IBM Future Lab: A new home at ECU to build the jobs of tomorrow

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Megan Lilley and Max Read at the IBM Future Lab

IBM and Edith Cowan University (ECU) have announced the launch of the *IBM Future Lab* at ECU Joondalup campusto help train West Australian students for the jobs of tomorrow across Artificial Intelligence (AI), sustainability and energy transition.

The lab gives interns access to specific learning resources, IBM experts and opportunities to connect directly with some of the most innovative companies in the state.

IBM APAC Industry Leader for Natural Resources Ian Abraham said the lab will help create a highly skilled and diverse workforce, with the aim to create around 200 jobs across IBM within Western Australia over the next 5 years, plus additional roles with IBM's partners and clients in key growth industries.

"The establishing of the Future Lab on the ECU campus follows the success of the IBM Talent Incubator Pilot Program which has already seen 102 students successfully complete the program. Over half of these students chose to accept full time roles as IBM graduates," he said.

"With the lab now located on the ECU Joondalup campus, IBM aims to expand the pilot program into a more comprehensive initiative, reach more students and tailor more resources to help equip students with the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow."

The IBM Future Lab has been created at ECU, IBM's partner institution in Western Australia, to provide successful students with a paid internship working in areas aligned to their studies.

This provides the interns with real world experience, while developing high demand skills as designers, software engineers, data scientists, mobile application developers and project managers.

The current focus for the IBM Future Lab is in the areas of sustainability, AI and energy transition, in line with the needs of its key clients, and is expected to widen over time.

ECU Vice-Chancellor Professor Steve Chapman CBE said one of the key strengths of the internship program is the increasing demand for graduates with a unique combination of skills in creativity, technology and business.

"This truly is the next generation of industry-embedded learning, the model we have developed with IBM is already proving to be what the market and students are screaming out for," Professor Chapman said.

"Opening the IBM Future Lab at our Joondalup campus creates a space where interns can meet, work, and collaborate today – to solve the problems of tomorrow."

The internship program and Future Lab continue ECU and IBM's commitment to ensuring West Australian university students are given the real-world experience they need to succeed in an evolving workforce.

"We are also committed to ensuring the program is as inclusive as possible. We are pleased that the pilot program had a 42 per cent female participation rate and the new Lab will also include specific programs targeting indigenous Western Australians," IBM Future Lab Director Vivien Hegedus said.

Current ECU Bachelor of Design student Megan Lilley is working on a range of UI/UX design projects as a part of the IBM internshiip.

"The most valuable aspect of the internship would be the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from people with different skillsets," Megan said.

"It is an invaluable experience where you can work within the industry, with professionals in your own field. It is also extremely flexible, so if you feel like expanding your knowledge in a certain area, you have the freedom to do so!"

Max Read is an ECU Bachelor of Computer Science graduate, a full-time IBM Associate, working as an IT Coordinator.

"I use the technical skills I gained during my degree and internship to collaborate with teams on a variety of different technologies and applications, to assist them in the support and operations of their systems. This is particularly rewarding given these systems are relied on at all hours, all year round, to ensure the client can continue to operate and deliver services to customers," Max said.

"One of the factors that led me to choose ECU as my preferred place of study was the Workplace Integrated Learning program, as I wanted to get hands-on industry experience.

"The IBM internship presented a fantastic opportunity to put my technical and soft skills into practice, with the potential to be hired out of university as a graduate. I was also attracted by the variety on offer, as I wasn't necessarily only going to be chained to a single technology, or a single development platform."

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