

“The Role of Catholic Social Teaching and Ethics in Franciscan University’s AI implementation”

Opening Statement:¹

James Cameron, in a FOX NEWS article, says the ‘fundamental issue’ with putting guardrails on AI is that humans can’t agree on morals.²

“Once a critic, Cameron’s stance on AI has evolved over the years ... ‘Avatar’ director James Cameron argued that the ‘fundamental issue’ in creating guardrails for artificial intelligence is that humans can’t agree on morals, noting that finding a universal moral code is nearly impossible. ...

Cameron argued that morality is subjective, pointing out that religions and political systems adhere to different moral frameworks, making consensus difficult to achieve. ... The issue with creating these guardrails, according to Cameron, is that ‘everybody’s morality is different,’ which inevitably leads to disagreement over which moral framework would be best suited to keep AI in line.

“For this reason,” states Pope Leo³, “it is increasingly urgent to introduce media, information and AI literacy into education systems at all levels, as already promoted by some civil institutions. As Catholics, we can and must contribute to this effort, so that individuals — especially young people — can acquire critical thinking skills and grow in freedom of spirit. This literacy should also be integrated into broader life-long learning initiatives, reaching out to older adults and marginalized members of society, who often feel excluded and powerless in the face of rapid technological change.

“Just as the industrial revolution called for basic literacy to enable people to respond to new developments, so too does the digital revolution require digital literacy (along with humanistic and cultural education) to understand how algorithms shape our perception of reality, how AI biases work, what mechanisms determine the presence of certain content in our feeds, what the economic principles and models of the AI economy are and how they might change.”

Franciscan University of Steubenville is not simply participating in the AI conversation — we are positioned in the vanguard to lead it. And we do so from a place few institutions can claim: where business excellence is inseparable from theological, philosophical, and ethical clarity.

In a marketplace racing to adopt AI, most are asking what technology can do. Franciscan is asking the more consequential question: what *should* it do — and who should we become in the process?

Because we unite business with theology, philosophy, and catechetics, we approach AI not just as a productivity engine, but as a force shaping human identity, responsibility, and the common good. That is not just a philosophical distinction — it is a strategic one.

Franciscan University can lead by fostering interdisciplinary curricula blending business, humanities, science, and technology, ensuring ‘no one left behind.’⁴

- ✧ Catholic universities must act as “laboratories of hope,” engaging AI research with wisdom to promote ethical applications and societal cohesion.⁵

- ✧ Emphasize ... standards prioritizing community good over personal gain.⁶
- ✧ “Integrate AI across departments — rooted in a moral framework based in Catholic Social Teachings (CST) and the cultivation of virtues — to fill the moral vacuum our students inherit.
- ✧ Franciscan forms graduates who wield technology ethically, augmenting human potential with prudence, justice, and charity.”⁷

In an age of artificial intelligence, Franciscan University graduates will be fluent in both innovation and business ethics — leaders who bring clarity of purpose, sound judgment, and a deep commitment to human dignity and service.

Franciscan graduates will be leaders of real wisdom — men and women who will not only use technology, but guide it in service of the human person, so that what we create always reflects who we are called to be in the *imago dei* — likeness of God.



References:

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