KEEPING PACE

Indiana Colleges Offer Cadre of New Programs

By Anthony Schoettle

With technology advancing at warp speeds, business practices are pivoting, changing and pushing forward like never before.

To keep up – and make sure their graduates have the knowledge and power to continue to meet businesses' needs – Indiana colleges and universities are constantly updating and upgrading their courses and programs.

Indiana and Purdue universities, along with Indiana Wesleyan University, the University of Southern Indiana and Vincennes University are among those that have added new and innovative academic offerings to align with a fast-changing business universe.

Speeding ahead with motorsports

Purdue University is on the leading edge with its motorsports engineering program. Housed in the Dallara IndyCar factory less than three miles from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and steps from major race shops and industry partners, Purdue offers the nation's only Bachelor of Science degree in motorsports engineering at its Indianapolis campus.

Students in the program "gain real-world experience through hands-on projects and close industry connections," emphasizes Christopher Finch, a Purdue motorsports engineering professor and the program's director. "Students build the technical skills, teamwork and innovative mindset needed to lead in the fast-paced world of racing and beyond."

The program has been gaining speed since it was launched in 2008, with noted acceleration in the last few years. The program's first cohort had fewer than 40 students, Finch says. In 2024, the number grew to 109 and now there are 145 students enrolled.

"Applications are up almost 50% this year, and we're projecting our next cohort to be around 175 students in the fall of 2026," exclaims Finch, who has nearly two decades of experience as a motorsports engineer, many of those in IndyCar racing. "That speaks to the demand of what we're offering and the reputation of the students we're graduating."

Finch and other program officials work closely with an industry advisory board composed of officials from IndyCar, NHRA, NASCAR and other top professional racing organizations.

"That helps us keep a pulse on industry advancements and needs and assures we're teaching our students everything they need to hit the ground running in the world of motorsports engineering," Finch says.

Vincennes University officials have also seized on this need – especially in a hotspot of racing like Indiana.

The Motorsports Certificate, C.G. program at Vincennes University is designed to prepare students for entry-level employment in the motorsports industry. The effort focuses on vehicle design, machine tool operations, welding and fabrication.

Students in the Motorsports Certificate program take courses including automotive electrical design, chassis and engine systems, industrial blueprints and CAD designs and manufacturing processes, among others. The program prepares Vincennes students to take on such jobs as race team technician, fabrication specialist and motorsports mechanic.

Technological revolution

In today's world, there's no doubt the massive impact artificial intelligence (AI) has had on business – and everyday life. So, it's no wonder that many educators are focusing on AI in their courses, degreed programs and overall education.

At Indiana University, there's an emphasis on informatics and AI. Informatics is the broader field of managing and using data, while AI is a specific technology focused on creating intelligent systems that mimic human cognitive functions. Think of informatics as the system for collecting and organizing data, and AI as the intelligent engine that analyzes and acts on that data.

"We launched new undergraduate, master and PhD computer science degrees in fall 2024 with the launch of a new department of computer science at IU Indianapolis," explains Davide Bolchini, executive associate dean at IU's Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering and the school's founding chair for the Department of Human-Centered Computing. "Within these programs, we really embraced the development of AI that we've seen in the industry and that we're still seeing evolve in the industry. And most recently, we launched a new software engineering master program in the computer science department."

Additionally, IU President Pamela Whitten said in December: "At IU Indianapolis, we have new degrees in biomedical sciences, the business of biotechnology, biomedical engineering and biochemistry.

Purdue's motorsports engineering program has seen dramatic enrollment increases in recent years. It's the only one of its kind in the U.S.

"The Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering will launch new degree programs in emerging areas, including computer engineering, robotics, bioengineering, nanoengineering, microelectronics and electrical engineering. These new academic programs will be offered in addition to the existing degrees in intelligent systems engineering, with some launching as early as next year," Whitten added about the Bloomington campus.

But it's not just teaching students about computer hardware and software at Indiana, school officials affirm. That's why in the fall of 2026, a new joint degree between IU's Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering and its Kelley School of Business will be offered in Bloomington.

Applications are now being accepted for the inaugural class of the Bachelor of Science in Business Intelligence and Data Science, which will equip students with the skills they need to identify and solve business problems using data-driven approaches. It combines the strategic breadth offered at the Kelley School with the quantitative depth of a data science major at the Luddy School.

"This degree represents the future of business education – where deep analytical expertise meets strategic insight – and it reflects Kelley's commitment to preparing students not just for today's roles, but for the evolving demands of tomorrow's economy," says Pat Hopkins, Kelley's dean and the James R. Hodge Chair of Excellence. "By combining the strengths of our world-class faculty with Luddy's excellence in data science, we're offering students an unparalleled interdisciplinary experience that enhances their career prospects and reinforces Kelley's reputation as a leader in innovative, high-impact business education."

One of Indiana University's newest academic offerings emphasizes using technology to solve real-world business problems.

IWU offers master's in AI

IU, of course, isn't the state's only school offering new and innovative courses centered on emerging technology.

In the fall of 2024, Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) announced the launch of its Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence degree with a specialization in data analytics.

The program is designed as an interdisciplinary track accessible to working professionals from a variety of backgrounds, and focused on applying AI tools to make faster, better decisions and increase productivity in the workplace.

This master's degree is currently offered in a blended form, with an online version of the program which became available in January 2025. The program features 10 courses over 20 months in the blended modality or 16 months in the online modality.

This interdisciplinary track is not programming or math intensive, instead covering an applied understanding of AI and data analytics relevant to many different professional fields. Graduates will learn to tailor commercially available AI applications to help their companies stay ahead of the competition.

"We are excited to equip leaders with the digital skills they need to leverage AI and drive innovation in a fast-paced market," shares Clark Cully, technology division chair of IWU's DeVoe School of Business, Technology and Leadership.

Cully says the demand for the program has been high, especially for international students. The demand, he says, spans a wide range of ages, from students in their 20s to 60s.

"This is not a theory-focused program," Cully explains. "This is meant to be a grad-level degree for someone who is already an expert in their field. It is a degree for people working in their business … to transform their work. It's a way to take what you're doing and accelerate it. It's also meant to provide some of the soft skills that go along with innovation."

AI woven into MBA

The University of Southern Indiana (USI), located in Evansville, also is incorporating AI into a graduate program.

USI's Romain College of Business in the fall of 2025 expanded its Master of Business Administration (MBA) online program to include a concentration in AI.

Designed to accommodate the needs of working professionals, the 30-credit-hour program can be completed online or with a mix of in-person and online classes.

The AI concentration is designed to develop proficiency in AI-driven business strategies, decision-making processes and the use of AI tools for business innovation and efficiency.

The program offers cutting-edge AI skills tailored to today's business landscape, enabling professionals to stay competitive by mastering tools and techniques in high demand.

"Our MBA program stands at the intersection of business and artificial intelligence, empowering professionals to harness AI for strategic transformation and business success," remarks Curt Gilstrap, USI professor of business communication.

Srishti Srivastava, associate professor of computer science at USI's Romain College of Business and the coordinator of the computer science program at USI, says that demand has been triple what school officials originally anticipated for the MBA-AI offering.

"We were thinking perhaps 25 students, and we've had 75 enrolled for this first year," she states. "And we've had students enrolled from all across the U.S."

There is a capacity for up to 200 students in USI's MBA course with AI concentration, and Gilstrap and Srivastava – who each teach a course in the program – are confident demand will continue to escalate. AI is woven throughout the program with three courses required for the AI concentration: business analytics, applied generative AI and AI-driven business transformation.

"Having computer science as part of the college of business is pretty unusual," Srivastava says. "So, having this combination in our MBA program is very unique. We're one of a small handful of universities nationwide with an MBA offering like this. I think that's part of what's driving demand for this program."

RESOURCES: Davide Bolchini, Pat Hopkins and Pamela Whitten, Indiana University, at www.iu.edu | Clark Cully, Indiana Wesleyan University, at www.indwes.edu | Christopher Finch, Purdue University, at www.purdue.edu | Curt Gilstrap and Srishti Srivastava, University of Southern Indiana, at www.usi.edu