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Responsible AI Institute Announces Leadership Transition, Welcoming Var Shankar as Executive Director

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Leading Ethical AI Nonprofit Appoints AI Policy Expert as Executive Director

AUSTIN, Texas--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- **Responsible AI Institute** (RAI Institute), the leading non-profit building AI Assessments and a Certification program dedicated to converting responsible AI principles into practice, today announced the appointment of Var Shankar as its new Executive Director. The Institute also thanked Ashley Casovan, who previously held the position, for her exemplary leadership and accomplishments. Casovan will continue to stay involved with RAI Institute as a member of the governing board. Shankar has been selected to advance RAI Institute's work given his extensive AI expertise and demonstrated leadership in the responsible AI community.

Under Casovan's leadership, RAI Institute became a leading non-profit in the AI sector, focused on building AI Assessments and a Certification Program. Over this period, the organization grew a significant community of experts from industry, academia, government and standards organizations, to build meaningful AI governance tools and advocate for AI regulatory reform.

"We'd like to thank Ashley for her dedication and many contributions to RAI Institute over the past four years. Through this work she has become a recognized leader in the social tech community and has developed a strong reputation for developing workable governance for data, AI and open source tools. We wish Ashley success in her next endeavor and look forward to continuing to work with her," said Manoj Saxena, founder and chairman of RAI Institute.

Shankar has led RAI Institute's Policy, Delivery and Customer Success team since March 2022. As Executive Director, Shankar plans to focus on furthering the adoption of responsible AI approaches, assessments and tools among leading organizations. Shankar previously practiced law at Cravath, Swaine and Moore LLP. He has also held leadership positions in industry and government providing him with deep insight into the legal landscape and regulatory frameworks. In 2021, alongside Alexis Cook, a developer relations engineer at Google, Shankar published the AI Ethics course at Kaggle, a data science and machine learning community with over 8 million users.

"The need to more rapidly operationalize responsible AI across industry sectors worldwide is urgent. Under Var's leadership I am confident that RAI Institute will be well positioned to develop practical solutions for our membership to address these concerns through the development of necessary responsible AI guardrails," observed Saxena.

"The Institute's continued growth is a testament to our reputation as a champion of safe and responsible AI adoption. As Executive Director, I look forward to continuing to work with members, practitioners, policymakers and researchers to operationalize responsible AI in real-world use cases and to accelerate the adoption of responsible AI practices and tools," said Var Shankar, Executive Director of RAI Institute.

A committed advocate for responsible AI, Shankar is a member of the World Economic Forum's AI Governance Alliance, the Brookings Institution's Forum for Cooperation on AI and the OECD.AI Expert Group on Risk & Accountability. Thanks to his track record, deep knowledge and expertise, he is well-equipped to further RAI Institute's mission of accelerating AI governance mechanisms and establishing system-specific guidance on a global scale.

How to Become a RAI Institute Member

RAI Institute invites new members to join in driving innovation and advancing responsible AI. Collaborating with esteemed organizations like those mentioned, RAI Institute develops practical approaches to mitigate AI-related risks and fosters the growth of responsible AI practices. Explore membership options **here**.

About Responsible AI Institute (RAI Institute)

Founded in 2016, Responsible AI Institute (RAI Institute) is a global and member-driven non-profit dedicated to enabling successful responsible AI efforts in organizations. RAI Institute's conformity assessments and certifications for AI systems support practitioners as they navigate the complex landscape of AI products. Members include ATB Financial, Amazon Web Services, Boston Consulting Group, Yum! Brands and many other leading companies and institutions collaborate with RAI Institute to bring responsible AI to all industry sectors.

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