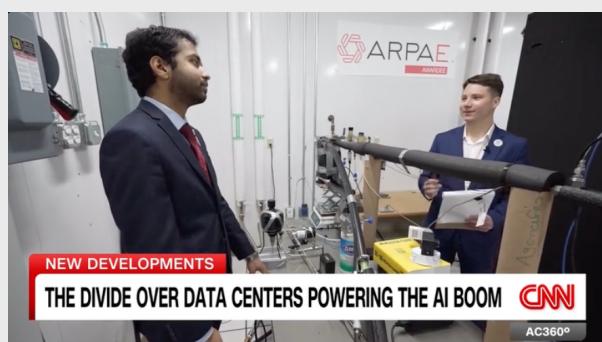
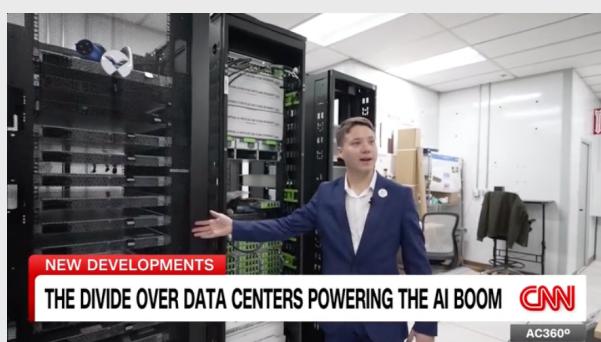
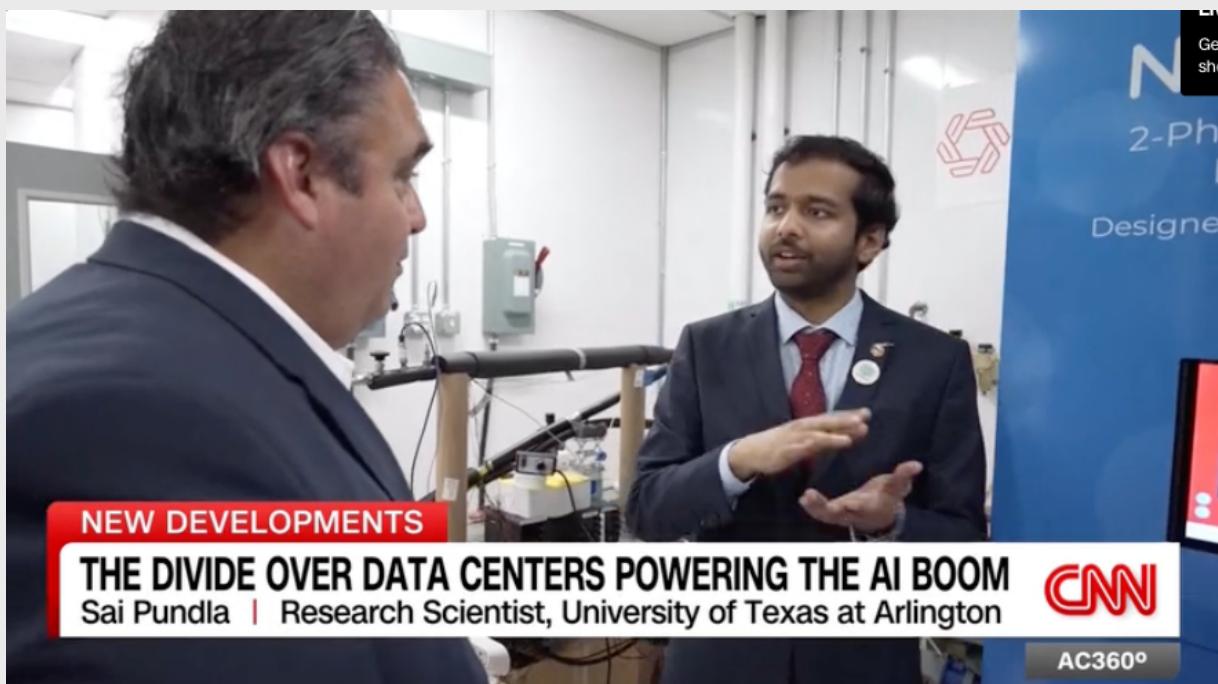


*Delivered to your inbox every Tuesday and Friday*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

**The divide over data centers powering the AI boom:** On [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360° on Dec. 23](#), national correspondent Ed Lavandera examined the rapid expansion of data centers in Texas and across

the country, driven by the rise of AI—and the growing pushback over their massive consumption of water and electricity. To explore potential solutions, Lavandera visited UTA and the lab of Dereje Agonafer, where he and his research team—including newly minted Ph.D. Sai Pundla (pictured above) and graduate student Braxton Smith (pictured left)—are working to significantly reduce the water needed to cool tens of thousands of servers operating inside modern data centers as part of the Department of Energy's COOLERCHIPS initiative.

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## EXPERT INTERVIEWS



**'No one has considered them': Families fight schools over special ed services:** Coordinated by the media relations team, Ambra Green (College of Education) spoke with the [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#) about how school districts work to place students with special needs in the least restrictive environment possible. Dr. Green said that's important because if students are placed in a setting that's more restrictive than necessary, they may miss out on instruction they would get in a general education classroom.

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**Here's why some North Texas cities want voters to decide to leave or stay in DART:** Julene Paul (College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs) spoke with [KERA](#) about the struggles of public transit nationwide. She said ridership dropped during the pandemic and still hasn't fully recovered. The [Denton Record-Chronicle](#) shared this story. In May, voters in Plano, Farmers Branch, Highland Park, and Irving will choose to stay in or leave Dallas Area Rapid Transit. Leaving DART could adversely affect residents with disabilities.



**UTA West to begin construction of first building, decide academic offerings in 2026:** Coordinated by the media relations team, Wayne Atchley, vice president for regional campuses, spoke with the [Fort Worth Report](#) about progress at UTA West. He said academic programs to offer at the far west Fort

Worth campus are being evaluated, and he is consulting with local leaders, chambers of commerce, and economic development partners to determine what will support the area's long-term needs.

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**Addressing homelessness in downtown Houston:** Hannah Lebovits (CAPPA) spoke with [KUHF](#) in Houston about the framework that city has put in place to address homelessness. In early 2026, a large shelter will open in east downtown, which Houston Mayor John Whitmire says will help end street homelessness, which officials define as moving people into permanent housing within 90 days of becoming homeless. "The framing of this as ending homelessness or, you know, functionally ending homelessness is just nonsense," Dr. Lebovits said.

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## MORE NEWS

### **This Tarrant County 12-year-old is a college sophomore with dreams of taking flight:**

Coordinated by the media relations team, the [Fort Worth Report](#) spoke with the Howard family, a three-generation Maverick family with a tradition of starting college at a young age. Matthew, 12, is studying aerospace engineering. "Most of my classmates treat me like I a normal college student. The only thing that stuck with me ... one classmate called me 'baby genius,' and it was kind of annoying."



### **Robotic arm made in North Texas could help in rehab and the workplace:** [The Seattle Times](#)

shared a story by [The Dallas Morning News](#) on the development of a robotic arm by researchers at UTARI. The soft robotic exoskeleton lightens the load—literally—by reducing strain on the arm and elbow. Hopes for the device are centered on improving the lives of people whose mobility has been limited by medical conditions such as a stroke or cerebral palsy. [Dallas Innovates](#) also shared the [UTA news release](#).

### **UTA, Texas A&M TEES Open Biomanufacturing Training and Research hub at Pegasus Park:**

[Dallas Innovates](#) shared a [UTA news release](#) on the National Center for Therapeutics Manufacturing satellite campus' ribbon cutting. The campus will strengthen North Texas' biomanufacturing workforce.

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**Dallas could be next for drone-first 911 response. Here's how Arlington does it:** A UTA study conducted by Jaya Davis (College of Liberal Arts), in partnership with the Arlington Police Department, was cited by [The Dallas Morning News](#) in an article examining whether drones could speed response times and reduce costs.

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**What to do when the holidays don't feel holly or jolly:** Coordinated by the media relations team, Tonya Hansel (School of Social Work) shared tips with [Axios Dallas](#) on how to reduce anxiety, set boundaries, and enjoy the holidays with less stress.

Some websites require registration or subscription before viewing the entire story.

This briefing is prepared by [UTA Media Relations](#). Send questions or comments to Joe Carpenter, chief communications officer, at [joe.carpenter@uta.edu](mailto:joe.carpenter@uta.edu), or Jeff Caplan, director of media relations, at [jeff.caplan@uta.edu](mailto:jeff.caplan@uta.edu).

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