Academics explore how entrepreneurs can navigate AI disruption at Jinju forum

By Lee Gyu-lee

Published Oct 20, 2026 4:40 pm KST Updated Oct 20, 2026 4:41 pm KST

Scholars call for closer ties between universities, businesses, communities



Erkko Autio, second from left, chair in technology transfer and entrepreneurship at Imperial College London, speaks during the fourth session of the 2026 Jinju International Forum on Entrepreneurship at Centennial Memorial Hall on the campus of Gyeongsang National University in Jinju, South Gyeongsang Province, Tuesday. Korea Times photo by Lee Gyu-lee

JINJU, South Gyeongsang Province — Academics explored how entrepreneurs can turn artificial intelligence (AI)-driven disruption into business opportunities and solutions to social challenges at the 2026 Jinju K-Entrepreneurship International Forum.

The fourth session, held Tuesday, the second day of the forum, examined how individuals and organizations can navigate uncertainty and turn technological disruption into opportunities through experimentation, resilience and practical problem-solving.

Erkko Autio, chair in technology transfer and entrepreneurship at Imperial College London, pointed out that AI has dramatically lowered the technical and financial barriers to developing products, making the products themselves less effective as a source of competitive advantage.

"The bottleneck in entrepreneurship was that it required engineering capacity and money. But now AI has collapsed that constraint because anyone can now build whatever they desire," Autio said.

"So the competitive advantage now comes from the entrepreneurial journey, which takes time, and from the product itself that crystallizes all those learnings and takes time to build."

He noted entrepreneurs must validate customer needs before investing in product development, adding that identifying meaningful problems and applying technology to solve them will become increasingly important as AI capabilities evolve rapidly.

Arham bin Abdullah, vice-chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, advocated a similar approach, urging entrepreneurs to start small, learn from feedback and adapt rather than attempt to predict every outcome. He cited university research projects that turned local resources into commercial products and generated opportunities for farmers and industry.

"I believe universities cannot work alone. We need industry and communities. University brings knowledge, industry brings real problems, entrepreneurs bring new ideas and communities bring humanness," he said.

Yonam Institute of Technology President Ahn Seung-kwon said technological disruption creates opportunities only when people can learn, adjust and develop new sources of value.

"Our purpose stays the same, but the way to reach it can change," he said, emphasizing that workplace cultures should also support this change.

"People should be able to ask questions, share bad news and learn from other teams. We may allow failure, but that does not mean lowering goals or reducing accountability. It means reporting problems early enough to have time to fix them."

Yoshimoto Koji, an economics professor at Soka University, called for promoting K-entrepreneurship overseas through educational exchanges, joint environmental, social and governance projects and public outreach, saying its emphasis on human dignity and community responsibility offers an alternative to short-term profit-driven business models.

Lee Dae-woo, an associate professor at Columbus State University, highlighted international exchanges as a way to develop students' adaptability and judgment. He noted immersion in unfamiliar cultural settings encourages students to seek help, question assumptions and collaborate across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.



Orpha Jane, right, a political science professor at Parahyangan Catholic University in Indonesia, attends the fifth session of the 2026 Jinju International Forum on Entrepreneurship at Centennial Memorial Hall on the campus of Gyeongsang National University in Jinju, South Gyeongsang Province, Tuesday. Korea Times photo by Lee Gyu-lee

The last session brought together international academics to discuss how universities and businesses can promote entrepreneurship that drives not only economic growth but also human well-being, social inclusion and meaningful work.

Orpha Jane, a political science professor at Indonesia's Parahyangan Catholic University, argued that universities should build innovation ecosystems that bring together students, businesses and communities to tackle social challenges, rather than focus solely on producing startups.

"As academic institutions, we must ask ourselves: Are we simply building startup factories or are we developing human beings who can transform society?" she said. "We can no longer be passive; higher education institutions must become the primary transformation institutions of our country."

Noorshella Che Nawi, dean of the Malaysian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship and Business at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, said universities should combine academic knowledge with empathy and practical action to address real-world problems.

Yao Xin, secretary-general of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, called for international cooperation to develop practical guidelines for human-centered entrepreneurship, saying companies should equip employees with the skills and resources to contribute and expand opportunities for young people and small businesses.

“Standards cooperation can helpfully translate entrepreneurship into practical management actions, meaningful opportunities for young people and shared practices across countries,” he said.

Explore More

Q. How is artificial intelligence changing the competitive advantage for entrepreneurs?

Q. What approach did academics recommend for entrepreneurs facing uncertainty and rapid technological change?

Q. How can universities support entrepreneurship that addresses social challenges?