

DISTANCE LEARNING & STUDENT SERVICES **NEWS**

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■ FACULTY LATEST TARGETS OF BIG TECH'S AI-IFICATION OF HIGHER ED

"A new partnership between OpenAI and Instructure will embed generative AI in Canvas. It may make grading easier, but faculty are skeptical it will enhance teaching and learning." (Source: Inside Higher Ed)

Read more [here](#).





IS THE 3-YEAR DEGREE DREAM BECOMING A REALITY?

“Colleges from Utah to Indiana and Maine are on track to offer three-year degrees in the near future. But the hesitations that have long plagued the movement haven’t disappeared.” (Source: Inside Higher Ed)

Read more [here](#).

DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER ON “GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION OUTCOMES USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) “

“As part of the U.S. Department of Education’s (Department’s) commitment to educational excellence, innovation, and opportunity for every learner, the Department is issuing this guidance regarding the use of formula and discretionary grant funds to support improved outcomes for learners through the responsible integration of artificial intelligence (AI).”
(Source: The Secretary of Education)

Read more [here](#).



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WCET UPDATE: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCE NEW RULES ON AI AND HIGHER ED POLICY

At the end of July, the Department of Education and the White House released information on two potentially important regulatory areas for digital learning: two rounds of negotiated rulemaking and Artificial Intelligence.

Negotiated Rulemaking

On July 24, 2025, the Department of Education released information on its intention to engage in [two negotiated rulemakings](#): one for student loan programs resulting from the recent passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and a second to focus on institutional and programmatic accountability, Workforce Pell, and Pell exclusions.

The Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) Committee will focus on changes to student loan programs and meet for two sessions, the first on September 29—October 3 and the second from November 3—November 7.

The Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Committee will focus on Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment, Workforce Pell, and exclusions to the Pell program. It will meet for two sessions, the first from December 8—December 12 and the second from January 5—January 9, 2026.

In preparation for negotiated rulemaking, the Department will hold a virtual public hearing on August 7, 9:00 AM -4:00 PM ET (with a 12:00-1:00 PM ET recess).

Artificial Intelligence

The Department of Education and the White House also released information and a request for public comment regarding Artificial Intelligence at the end of July.

The Department of Education released a [Dear Colleague Letter on “Guidance on the Use of Federal Grant Funds to Improve Education Outcomes Using Artificial Intelligence”](#) on July 22, 2025.

This DCL “encourages grantees to explore how AI can enhance teaching and learning, expand access, and support educators, without replacing the critical role they play” by providing information on:

- AI-Based High-Quality Instructional Materials
- AI-Enhanced High-Impact Tutoring
- AI for College and Career Pathway Exploration, Advising, and Navigation

It also lays out five principles for responsible use of AI: educator-led, ethical, accessible, transparent and explainable, and data-protective.

The Department also issued a request for public comment on the proposed rule, [“Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria: Secretary’s Supplemental Priority and Definitions on Advancing Artificial Intelligence in Education.”](#) The public is asked to provide comments by August 20, 2025, on proposed grant areas and the definitions associated with AI, including artificial intelligence literacy. Most of this proposed rule is focused on K-12 education, but it does include postsecondary education suggestions related to “expand[ing] offerings of AI and computer science into an institution of higher education’s general education and/or core” as well as embedding artificial intelligence and computer science into teacher education programs. Additionally, it advocates for the development of dual credit programs that allow students to “earn postsecondary credentials and industry-recognized credentials in artificial intelligence coursework concurrent with a high school education.”

Finally, the White House released [Winning the Race: America’s AI Action Plan](#), which focuses on three pillars:

1. Accelerate AI Innovations;
2. Build American AI Infrastructure; and
3. Lead in International AI Diplomacy and Security

Although most of this document is concerned with areas outside of higher education, it does include several higher education provisions focused on making AI skill development a core objective of education and workforce funding, with a special focus on career and technical education and industry-driven training programs.

INSTITUTION SPOTLIGHT: UCF LAUNCHES INSTITUTE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ADVANCE RESEARCH, TALENT DEVELOPMENT ACROSS DISCIPLINES

“The institute will unite more than two dozen world-class faculty across multiple colleges who are advancing foundational and applied artificial intelligence (AI) in areas like computer vision, robotics, machine learning, healthcare, finance and mathematics. By bringing AI-related faculty, students, research, and partners together, the institute will serve as a nucleus for collaboration, driving education and discovery with real-world impact.”

With focus on research, applications-translation partnerships and education-workforce talent development, the IAI will:

- Unite an initial 25 faculty across four colleges — the College of Business, College of Engineering and Computer Science, College of Medicine, and College of Sciences — leveraging UCF’s expertise and scale to promote a truly collaborative, multidisciplinary approach ...” (Source: UCF News)

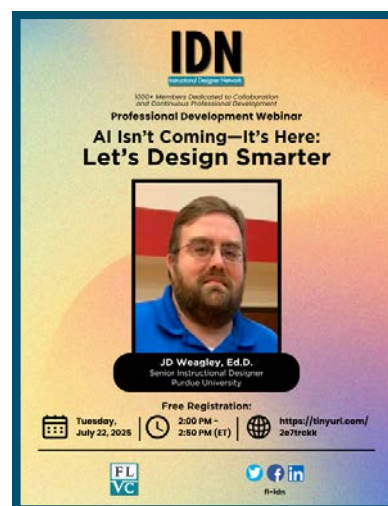
Read more [here](#).

FL-IDN LATEST WEBINAR: AI ISN'T COMING—IT'S HERE: LET'S DESIGN SMARTER

Last month, FL-IDN hosted the webinar, “[AI Isn't Coming—It's Here: Let's Design Smarter](#).” In this session, JD Weagley, Ed.D. (Purdue University), guided attendees as they explored how instructional designers can use AI tools to work smarter, not harder, allowing them to save time, spark creativity, and build more inclusive learning experiences. Attendees also walked through real examples of using AI for assessments, media, rubrics, and more. Many thanks to JD Weagley, Ed.D. for sharing their knowledge and experience with our IDN community.

In case you missed it, here are a couple resources below:

[Recording](#), | [Presentation Slides](#)



FL-IDN LATEST WEBINAR: SUPERCHARGE YOUR SLIDES: ACCESSIBLE POWERPOINT DESIGN

Earlier this week, FL-IDN hosted the webinar, “[Supercharge Your Slides: Accessible PowerPoint Design](#).” In this session, Steven Kolberg, MA (Florida SouthWestern State College), provided tips to equip attendees with the skills to level up their accessibility game in PowerPoint. Attendees also explored the power of the slide master and built-in checker tools to create truly inclusive presentations. Many thanks to Steven Kolberg, MA for sharing their knowledge and experience with our IDN community.

The recording and other resources related to this webinar will be sent to the FL-IDN and MCDLSS listservs as soon as they are made available.



FL-IDN UPCOMING WEBINAR: FROM PROMPT TO PRODUCT: REAL-WORLD AI TOOLS FOR EFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Later this month, FL-IDN will host the webinar, “[From Prompt to Product: Real-World AI Tools for Efficient Instructional Design](#).” This dynamic panel brings together five experienced instructional designers from a variety of ID industries to explore how artificial intelligence is transforming their daily workflows and enhancing productivity. Panelists will share real-world examples of AI integration, discussing specific AI tools they've successfully adopted for practical AI uses like ideation, outlining, assessment/rubric development, and image creation. Panelists will identify their preferred AI tools for ID tasks and the reasoning behind the tool selection, as well as any lessons learned from using AI in ID workflows. Participants will leave with actionable strategies for thoughtfully incorporating AI into their instructional design practice while maintaining learning effectiveness and academic and pedagogical integrity.

Moderators

Dr. Laura McNeill, University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL); Beth Brooks, Health HIV (Washington, DC/Daphne, AL)

Panel

Preston Ruddell, University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL); Ciera Cornelison, Brasfield & Gorrie (Birmingham, AL); Amy Bethke, Belmont University Medical School (Nashville, TN); Justine Burke, National Debt Relief (NYC/Louisville, Kentucky); Detra Allen, Rollins Pest Control (Atlanta, GA)

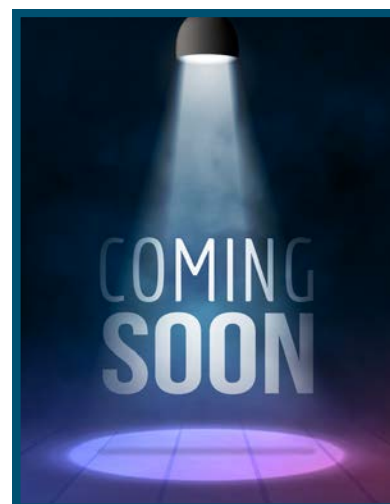
August 19, 2025 | 2:00 - 2:50 PM (ET) | Register for free [here](#).



FL-IDN UPCOMING WEBINAR: GENAI IN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: SURVEY FINDINGS ON ID USE, CHALLENGES, AND NEEDS

Next month, FL-IDN will host the webinar, “[GenAI in Instructional Design: Survey Findings on ID Use, Challenges, and Needs](#).” This presentation shares the results of a survey exploring how instructional designers (IDs) in higher education use generative AI (GenAI) in their practice. IDs use GenAI in online and blended course development (e.g., to develop materials) and also guide faculty on GenAI use for teaching. IDs identified several challenges with GenAI, including credibility, ethical, and academic integrity concerns. They reported struggling to keep up with rapidly evolving GenAI technologies and the need for various types of support to successfully implement GenAI at their institutions. Ariel Gunn (Johns Hopkins University), Swapna Kumar (UF), Margeaux Johnson (UF), and Albert Ritzhaupt (UF) will discuss the implications for their research for IDs and GenAI integration into teaching and learning processes at institutions of higher education.

September 16, 2025 | 2:00 - 2:50 PM (ET) | Register for free [here](#).



UP NEXT

■ FREE COLLEGE 101 WEBINARS COMING NEXT MONTH!

Registration is now open for September's free College 101 webinars!

This three-part series, "College 101: Plan Your Path After High School," is designed to help high school students and parents successfully navigate the various education paths after graduation.

Each webinar will cover a key step in the admission process: selecting an education path, creating an effective application, and various financial aid options. Experts in college admissions and financial aid will present the sessions and answer questions. Attendees can register for one, two, or all three webinars for free.

- **September 9:** Discover Your Shining Path: College, University, or Technical College?
- **September 16:** Make an Impression: How to Make Your Application Shine!
- **September 23:** Paying for College: How to Save Big, Stress Less, and Make College Affordable!

College 101 is presented through partnership with the Florida Department of Education, FloridaShines, Florida College Access Network, and numerous school districts across the state.

To learn more about College 101 and to register, please visit FloridaShines.org/college-101.

FloridaShines has free College 101 flyers to help you spread the word to your school's students and parents. Visit FloridaShines.org/promotion to order your flyers today!



Guest Speaker

Dr. Amanda Sterk, Method Learning



Guest Speaker

Jasey Bedoya, Path to College



Guest Speaker

Dr. Karemah Campbell Manselle,
University of Central Florida

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ARTICLE DIGESTS



PODCAST: EP. 167 - REIMAGINING ONLINE LEARNING

"In this episode, we're bringing you a conversation between Inside Higher Ed's senior editor for special content, Colleen Flaherty, and Stephanie Moore, an associate professor in organization, information and learning sciences at the University of New Mexico, from the Digital Universities event in Salt Lake City earlier this year. A leading researcher in online learning, Moore addresses what she sees is a false binary between in-person and online learning, arguing that more modalities means meeting more diverse student needs and keeps colleges nimble." (Source: Inside Higher Ed)

CHATBOT SAFETY STILL FALLS SHORT, PER A NEW ANALYSIS

"The most popular large language models still peddle misinformation, spread hate speech, impersonate public figures and pose many other safety issues, according to a quantitative analysis from a DC startup. The findings are mapped out in a risk and responsibility matrix developed by Aymara... To develop the tool, Aymara tested 20 different large language models, also known as LLMs. Popular chatbots like Claude, ChatGPT, Grok and Gemini were among those tested." (Source: Technical.ly)

CHATGPT 'STUDY MODE' FEATURE AIMS TO ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

"OpenAI has launched a new "study mode" feature on ChatGPT to help encourage "cognitive learning", in an attempt to address concerns that widespread AI use is damaging students' education. With some studies estimating nine in 10 students are using AI in their assessments less than three years since large language models were popularised, the tech giant said the "study mode" option will encourage students to "work through questions step by step, instead of just getting an answer." (Source: Times Higher Ed)

UNIVERSITIES MEETING FRACTION OF DEMAND FOR AI SKILLS TRAINING

"Interest in artificial intelligence training is soaring but only a fraction of the demand is being met by higher education, according to a new report. Nearly 57 million people in the US are interested in learning AI-based skills – with about 8.7 million currently learning it, the higher education marketing and research firm Validated Insights estimates. Two-thirds of them are doing so independently through videos, online reading and other learning resources and a third are doing so via a structured and supervised learning program. However, just 7,000 (0.2 percent) are learning AI via a credit-bearing program from a higher education institution." (Source: Times Higher Ed)

PHISHING ATTEMPTS TARGET US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANT PORTAL

"Cybersecurity solutions provider BforeAI's PreCrime Labs has identified a phishing campaign currently targeting education professionals. According to the company, malicious actors have spoofed the U.S. Department of Education's G5 portal. The portal, used for managing federal education grants and funding, requires users to log in with their credentials. The phishing campaign aims to harvest these credentials from users by imitating the G5 website's layout and login portal." (Source: EdTech)

THIS PHILLY ART MUSEUM BUILT ITS OWN EDTECH PLATFORM – NOW IT'S LICENSING TO FUND THE FUTURE

"The Barnes Foundation's Virtual Experience Platform lets students explore its collection through close-up, 360-degree views.... The museum's proprietary Virtual Experience Platform (VXP) brings its vast collection into the digital age. Students in its educational programming can see Claude Monet's brushstrokes up close and examine a Pierre-Auguste Renoir sculpture from every angle, with deep zoom and panoramas in tandem with class discussions. Now, the Penn Museum will gain access to the tech to help it make online classes more engaging, and the Barnes earns \$37,000 in annual fees." (Source: Technical.ly)

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MOVIE MUST-SEE: SUPERMAN

"When Superman gets drawn into conflicts at home and abroad, his actions are questioned, giving tech billionaire Lex Luthor the opportunity to get the Man of Steel out of the way for good. Will intrepid reporter Lois Lane and Superman's four-legged companion, Krypto, be able to help him before it's too late?"

(Source: [Rotten Tomatoes](#))



YOU GOTTA TRY IT: SE7ENBITES

"A large sign just off the street signals the entrance to this bakery-café. Its bright green structure is hard to miss; inside, diners will discover a large space with wood paneling and a corrugated metal ceiling. Another wall decked with Bundt cake pans makes for a cool design feature. This is an undoubtedly inviting spot, with a friendly staff that churns out hearty American-Southern dishes in big portions and small prices. The chicken biscuit is a tender-fried revelation spread with cream cheese and pepper jelly." Located on Primrose Drive in Orlando. (Source: [Michelin Guide](#))



FUN STUFF

SPINE-BENDERS:

"With a new month comes a new selection of must-read books heading to a shelf near you. As with every monthly pick, each of these books has been read, analyzed and loved by readers and booksellers alike, so now it's your turn to discover a new favorite.

This month you'll find inspiring fiction, a clever sci-fi tale and even some historical fiction for the kids." (Source: [B&N](#))

YOU GOTTA GO:

ST. GEORGE ISLAND STATE PARK

"St. George is a favorite destination for beachgoers, bird-watchers and anglers, offering spectacular Gulf of America sunsets and the best stargazing in the Panhandle. Miles of undeveloped beaches on this barrier island provide the perfect setting for the park, which offers ample opportunities for sunbathing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, boating, fishing, hiking, camping and nature study. On the gulf side of the island, enjoy perfect blue waters and miles of sugary white sands, and perhaps catch sight of a pod of dolphins." (Source: [Florida State Parks](#))

