

## Tel Aviv U., Google launch a new program to promote multidisciplinary research in AI

Staff Reports

Google and Tel Aviv University are continuing their ongoing collaboration and launched a new program for the promotion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data science research, through the Center for AI and Data Science at TAU (TAD), headed by Prof. Meir Feder (Engineering) with financial support of \$1M from Google.

The new 3-year program is focused mainly on AI research for Sustainability and for Education. The launch event, held on May 1, included a ceremony to announce the grant awardees who were selected by the grant committee following a call for research proposals.

The faculty members who

won the grants come from diverse fields – from Porter School for Environmental Studies, Life Sciences, Engineering and Education. In addition, three fellowships were awarded to graduate students from underrepresented groups in academia in the fields of AI. The winning students come from Computer Science, Zoology and Education.

During the opening ceremony, TAU president, Prof. Ariel Porat, Prof. Yossi Matias, VP Engineering and Research, Google and Head of Google center in Israel, and Prof. Meir Feder, Head of TAD spoke about the program and the TAU-Google long-standing partnership: TAU president, Prof. Ariel Porat said: “Several years ago we began a fruitful

collaboration with Google, led by Prof. Yossi Matias. The purpose of this partnership is to boost the contribution of AI to the improvement of human society and the world we live in. In this new program, we place the focus on utilizing AI tools to advance sustainability and education. Sustainability is absolutely critical to the continued existence of humanity, while education is crucial to the health of our society. TAU excels in both of these areas, and collaboration with Google will strengthen them even further”.

Yossi Matias, VP Engineering and Research, Google said: “We have great opportunities to use AI to make a significant positive impact in many areas,

and I’m excited about our continued investments in driving for positive change in Sustainability and Education. Through our continued and expanded partnership with TAU and its Center for AI and Data Science, we hope to join together industrial and academic research to advance science and technology in these critical areas for humanity and society. We are also committed to continuing our efforts to make academia and industry more inclusive for all segments of society.”

Google started a mentoring program with ExactShe, established by Prof. Tova Milo, Dean at the Faculty of Exact Sciences at TAU, through which female Google volunteers will mentor female students

from the Faculty, to create a supportive community and help them integrate into the research community and the industry.

Prof. Meir Feder, Head of TAD, thanked Google for the ongoing collaboration and the support in these important fields of AI research at TAU. “Both sustainability and education are topics of growing interest and AI can greatly advance these areas for the benefit of the environment and society in general. AI can help to address some of the biggest challenges such as innovative teaching and learning for all, climate change, water resources, renewable energy, biodiversity and more. The collaboration with Google helps in another very important goal of the center – the support

of underrepresented groups in the field of AI in academia and promote diversity and inclusive environment at the university. We are happy to join forces to promote all these important aspects”.

As part of the long-standing partnership, TAD and Google held joint seminars in the last couple of years in the fields of AI for the Environment and Health. Led by Dr. Deborah Cohen, Senior Scientist at Google Research, and Dr. Shiri Stempler, Director of Research Collaborations at TAD, the meetings included talks by researchers from both TAU and Google who presented established results as well as work in progress and provided a platform to advance connections between academia and industry.

## Chitwood

from Page 1

and now it was time to fight back. Believing that sunlight is the best anti-septic he featured photos and criminal records of the ring-leaders in the local newspaper. Let all see what a ‘bunch of lowlives’ these self-proclaimed patriots really are. It brought an immediate response. Death threats ensued against the entire family of the Sheriff. His parents, children and grandchildren were all targets. The haters were finally on the defensive. Sheriff Chitwood’s response was defiant. Come and get me was his challenge. When three of the responsible individuals were apprehended in three different states and extradited to Daytona Beach, Sheriff Mike welcomed them personally to Volusia County with a phalanx of TV news cameras. When a planned protest by the Goyim Defense League was scuttled by this one man’s extraordinary pressure, a counter demonstration by people representing many faiths and ethnic groups

marched in solidarity, their American flags proudly waving. Mike Chitwood was asked the simple question of why he stood up and fought back in such a very dangerous and powerful way. His response: ‘It’s personal. This is my community.’ It is no accident that during that same week, Florida enacted legislation making the acts that Chitwood reacted to, felonies. While the established organizations have frankly failed to embrace the Sheriff’s offensive against hate, I join many others in applauding and thanking Mike Chitwood. Let us follow his courageous example and to that I say as they do in Daytona; ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Engines!’”

I asked Sheriff Chitwood to share his thoughts on the importance of law enforcement members embracing the fight against antisemitism and hate.

“I think it’s tempting for all of us to ignore it and pretend like it doesn’t exist. But when hate goes on a full-blown invasion of a community like it did ours, I think it has to be challenged and exposed. When



Rabbi Raphael Adler of Temple Anshei Shalom in Delray Beach. COURTESY/RABBI RAPHAEL ADLER

you shine the light on the kind of scumbag criminals, thugs and losers who are behind all of this stuff, you really see there’s no future in a life full of hate. No one

wants to live like these guys do. Now, there’s always the argument that by calling out hate, you’re drawing more attention to it. That is always a risk you take with

this approach. But I come down on the side of shining a spotlight on the ugly side of humanity so that others see it for what it is. That way, when it lands on your driveway or your kids come across it on the internet, maybe it’s lost some of the power it might have over anyone who might buy into it.”

Sheriff Chitwood expressed his thoughts regarding a “Come and Get Me” challenge to the haters.

“If I’m the one they’re threatening and harassing, then that’s less time they can spend targeting others. So I look at it as a win. There’s nothing they can come up with that’s going to shut me up. They can waste their time on me, and I’ll keep telling them what they can do to themselves. I’m proud to be the one they’re coming after, because I feel like I’m serving as a shield for innocent people who don’t deserve the abuse.”

Sheriff Chitwood recalled meeting the man accused of threatening him.

“Every time you see these guys, you think they just came straight out of central

casting. They’re the personification of a marginalized and radicalized failure to integrate into society. They have failed at life, so they are looking for someone to blame. That blame turns into hate. And the ringleaders of these hate groups are waiting with open arms to recruit, brainwash and exploit them. So when I see them come down the escalator at the airport, I’m probably feeling a mixture of anger, disgust and even pity. But I’m also thinking, thank God I’m looking at his face here, and not on the 6 o’clock news after he shot up a synagogue, a mosque, a church, a grocery store, a shopping mall.”

Sheriff Chitwood shared the example he hopes to set for adults and children alike.

“I really just hope I can inspire people to stand up for others. That was a lesson my father taught me at an early age. If I can help give others the courage to stand up and speak against hate, against extremism, against Internet bullies and all their disgusting beliefs, then it’s not just ‘Mike Chitwood vs. the scumbags’, it’s all of us taking them on.”