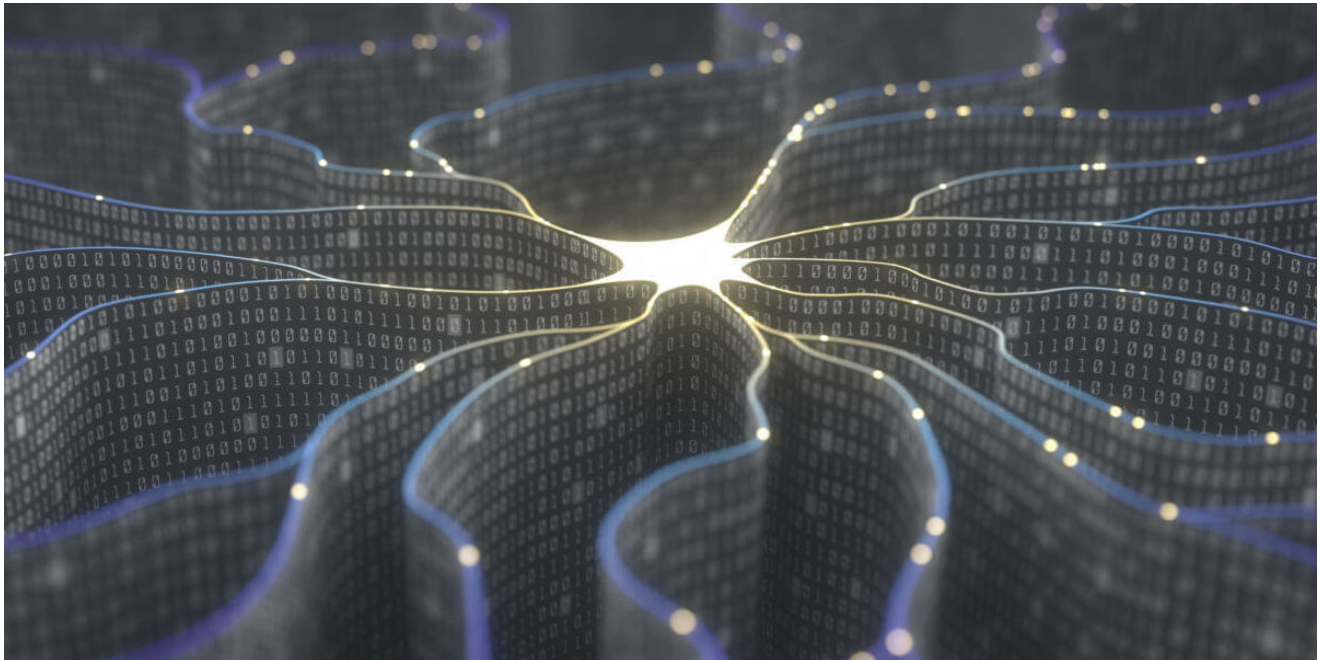


Engineering a Better World

Rheagan Rizio (<https://viterbischool.usc.edu/author/rizio/>) | June 29, 2017

Top researchers gather at USC this summer to work towards using AI to improve the world.



ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORK AND DATA TRANSMISSION (PHOTO CREDIT/ISTOCK)

Suicide prevention among college students. Poaching prevention to conserve wildlife populations in the national parks of developing nations. Substance abuse and HIV prevention in the homeless youth population.

These are just a few of the topics that will be researched this summer in the CAIS (Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society) (<https://www.cais.usc.edu>) Summer Fellowship Program, which explores how to use artificial intelligence for human good.

"We want to advance AI research to address the needs of low-resource communities and the challenges in both the developing world and general challenges that may not have received significant commercial attention but nonetheless are beneficial to society," said USC Viterbi School of Engineering's Milind Tambe (<http://teamcore.usc.edu/tambe/>), cofounder of CAIS.



FELLOWS AND FACULTY GATHER IN THE MING Hsieh BOARD ROOM OF ENGINEERING (PHOTO CREDIT/HAILEY WINETROPE)

On Monday, June 5, the 12 CAIS fellows (<https://www.cais.usc.edu/news/assistant-professors-postdocs-phd-students-join-cais-summer-2017-scholarly-work/>), gathered in the conference room at Ronald Tutor Hall, along with advisors and faculty of the fellowship program for a presentation from the two CAIS cofounders– USC School of Social Work’s Eric Rice (<https://sowkweb.usc.edu/faculty/eric-rice>) and USC Viterbi’s Tambe. The pair spoke on the history of the CAIS center and how it intends to use AI to benefit underprivileged communities.

Two of the fellows, Lily Hu, a graduate student from Harvard University (<http://www.harvard.edu>) and Hau Chan, a postdoc from Trinity University (<https://new.trinity.edu>), also gave brief presentations on what their research this summer has so far entailed.

“I’m incredibly proud to be a Fellow in Center that’s doing such important research at the intersection of computer science and social work,” Hu said. “The center is of symbolic importance; Its existence within a prominent institution like USC will hopefully pave the way for more departments and universities to shift their view towards similar socially-minded collaborations.”

CAIS is a collaborative venture between USC Viterbi and the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work (<https://sowkweb.usc.edu>). Much of its previous work has centered around combating homelessness and raising HIV awareness.

“This is the first dual venture between social work and AI for sure,” Tambe said. “Being the first, we expect CAIS to be the leader in this space of research. Our hope is that by applying AI to the types of problems that cross disciplines and transcend borders, we can greatly improve or even save lives, as well as better allocate resources where they will have the most benefit and impact.”

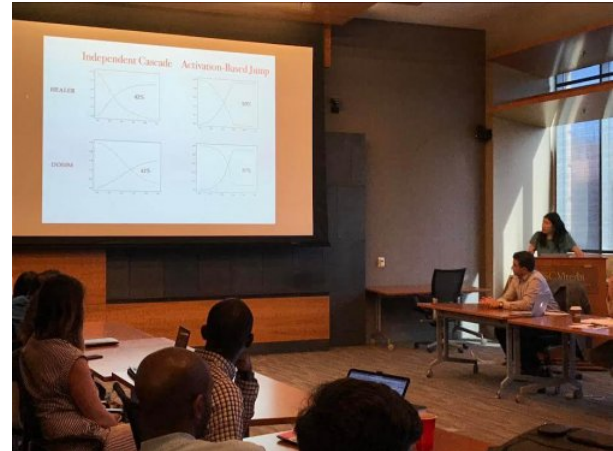
Tambe’s previous work in security games theory has been used by such organizations as the US Coast Guard (<http://teamcore.usc.edu/projects/coastguard/default.htm>), the Federal Air Marshals Service, several Los Angeles police departments, and several NGOs working in the field of animal conservation. His algorithm also works on randomized scheduling of security at airports to help combat terrorist threats.

Eric Rice, an associate professor at the USC School of Social Work and CAIS co-founder, spoke next. He gave a brief overview of social work, as well as several important figures in the history of the field who have helped shape it into what it is today.

"I think this university has a great investment in social work," Rice said. "This center reflects how USC sees social work as a dynamic part of the larger intellectual community of the university."

The 12 summer fellows – doctoral students, postdoctoral students and assistant professors – hail from nine different universities, including USC, Harvard, MIT, and Carnegie Mellon. They will be here one to three months.

"Looking forward, I'm already excited about bringing this type of trans-disciplinary energy back to Harvard and seeing whether I can rally some people in my own department around this focus of research," said Hu, one of the fellows.



CAIS FELLOW LILY HU PRESENTS HER RESEARCH TO HER PEERS (PHOTO CREDIT/HAILEY WINETROBE)

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