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MEDIA RELEASE

SFU helps close STEM gender gap through summer AI program

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SFU is helping close the STEM gender gap through *Invent the Future*, a trailblazing summer enrichment program to help increase the number of Canadian girls considering careers in computer science (CS) and artificial intelligence (AI).

STEM is an acronym representing science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Twenty-four female Grade 11 students from across Canada will be immersed in life as an AI researcher on SFU's Burnaby campus from July 8-20, 2018.

Registration for this program is now open and the application deadline is April 3. Young women from rural areas who may have less access to STEM programs will be given priority.

The program will introduce the students to AI through exploratory projects, lectures by experts in the field, tours of research facilities at SFU, and field trips to local companies.

"Many female students are unaware of opportunities in CS and more specifically AI, both in terms of university programs and careers," says Angelica Lim, SFU computing science professor and *Invent the Future* program lead. "Gender diversity in these fields help ensure that technologies used by everyone on a daily basis are inclusive and contain minimal bias."

Lim, who is on Forbes' leading women in AI research list, is currently developing sympathetic humanoid robots in SFU's Robots with Social Intelligence and Empathy lab (ROSIE). The goal is to build robots that can help teach second languages to kids, fetch objects from the floor for seniors and act as a human companion.

"Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri are great examples of everyday uses of AI, but we are still in the infancy of the technology. In our lab, we hope to bring human interaction to the next level by developing robots that not only have conversations with humans, but also have the capacity for compassion.

"One of the key research areas for our robots is that they can understand the nuances of tone in human conversation, and how it can change the meaning of words and phrases. Machine learning is key in making this work."

Fast Facts

- Initiatives like *Invent the Future* help support gender equality in the male-dominated STEM industry
- According to the [Information and Communications Technology Council](#), the tech industry is comprised of 25 percent women and 75 percent men—despite the Canadian workforce being almost equal
- AI is a key sector for growth in Canada, with a recent \$125 million government investment in a pan-Canadian AI strategy

- SFU is participating in [AI4ALL](#), an initiative working to increase diversity and inclusion in the field of AI
- SFU is one of six universities participating in AI4All's official roll out in 2018, and the only one in Canada. Stanford University, Princeton University, University of California Berkeley, Boston University and Carnegie Mellon University are the American partner organizations.

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