

Learn how to learn, as tech skills become obsolete quickly: Expert

Ng Wei Kai

Students will have to learn how to learn rather than focus on skills and specific tools as most content will be obsolete in two years or less, said the head of computing giant Nvidia's artificial intelligence (AI) technology centre Simon See.

"Technology is moving so fast, you have to keep adopting new skills," he said. "What you have to learn is the methodology of learning new things."

Dr See was speaking at a panel discussion at the launch of Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Deep Learning Week yesterday.

Minister-in-charge of the Smart

Nation Initiative Vivian Balakrishnan was the guest of honour.

Speaking over a video call to students, staff, alumni and members of the public, Dr Balakrishnan emphasised the need for university students to develop "deep technical skills" in areas such as data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI).

"You are the dynamos that will drive our transformation and push the boundaries of how we can leverage technology to transform our economy – and make a real difference," he added.

This is the second edition of NTU's Deep Learning Week, which is organised annually by the Machine Learning and Data Analytics Lab at the NTU School of Electrical

and Electronic Engineering (EEE).

It started yesterday and will run till Sunday, and will have AI-related workshops as well as a virtual AI career fair for students, ending with a machine learning hackathon themed "AI in business and economics", NTU said in a statement yesterday.

The panel discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and digital transformation, but agreed that while Covid-19 forced companies to speed up, most trends were already in motion since last year.

Panellists also emphasised that passion was more important than an academic background when pursuing a career in AI.

Along with Dr See, the other

members of the panel included Mr Sim Kai, deputy director of the national AI office, Dr Laurence Liew, director for AI industry innovation at AI Singapore, Ms Jane Shen, chief scientist and managing director at Pensees, Dr Pan Yaozhang, head of data science at Shopee, and Dr Yap Kim Hui, associate professor at EEE.

The session was moderated by Dr Wesley Tan, senior lecturer at EEE.

Dr Liew said that computer scientists formed a minority of applicants for his organisation's AI apprenticeship programme, and that he had social scientists and many people from other disciplines applying and doing well.

"A lot of the most successful tech people in the world do not come from a computer science background.

"It doesn't really matter what your first degree is in, as long as you are passionate, you can get into AI," he said.

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