

New ASU certificate lets students add AI expertise to any major

Allison Curran shares how a program built for service members evolved into a campuswide offering

By Kelly deVos, ASU News
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Artificial intelligence, or AI, is rapidly transforming nearly every industry, creating a growing need for students to add key technical skills to their major.

To help meet that demand, the [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#), part of the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#) at Arizona State University, recently launched the [Foundations of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Certificate](#), a program designed to give students from a variety of non-computer science majors a practical understanding of computing and AI concepts while developing a project they can showcase to future employers.

We spoke with [Allison Curran](#), associate director of academic services in the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, to learn more. Curran oversees graduate and undergraduate advising for approximately 10,000 students across multiple engineering and computing programs.

Question: What is the Foundations of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Certificate?

Answer: This certificate gives students a solid foundation in computer science while helping them build practical skills in artificial intelligence. Students learn programming, data structures, statistics, data literacy and AI concepts, then bring everything together in a hands-on capstone project.

What's especially interesting is that the program was originally developed in partnership with the U.S. Naval Community College to help enlisted personnel in the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard gain valuable technology skills and advance their careers. As we saw the success of that model, we realized it could also be a great opportunity for ASU students who want to show employers they have current knowledge of AI and computing, regardless of their major. Just as importantly, they'll leave with a capstone project that demonstrates those skills in action.

Q: Who is this certificate for?

A: This certificate is designed for a wide range of undergraduate students. You don't have to be a computer science major to benefit from it.

It's a great fit for students who want to better understand how technology and AI are shaping their industries. For example, students studying business, entrepreneurship, communications, health care, public service or other engineering disciplines can use this certificate to build technical skills that complement their primary degree. AI is becoming part of nearly every profession, and this certificate helps students develop the knowledge and confidence to work alongside these emerging technologies.

Q: What will students gain from completing the certificate?

A: Students will gain foundational skills in computer science, programming, data literacy and AI that can help them stand out in a rapidly changing job market.

One of the biggest benefits is that students apply what they've learned in a capstone project. In the program's [artificial intelligence and data capstone](#) course, students work as part of a team to tackle a project that brings together the programming, data and AI skills they've developed throughout the certificate.

That means students leave with practical experience and a real project they can discuss in job interviews and showcase to potential employers. For many students, having something tangible to point to can be just as valuable as the coursework itself.

Since students may be able to apply coursework from the certificate toward their major requirements, we're hopeful it won't add much time to degree completion.

Q: Is this certificate intended for computer science students?

A: Generally, no. Students pursuing a computer science degree need deeper expertise in AI and can explore ASU's [computer science bachelor's degree program](#) with an AI-focused concentration.

That degree program provides the engineering, software development and technical depth that future AI engineers and developers need. The certificate is designed more for students in other disciplines who want foundational computing and AI knowledge that can strengthen their career opportunities.

I would also add that while this certificate is not a great choice for computer science students, it might be very helpful to students in other engineering disciplines. And again, they might be able to complete it with minimal added time.

Q: What should students do if they're interested in the certificate?

A: The best first step is to talk with your academic advisor. Advisors can help students determine how the certificate fits into their degree plan and whether any prerequisite courses may be needed.

Students can request to add this certificate through [MyASU](#). Those who are just seeking information about the certificate before officially requesting it may contact our team directly with questions by emailing SCAI.Undergrad.Admission@asu.edu.

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Main image



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