

August 2023



Letter from the Executive Director

Artificial Intelligence and Principled Human Action

The sudden socialization of AI feels like a turning point, doesn't it?

The meaning and impact of AI on our lives is as exciting as it is cause for anxiousness. It's not quite analogous to our pandemic pivot in March 2020, but it still challenges us to consider what AI means for the future of work, for resource and time allocation, and for the ways in which we, quite simply, create economic value to sustain our lives.

Yikes.

This moment reminds me of the time, in late 2015, when I visited a large exhibition in Seoul's Gangnam District (I didn't do the dance, but I thought about it) where a Seoul-based United Nations (UN) office was exhibiting their new (first-ever) Virtual Reality (VR) goggles for developing empathy for the plight of refugees living in camps around the world.

You put on the goggles and you're immediately transported to walking through a refugee camp along with adults and children going about their day.

At the time, my job was to develop experiential learning programs involving travel to and immersion in cultures to instill self-awareness and empathy and, hopefully, greater global equity and peace.

In the back of my mind I was thinking, could these goggles spell the beginning of the end of physical travel for experiential learning across borders and continents?

In fact, I was in Seoul to develop our first experiential learning computer science program for STEM/computer science students. I'd designed the program to engage our students in questions of computer science's social engagement and ethics across cultures and historical circumstances. We hoped we might create new openings for understandings of how a theoretically global science may also have local meanings and practices too. We hoped this learning might create better science and better practices across time and space.

I put on those UN-developed VR goggles a self-interested, slightly defensive (threatened, maybe a little self-righteous) skeptic. How could walking through a refugee camp while standing still in a 5 million-square foot exhibition center in Seoul's high-end Gangnam District in any way help me (or anyone) develop a sense of connection with, much less compassion (activated empathy), to take meaningful action on behalf of refugees? (Here are a few reactions to that question: [NPR](#) (2016) and [academic article](#) (2022).)

With the jolt of the pandemic a little over 4 years later, and everything we've learned since about virtual collaboration, I'm skeptical but open to the opportunities present in this AI moment. That is, as long as that future involves a commitment to the 4 guiding principles of Moral Intelligence—compassion, forgiveness, integrity, and responsibility.

Dr. Robert Emmerling encourages us to engage with AI. He encourages his students' agency and challenges them to refine their power of discernment to define AI's limits.

To me, the AI question makes our mission to advance moral, purposeful and emotionally intelligent leadership for current and emerging leaders more vital still.

I'm excited to learn how our Directed Research Fellowships in Moral Intelligence,

Rights, and Artificial Intelligence challenges us to push this question in a new data-driven direction that enhances our sense of agency as humans, too.

Please join me in spreading the word about our Directed Research Fellowships and all of our fellowships. Learn more [here](#).

- Brian Hammer, PhD, Executive Director

[2024-2025 Future Leaders Academy flyer](#)