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Twentieth edition of CIFAR's DLRL Summer School brings the world's top AI talent to Canada

Kathleen Sandusky

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This year's summer school hosted by the Vector Institute brings the number of global DLRL alumni to nearly three thousand.

The twentieth annual edition of the CIFAR Deep Learning + Reinforcement Learning Summer School (DLRL) concluded last week at the Vector Institute in Toronto, once again bringing to Canada the world's top AI graduate students, post-docs and professionals eager to advance their knowledge of the foundational research, new developments and real-world applications of artificial intelligence.

Over 10 days, nearly 200 trainees attended talks and workshops led by experts on the use of deep learning and reinforcement learning for a range of applications spanning robotics and automation, generative AI, AI-enabled advances in science, health and medicine, gaming and creative arts.

Also featured were deep dives on ethics and safety, Indigenous knowledge and world views, and advances in some of the most complex challenges in fundamental AI including alignment, privacy, optimization and causality.



AI Safety panel discussion at DLRL (L-R): Moderator Gus Skorburg (University of Guelph); Sheila McIlraith and Roger Grosse (both, Canada CIFAR AI Chairs, Vector Institute); Joanna Redden (Western University).

Approximately half of this year's attendees were international students, hailing from 25 countries. Notes Elissa Strome, Executive Director of the Pan-Canadian Strategy at CIFAR, "For twenty years, DLRL has grown in stature as an incredible opportunity for the world's best emerging talent in AI to come and learn about the latest advances in the field. Our alumni have gone on to create some of the most important breakthroughs in the field, and they frequently cite DLRL and their time in Canada as planting the seed for their scientific ideas and collaborative networks. For Canada, the benefits are an enriched and diversified AI workforce and research networks and deeper opportunities for future global partnerships in this important field. It's a win-win situation."



Alumni panel at the DLRL 20th celebration (L-R): moderator Murad Hemmadi of The Logic; Graham Taylor (Canada CIFAR AI Chair, the Vector Institute); Luz Angélica Caudillo Mata (Senior Applied AI Scientist, MDA Space); Alex Cui (Co-Founder & Chief Technology Officer, GPTZero).

Near the school's conclusion, CIFAR hosted a special 20th anniversary celebration. Newly-minted DLRL grads mingled with speakers and sponsors, celebrated their achievements and new friendships at the photo booth, and listened keenly to career advice shared by past alumni. Elissa Strome encouraged the new alumni to continue their connection to CIFAR and Canada's three National AI Institutes, advising them to seize their advantage as members of the Canadian AI community, which now boasts nearly three thousand graduates of DLRL to date.

DLRL alumnus Luz Angélica Caudillo Mata, today a Senior Applied AI Scientist at MDA Space, shared some advice for AI researchers poised to begin their careers, whether in industry or academia: "I like to remember that AI isn't just happening around me or to me — I am building it. All of us in this room share the responsibility that comes with that power. You can use it to help others enter the field, to make systems fairer and safer, and also to notice gaps and use your entrepreneurial instincts to create new opportunities. But most of all, remember that AI is not happening to you, but by you."



Newly-minted DLRL alumni having fun at the 20th anniversary photo booth.

Sponsors for this year's DLRL were instrumental in its success, and were featured at the packed DLRL career mixer, with representatives from a dozen Canadian-based companies and organizations keen to discuss employment and training opportunities with these early-career talents.



Career fair table for TELUS, one of the sponsors of DLRL 2024.

CIFAR and Canada's National AI Institutes extend our deep thanks to [this year's sponsors](#) for making DLRL 2024 a huge success.

✉ Be sure to [subscribe to CIFAR's AI Can Bulletin](#) for early news about next year's DLRL 2025, to be hosted by Amii in Edmonton, Alberta.

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