

King Saud University Announces Collaboration with IBM to cultivate AI skills among students and aspiring developers



Riyadh, April 13, 2025 –

King Saud University (KSU) has announced a strategic collaboration with IBM SkillsBuild, aimed at cultivating next-generation talent in generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and driving long-term economic growth in the Kingdom.

Through IBM SkillsBuild, KSU students will gain access to watsonx, IBM's portfolio of generative AI products, enabling them to develop new solutions for real-world problems. Students across all disciplines will also benefit from new, free online courses that introduce core AI concepts, equipping them with in-demand skills regardless of their field of study.

This initiative comes at a critical time. According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, 39% of current skills may become outdated by 2030, showing the skills gap remains the most pressing barrier to business transformation. Additionally, recent research from IBM and Morning Consult revealed that 76% of developers do not consider themselves experts in generative AI, highlighting the urgency of AI-focused training.

In response, King Saud University is working with IBM as part of a new strategy to empower students and aspiring developers with practical, high-impact AI skills through real-world tech learning experiences.

Prof. Abdullah bin Salman Alsalman, the Acting President of KSU, emphasized that this agreement reflects the university's strategic commitment to enhancing its students' capabilities in technology and innovation. It also leverages IBM's advanced artificial intelligence ecosystem to prepare KSU graduates to lead AI-powered digital transformation at both the local and global levels.

Prof. Yazid bin Abdulmalik Al-Sheikh, Vice President for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, added:

“This agreement represents a pivotal step toward strengthening the university’s research ecosystem and maximizing its economic impact. By integrating AI technologies to address real-world societal challenges, the university aligns itself with national priorities while reinforcing its leadership in forming strategic partnerships with global technology leaders. This will enhance KSU’s standing both locally and internationally, while fostering national capacity building and innovation.”

IBM Perspective

“The rapid evolution of AI innovation continues to challenge and inspire businesses across industries, making skilled talent more important than ever,” said Justina Nixon-Saintil, IBM VP and Chief Impact Officer *“As we see the rise of more open-source AI models, it’s clear that the pace of transformation is not slowing down. The future of AI will be shaped by students, educators, and professionals who not only have the skills to use generative AI, but also to manage AI agents, or even build them.”*

Fahad Alanazi, General Manager of IBM Saudi Arabia, commented *“At IBM, we believe in empowering the next generation with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive in our rapidly evolving world. This collaboration with King Saud University is a testament to our commitment to fostering AI literacy. By providing access to IBM's cutting-edge AI technologies and comprehensive learning resources, we aim to equip students with the practical skills required to tackle today's challenges and drive future innovations. Together, we're not just preparing students for jobs; we're nurturing a community of problem solvers ready to shape the future of technology in Saudi Arabia and beyond.”*

Collaboration Highlights

A central component of the KSU-IBM SkillsBuild collaboration is the emphasis on faculty development and hands-on, real-world learning opportunities. Students and educators will gain access to watsonx, and Granite, IBM's family of open-source large language models, allowing them to explore, build, and apply AI-driven solutions to real-world challenges.

Hands-On AI Learning

KSU students will engage in AI learning through interactive labs of up to 90 minutes, exploring topics such as code generation

and data classification using large language models. Students will also have opportunities to earn digital credentials that are widely recognized by employers.

Generative AI Capstone Projects

Senior students will have the opportunity to develop semester-long capstone projects using watsonx . These projects will be co-supervised by IBM experts and university faculty and will address real problem statements, including some from IBM clients across diverse sectors—including financial services, healthcare, insurance, life sciences, manufacturing, telecommunications, marketing, and energy.

Free AI Courses for All Disciplines

To foster inclusive participation at all levels, IBM SkillsBuild will offer introductory courses in generative AI to students across all disciplines. These one-hour online modules cover foundational topics such as text-to-speech, chatbot development, and open-source LLMs, enabling students to begin their AI journey with confidence.

This agreement reflects King Saud University's commitment to preparing its students for the future of work through access to advanced AI technologies, industry collaboration, and practice-based learning environments that connect education with real-world impact.

<https://mea.newsroom.ibm.com/ibm-ksu-collaboration>