Cody Reynolds.

Oregon’s 6th congressional district was created by the 2020 U.S. census and extends from Portland’s suburbs to the southwest, including the state capital of Salem and towns in the Willamette Valley and the Coastal Range. The Cook Political Report said the new district would vote “likely Democratic” in the November election.

Republican candidates include state Rep. Ron Noble, former congressional candidate Amy Ryan Courser, clinical psychologist Angela Plowhead and Dundee Mayor David Russ.

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