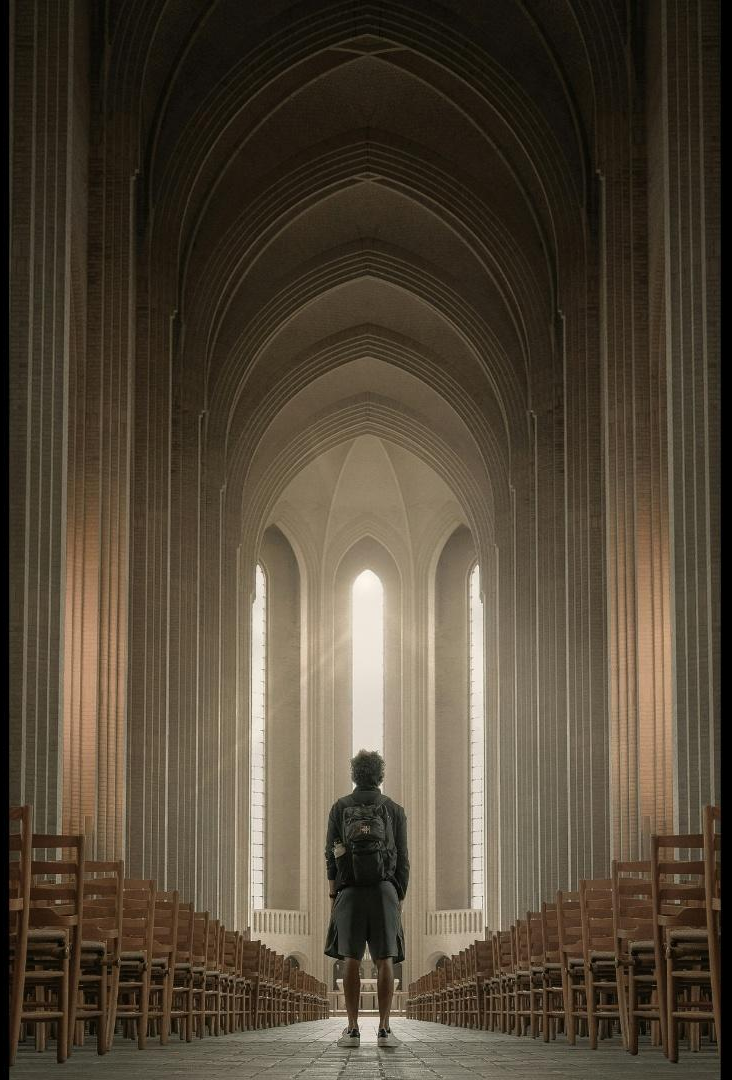


FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

How should universities prepare for this
growing phenomenon?

Brett Smith, Miami University (Ohio)





Recent estimates

180+ MILLION

F+E - GROWING PRACTICE

ENTREPRENEURS, FUNDS, ACCELERATORS & SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS



Hallow

Aruma
STRENGTH IN FREEDOM



Sovereign's
CAPITAL



CURRENT TOPIC. INDUSTRY LEADERS.



Illustration by Scott Anderson

Seeking God, or Peter Thiel, in Silicon Valley

When tech luminaries talk about their Christian faith, people listen.



Listen to this article · 17:50 min [Learn more](#)



WHY FAITH?

1

Prevalence

80%+ of world's population claim a faith affiliation

2

Centrality

To many, faith is most important factor in their lives

3

Base of Knowledge

Decades of research in foundational disciplines: psych, soc, & economics

4

Novel Answers

Informs questions not covered by economic & materialistic paradigm

Smith, McMullen & Cardon (2021). Toward a Theological Turn in Entrepreneurship: How religion could enable transformative research in our field. *Journal of Business Venturing*.



LIFE

LEADING THE INTEGRATION OF
FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CENTER FOR L.I.F.E.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY (OXFORD, OH)



THE PROBLEM

Challenges for Integrating Faith & Entrepreneurship in Higher Education



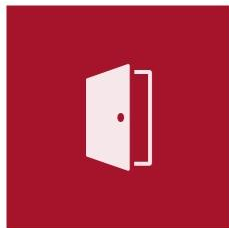
Researchers

CHOICE: Real or faith-based research.



Teachers

LIMITED: Ready to use content & experiences.



Students

LACK: knowledge & opportunities in F+E



Entrepreneurs

NEED: rigorous knowledge & workforce

PURPOSE

**L.I.F.E
CREATES ACADEMICALLY
RIGOROUS AND
PRACTICALLY RELEVANT
KNOWLEDGE AND
EXPERIENCES AT THE
INTERSECTION OF F+E.**



SOLUTION #1: RESEARCH



Create Research Viability:

Top 50 *Financial Times* Journals



Create a Research Pathway:

L.I.F.E. Research Conference

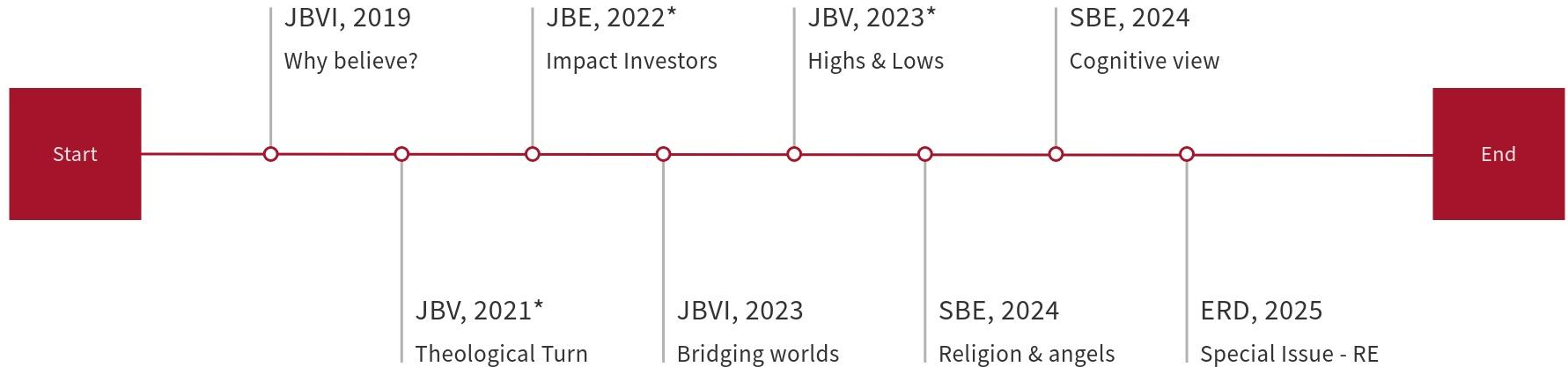


Create Opportunities:

Next Generation - Doctoral Students

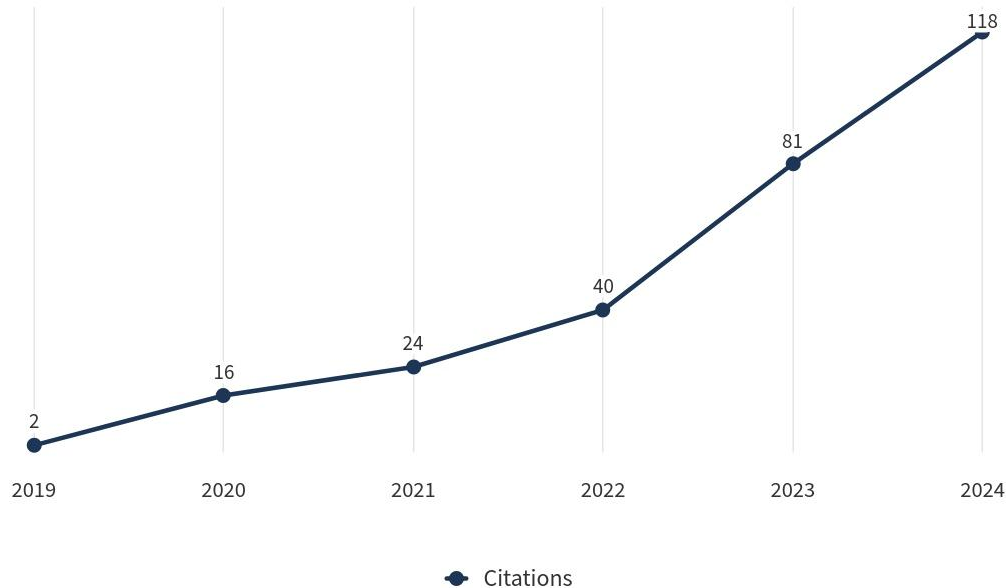
RESEARCH ON F+E - CENTER FOR L.I.F.E.

MODELING THE WAY



FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

L.I.F.E. PUBLICATION - CITATIONS



391%

Growth Rate - 2021 to 24

3 publications in top-tier ENT (JBV) and MGT (JBE) journals.

8 articles published since 2019

5TH L.I.F.E. RESEARCH CONFERENCE

1,000+

SCHOLARS

30+

COUNTRIES



"The LIFE Conference is critical because it introduces a conversation that is long overdue."

ROY SUDDABY, ENDOWED CHAIR

University of Victoria



"The LIFE Conference is an event we will look back on as the **creation of a new subfield** of entrepreneurship research."

TED BAKER, ENDOWED CHAIR

Rutgers University



"...one of the **most innovative and important research exchanges** to advance the field."

BECCA ARWINE, PHD STUDENT

University of Tennessee

(University of Cincinnati)



"...opened up **meaningful conversations and created legitimacy** for this area of research."

SEAN DWYER, PHD STUDENT

Baylor University

(University of Oklahoma)

2ND L.I.F.E. SOCIAL

August - Chicago, IL

2024



SPECIAL ISSUE

Faith & Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship & Regional Development

Coming out in 2026



TOOLS

ADVANCING RESEARCH ON F+E



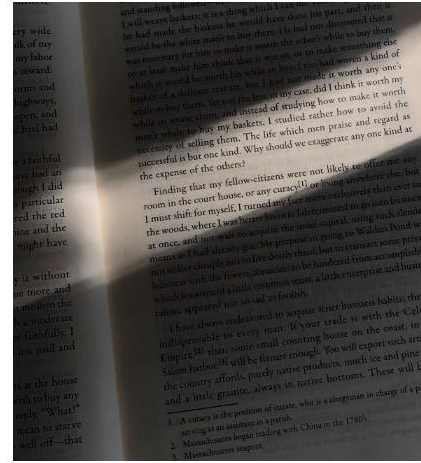
F+E Starter Kit

This guide serves as an onramp to the literature on F+E, including major topics, trends, and articles.



F+E Bibliography

The bibliography is an ongoing catalogue of the research in F+E in ABS 3 & 4 journals.



F+E Special Issues

Two special issues dedicated to F+E: *Small Business Economics* (2024); *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* (in process).

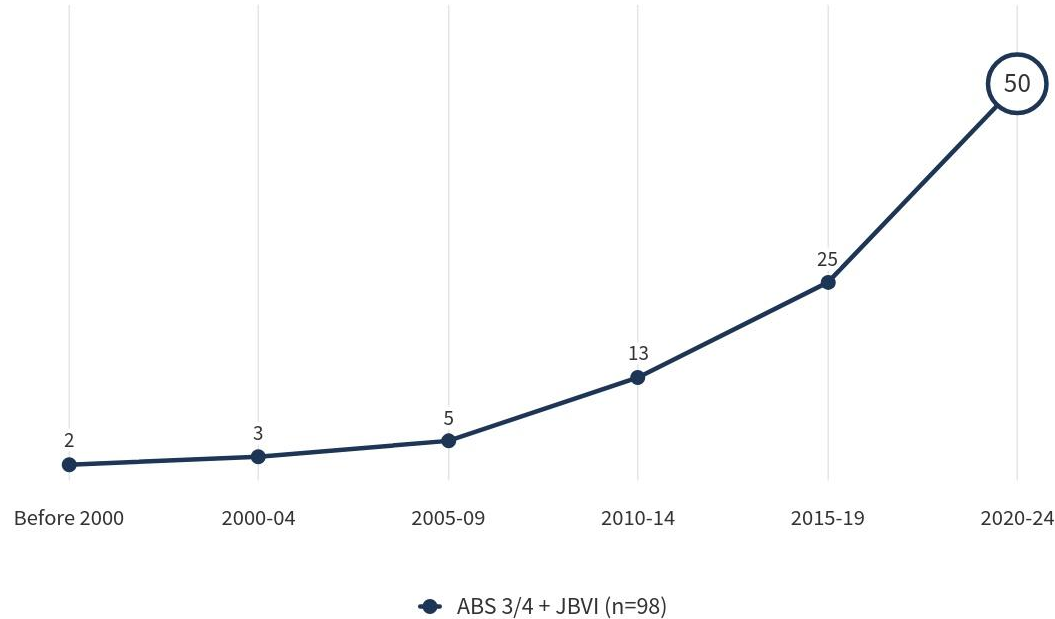


F+E Conference Videos

Videos are available from each session of the conference since inception on YouTube.

FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

TOP-TIER JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS



284%

Growth Rate - 10 years

51% of articles in last 5 years

11+ - each of last 4 years

CATALYZING A NETWORK

SOLUTION #2: TEACHING



100+

SCHOOLS ONE DAY
TEACHING ON
FAITH AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- 1 Course: F+E (4 yrs - public university)
- 2 Market research: Higher Ed
- 3 Develop knowledge sharing resources
- 4 Teaching Conference: Create & Share Teaching Content in Network

TEACHING

INITIAL COURSE ON FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Pilot course and content; assess demand and need for changes.

100% of alumni would recommend the course to a friend or family member!



Taught in Spring, 2021 - Special Topics

Offered every semester - 8 straight semesters

10+ guest speakers every semester



Content: F+E integration; calling; identity; success & failures; interacting with faith of others; opportunities; resource acquisition; different models of faith integration.

ADVANCING THE FIELD

3RD PH.D. SEMINAR ON FAITH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A one-day seminar to equip the best & brightest with the tools to publish in top-tier journals on F+E.



Launched in 2022 - before AOM Annual Meeting

Instructors have included: Melissa Cardon, Stephanie Fernhaber, Brett Smith & David Townsend.



Draws students from leading research universities:

Auburn, Baylor, Boston College, Indiana, Iowa State, Miss State, Oklahoma State, U of Alberta, U of Tennessee, U of Washington, among others.

Connects students around the world: Canada, England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Switzerland and the United States.

175

UNIVERSITIES

SURVEY OF HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE
(WEB-SEARCH & CALLS).

76

CONVERSATIONS

ONE ON ONE CONVERSATIONS TO
UNDERSTAND CURRENT PRACTICES.

3

FOCUS GROUPS

FOCUS GROUPS TO UNDERSTAND FUTURE
TEACHING NEEDS.

**“BUILDING A NETWORK...
FRAGMENTED SCHOOLS
& INITIATIVES.”**

Ashoka U Approach to SE



2023

SYLLABUS EXCHANGE

Launched initial knowledge
sharing platform for
universities - 30+ syllabi





2024 DEVELOPING PROTOTYPE OF F+E COURSE

Includes: readings, videos,
decks & teaching notes

1ST L.I.F.E. TEACHING CONFERENCE

20+ countries & 185+ participants - Best Practices, NOV 2024



EDUCATING A NEW GENERATION OF ENTREPRENEURS

SOLUTION #3: STUDENT EXPERIENCES & PLACEMENT



Today: Work with Global Partners to Expand Student Experiences



Tomorrow: Internship & Placement Network



Tomorrow: Co-curricular Student Groups



Tomorrow: Back Student Ventures



CONNECTING TO F+E ECOSYSTEM

2024 Pilot: 7 students from 5 universities

2025 Growth: 20 students from 15 universities

PLACEMENT NETWORK: CONNECTING STUDENTS AND F+E ORGANIZATIONS



2025

F+E STUDENT GROUPS

Re-launching Student Group model (template) to allow for scaling and dissemination across universities.



CONNECTING NETWORK

SOLUTION #4: ENTREPRENEURS



- 1 Academically rigorous, practically relevant knowledge
- 2 F+E workforce
- 3 Entrepreneurs as teachers & research options

RESEARCH TRANSLATION

ENTREPRENEURS SHARING WITH THEIR NETWORK

"Love these practical takeaways from the team at the Center for LIFE - after years of in-depth research on the topic of entrepreneurial identity."



Tim Metzner • 1st

Build, buy, and back companies to cr...

[Visit my website](#)

5d • 🌐

I've never had the data to back it up, but for years I've been pretty openly sharing that the three things that have had the greatest impact ...more



Center for L.I.F.E. (Leading the I...

865 followers

5d • 🌐

At L.I.F.E., we are working to translate research from the ecosystem of scholars addressing faith and entrepreneurship. To present ...more



You and 21 others

2 comments

EXPERIENCE
MATTERS

X15

LEADERS AND GROWTH



**Faith and Entrepreneurship: Keeping
Your Identity Through Career Transition**

RE

REFINERY VENTURES
NEWSLETTER

PROSPECTIVE FOUNDERS

"Jeffersonian Dinner" discussion on faith &
entrepreneurial identity research

OUR APPROACH



We have a strong base *doing* research *at* a research university.

We do research, we connect others to research, and we're at a research institution. This is unique in the faith & entrepreneurship space.



We only do faith and entrepreneurship in higher education.

All three are necessary for us to say yes. Faith. Entrepreneurship. Higher Education.



We're building a field.

We're not just building our own thing. We're here to catalyze a moment, build a field, and leave a lasting, systemic impact in collaboration with our partners.

OPPORTUNITY

70+% of college students identify as religious

2,000+ universities in U.S. with entrepreneurship programs



1%

F+E Teaching

100%

Entrepreneurship Curriculum

LEADERSHIP

The Team at the Center for L.I.F.E. at the John W. Altman Institute for Entrepreneurship at Miami University



**Brett
Smith**

*Founder &
Executive Director*

L.I.F.E. Endowed
Professor of
Entrepreneurship



**Jen
Bennett**

Director,
Teaching
Center for L.I.F.E.



Cory Driver

Director,
Research
Center for L.I.F.E.



**Tara
Hoppe**

*Associate
Director*
Center for L.I.F.E.



**Michael
Conger**

Research Faculty

Associate
Professor of
Entrepreneurship



**Jessica
Jones**

Research Faculty

Assistant
Professor of
Entrepreneurship



**Nathan
French**

Affiliate Faculty

Associate
Professor of
Comparative
Religion



**Jeff
Haanen**

Advisor
Center for L.I.F.E.

ADVISORY BOARD

Our advisors are top notch scholars, theologians and entrepreneurs in the field of faith and entrepreneurship.



Kenda Creasy Dean
Princeton Theological
Seminary



Angelique Johnson
Vissionaireum



Eric Johnson
Professor & Former Dean
Vanderbilt University



David Miller
Princeton University



Michaela O'Donnell
Fuller Theological Seminary



Dan Owolabi
Branches Worldwide

STRATEGIC ADVISORS

Our advisors are top notch scholars, theologians and entrepreneurs in the field of faith and entrepreneurship.



Jim Bechtold

Board, World Vision
Former CMO, P&G



Henry Kaestner

FDE & FDI
Sovereign's Capital



Jeff McMullen

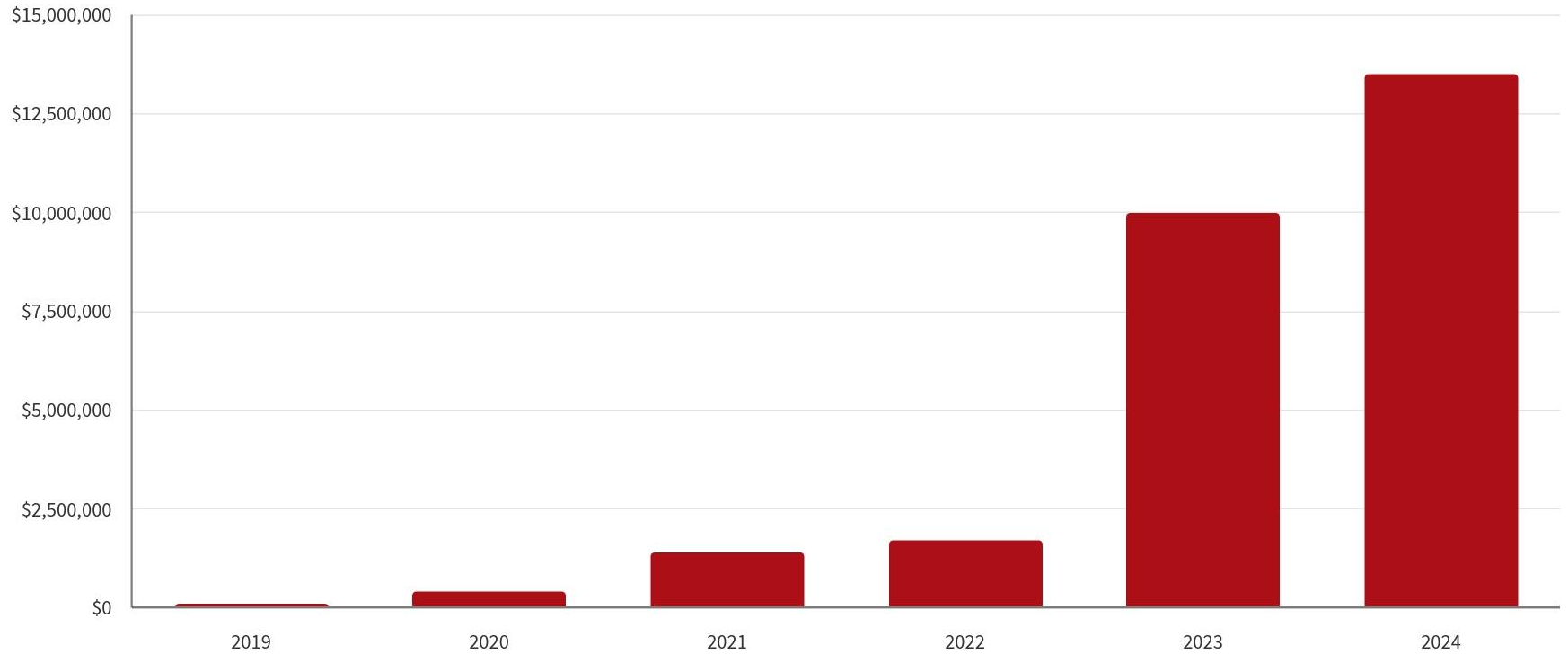
Indiana University
Editor, *Journal of Business Venturing*



Dan & Saroya Williamson

Williamson Family Foundation

FUNDING



CENTER FOR LIFE: 2025 U.S.A.S.B.E. EMERGING MODEL PROGRAM AWARD

"L.I.F.E. is a '*game changer*' in entrepreneurship."

-Dr. Don Kuratko, Jack Gill Chair,
Indiana University; Founder, GCEC





DEVELOPING PROGRAM ON F+E:

Building with and for others

- 1 Research: Starter Kit, Bibliography & Conference
- 2 Teaching: Course, Syllabus Exchange & Conference
- 3 Co-curricular: Pilot of student groups & CEF
- 4 Center: Partnering with select schools
- 5 Entrepreneurs: Research translation & consulting

PURPOSE

**L.I.F.E
CREATES ACADEMICALLY
RIGOROUS AND
PRACTICALLY RELEVANT
KNOWLEDGE AND
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INTERSECTION OF F+E.**

