

# MIT enlisting hundreds of scientists in effort to make computers think more like people

*Andy Rosen - Metro Producer*

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is planning a broad initiative to seek breakthroughs in the field of artificial intelligence, enlisting hundreds of researchers who will look deeply at the human mind for lessons on how to build smarter machines.

The university on Thursday will announce the launch of the MIT Intelligence Quest, a multimillion-dollar plan to coordinate the individual efforts of MIT's many experts from all corners of the campus — with the aim of teaching computers to think more like the way people do.

MIT president Rafael Reif said more than 200 faculty working in fields including brain science, computer engineering, and robotics are planning to participate in the effort.

During a conference call on Wednesday, Reif said that while those scientists are all “smart and terrific,” they are also like “boats on the Charles River going in different directions.”

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Now, he said, “they are going to work together toward a moonshot, and that is more than they can do now on their own.”

While computers have become highly effective at finding patterns and learning from them, they can't do much that we would recognize as humanlike intelligence. MIT wants to change that. The Intelligence Quest program — or MIT IQ — will help connect researchers across disciplines and support projects in which they work together, as well as seek collaborations with industry.

Josh Tenenbaum, a professor of cognitive science and computation who is working to develop computer algorithms based on the workings of the brain, said he needs the help of his colleagues in other fields.

For instance, scientists have long dreamed of building computers that can learn and grow in the same way that children do, he said. But that is difficult without a deep knowledge of both how computers work and how the minds of children develop.

“This is really about coupling the science of intelligence and the engineering — that is, the basic science of how intelligence works in the mind and brain with the quest to engineer more powerful, more intelligent, more human kinds of intelligence in machines,” he said.

MIT said it plans to raise money through corporate and other donations, in a model similar to an initiative it announced last year in collaboration with IBM. The computing giant pledged [\\$240 million to establish a new lab](#) researching artificial intelligence. While the new Intelligence Quest is a separate initiative, the idea behind it grew out MIT’s efforts to find projects for the MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab.

Reif said faculty have asked university leadership to help coordinate efforts toward major advances.

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