

will.i.am to teach ASU class on agentic AI

Also, university joins UN coalition to close global AI skills gap, master's degree in AI in business expands to LA

By Penny Walker, ASU News
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As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly more prevalent, Arizona State University is partnering with tech innovator and creator will.i.am to design new educational models that better prepare today's learners for the digital economy of tomorrow.

On Tuesday in New York City, will.i.am and ASU President Michael Crow announced the collaboration on a new ASU AI course, "The Agentic Self," to be designed and taught by will.i.am. He will be appointed a professor of practice in [The GAME School](#) at ASU, a school focused on increasing the digital fluency of the next generation of learners.

As an adviser to Fortune 100 companies, will.i.am brings more than a decade of hands-on development work in AI and distinct points of view as an advocate for good governance, including ethical and moral AI operating standards.

[The 15-week class](#) is planned for spring 2026.

"This professorship marks a new chapter in my life," said will.i.am, a household name as the frontman of the Black Eyed Peas. "From creating global unifying music to establishing my i.am Angel Foundation, which empowers 15,000 Los Angeles area high school students with STEM skills and sends thousands to college, I find the answer to my question 'Where's the love?' in this course. The Agentic Self represents a solution to AI replacing human jobs."

He found the perfect partner in ASU, named this week as the [most innovative university for 11 straight years](#) by U.S. News & World Report. Under Crow, the university continues to forge new paths in higher education, whether embracing AI or leveraging virtual reality-centered, cinematic storytelling to rethink biology and chemistry classes.

"We are always looking for ways to innovate how we teach to better prepare our students to meet the moment," Crow said. "Our graduates must be ready for the powerful shift in jobs toward AI. This pioneering partnership with will.i.am is an unbelievable opportunity for our students to learn from his extraordinary experience as a highly creative and unique tech innovator."

This will be the first of several collaborations between ASU and the tech entrepreneur and global musician. The partnership will build new education-focused capabilities on top of will.i.am's FYI.AI creative productivity tool, creating EDU.FYI, a new platform using NVIDIA technology. The platform

will be developed especially for educational use and student life activities that will equip ASU faculty and students with advanced capabilities to leverage AI, create AI agents and collaborate with peers as they start their learning journey.

“The future of education will be shaped by how students learn about AI and use it to amplify their creativity, values and ambitions,” said Richard Kerris, vice president of media and entertainment at NVIDIA. “Built on the NVIDIA AI stack, this collaboration with ASU, FYI.AI and will.i.am creates a foundation for the next generation of leaders to develop the skills to create and work with AI agents in ways that are empathetic, ethical and empowering.”

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[ASU, FYI.AI preview AI platform at ASU+GSV Summit](#)

In the spring course, students will learn foundational AI knowledge and skills applicable across all disciplines. They will also work alongside will.i.am to build an AI universal learning companion, which they can fine-tune and keep with them throughout their learning and career journeys. The course will help the students understand their digital selves and build the skills necessary to understand and develop AI agents, yet maintain a human perspective.

The general-elective ASU course will be taught in will.i.am’s Hollywood studio, with some students in-person and others likely joining from other ASU classrooms in Los Angeles, Arizona or online.

The Tuesday announcement was one of several major developments in AI at ASU as the university continues to push on the leading edge of AI in higher education.

‘AI for Good’ event with the United Nations

Also in New York City, ASU and will.i.am gathered Wednesday as part of the U.N. General Assembly.

will.i.am — a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations’ International Telecommunication Union — and ASU Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President Chris Howard spoke about upskilling in the AI era during the [“AI for Good: Three Areas of Action” event](#). The program explored how to equip societies with the knowledge and tools to participate in the AI era, while highlighting the role of international standards in turning policy into practice.

The event came out of the International Telecommunication Union’s [AI for Good Impact Initiative](#), which aims to unlock AI’s potential to serve humanity. A flagship program of the AI for Good initiative is the [AI Skills Coalition](#) to bridge the global AI skills gap by sharing knowledge and training around the world.

ASU has been invited to be the first university partner-member of the coalition, joining such founding members as Amazon Web Services and Microsoft. The coalition provides educational materials that can bolster skills for the future and

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address global inequalities in AI knowledge.

“We are proud to welcome Arizona State University as the first and only university member to join the AI Skills Coalition at the institutional level,” said Frederic Werner, chief of strategic engagement for the International Telecommunication Union. “ASU has consistently been recognized as one of the leading universities in the United States, pioneering new models for online and experiential learning.”

“With more than 200,000 learners served annually, ASU has scaled cutting-edge training in artificial intelligence, engineering and digital skills through innovative platforms and collaborations,” Werner said. “Their leadership in technology and AI education aligns seamlessly with the mission of the AI Skills Coalition, and reflects the vision of our goodwill ambassador, will.i.am, to empower young people with the skills of the future. Together, we are committed to democratizing AI learning worldwide and ensuring no community is left behind.”

Master’s degree in AI launches in LA to serve global business leaders

The W. P. Carey School of Business’ Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence in Business (MS-AIB) — the [first AI graduate degree program from a U.S. business school](#) when it launched in 2024 — is expanding to Los Angeles.

Beginning in fall 2026, the degree program will be offered at ASU’s California Center Broadway, where the program will provide students the opportunity to study at the intersection of business and technology in one of the nation’s most innovative hubs. Completed in two semesters, the Los Angeles program mirrors the academic rigor and structure of ASU’s existing MS-AIB in Tempe, and emphasizes what faculty call mindful AI — applying artificial intelligence ethically, responsibly and with intention.

“Expanding the MS-AIB program to Los Angeles builds on ASU’s commitment to innovation and access while connecting students directly with the industries shaping the future of AI in business,” said [Ohad Kadan](#), Charles J. Robel Dean and W. P. Carey Distinguished Chair in Business. “From entertainment and fashion to technology and startups, the LA market is a natural fit for this program.”

Courses will cover key areas including enterprise analytics, machine learning in business, data visualization, AI business strategy and transforming business with AI. Capstone projects will connect students with companies and tech hubs, providing real-world applications and professional networking opportunities.

As a STEM-designated program, the MS-AIB also supports optional practical training eligibility, enabling international students to pursue up to three years of U.S.-based work experience after graduation.

Learn more about the [MS-AIB in LA program](#).

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Tech innovator and creator will.i.am speaks Tuesday in New York about the ongoing collaboration between ASU and will.i.am's FYI.AI, including a spring course on agentic AI that he will design and teach. He discussed the developments at an event with ASU President Michael Crow. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



will.i.am and ASU President Michael Crow show some Sun Devil spirit before a press conference Tuesday in New York. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University