DECEMEBER 11, 2025

Distance Learning and Student Services *News*

Top News

AI TOOL FROM MARYLAND GRADS TEACHES CASE STUDY RESPONSES

"The student-developed tool provides case study prompts for business students to improve their critical thinking and reduce cheating using generative AI."

(Source: Inside Higher Ed)

READ MORE HERE.

COLLEGE COMPLETION RATE HOLDS STEADY ABOVE 61%

"Earning college credit in high school made students more likely to graduate within six years, per the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center."

(Source: Higher Ed Dive)

READ MORE HERE.

WORKFORCE PELL NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING

This week, we've been following the U.S. Department of Education's Negotiated Rulemaking sessions for the new Workforce Pell program. Authorized in last summer's **"One Big Beautiful Bill Act,"** the program extends Pell eligibility to short-term (fewer than 600 instructional hours), workforce-aligned programs.

WCET and SAN are closely monitoring these discussions, particularly potential implications for interstate distance education and institutions with multi-state online enrollment.

For a helpful overview of the rulemaking process and its potential impact, see: **From RISE to AHEAD: What We Learned and What Comes Next in Federal Rulemaking - WCET**.

Updates

FLVC LATEST WEBINAR: A DEEP DIVE INTO SARA: A SPECIAL SESSION WITH THE NC-SARA NATIONAL TEAM

Earlier this month, FLVC hosted a webinar, "**A Deep Dive into SARA: A Special Session with the NC-SARA National Team**." This interactive session covered the history and purpose and address the nuances of SARA compliance, including professional licensure disclosures, out-of-state placements, and recent policy updates. Members got clarity on their institution's responsibilities and learned best practices directly from the source—our presenters, Dr. Marianne Boeke, President, NC-SARA and Jeannie Yockey-Fine, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, NC-SARA. This was a unique opportunity to strengthen our institutions' compliance efforts and to get answers to our most pressing questions.

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

FL-IDN LATEST WEBINAR: UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING: BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

Earlier this month, FL-IDN hosted a webinar, "**Universal Design for Learning: Building Accessibility from the Ground Up**." This session explored how to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles from the beginning of course design rather than retrofitting accessibility features after courses are complete. Participants examined the time and resource costs of the retrofitting approach and learn practical workflows that scale from individual documents to complete course components. Our guest speaker, Samantha Groh (University of Cincinnati), included demonstrations of tools and case study examples that illustrate accessibility implementation in real-world contexts, along with strategies for presenting accessibility as an enhancement that benefits all students. Many thanks to our guest speaker for sharing their expertise and experience with our community.

In case you missed it, here are a couple resources below:
Recording | **Presentation Slides**

TRANSIENT STUDENT ADMISSIONS APPLICATIONS SEE STEADY INCREASE

Transient Student Admissions Applications created for Fall 2025 (15,380) increased by 4.6 percent when compared to the Fall term last year (14,698). For the Spring 2026 term so far, applications (8,103) have increased 5 percent compared to the same period last year (7,714). At this point in the academic year there have been 23,830 applications created compared to the same time in 2024 (22,810), which is a 4.5 percent increase.

Thank you for supporting the mission of the Florida Virtual Campus and being a part of the Transient Admissions Application process to support your students.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Florida Virtual Campus Help Desk, throughout the semester, for further assistance.

INSTITUTION SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT AMONG THOSE THAT OPTIMIZE PERFORMANCE WITH AI

"At the University of Florida, soccer players meet with trainers to measure their hamstring flexibility, groin strength and overhead squat stability to prescreen them for injury risk. Football players arrive at practice wearing sensors that measure their speed, acceleration and force. And gymnasts jump from plates that measure their explosive power.

Then, this information—along with countless other **data points**—is fed into an artificial intelligence data bank.

UF is one of a growing number of schools bringing artificial intelligence into their athletics departments to give coaches and athletes an edge. Just as universities compete to build the biggest stadiums and best training facilities, they are now racing to plant their flags in the next frontier of sports analytics. While it is still early, AI adopters hope the technology will help prevent injuries, optimize performance and uncover winning strategies."

(Source: EdTech)

READ MORE HERE.

INSTITUTION SPOTLIGHT: UWF B.S. IN CYBERSECURITY AI SPECIALIZATION APPROVED AS A NATIONAL CENTER OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN CYBER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM OF STUDY

"The University of West Florida's new AI specialization in the B.S. in Cybersecurity program has been validated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Artificial Intelligence Program of Study from the National Security Agency through 2030. UWF was the second university across the country to receive this approval and one of only 6 out of the more than 495 NCAE-designated institutions across the nation to receive the new NSA NCAE Cyber AI program approval this year.

"This is another accolade to be added to the cybersecurity program at UWF," said Dr. Mohamed Khabou, dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering. "Being among the first institutions in the U.S. to receive this approval is a testimony to the quality of the program and the great synergy between the Department of Cybersecurity and Information Technology and the Center for Cybersecurity."

The NSA NCAE Cyber AI Program of Study validation is a new recognition honoring universities that demonstrate excellence in the integration of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity into their programs. The NSA NCAE Program created the new Cyber AI Program of Study validation to address the rapidly growing national need for qualified cybersecurity and AI professionals. UWF offers high-quality undergraduate and graduate cybersecurity degrees and certificates and is part of the inaugural cohort of institutions nationwide to receive the new Cyber AI Program of Study Approval."

(Source: UWF News)

READ MORE HERE.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE DLSS TEAM

As 2025 comes to a close and we look forward to the new year, we want to extend our sincere thanks to all of you for your unwavering commitment and collaboration to support the mission of Florida Virtual Campus and FloridaShines. This year marked another period of growth for FLVC and the Distance Learning and Student Services team.

We reached new heights as we continued to expand academic resources and advance initiatives to support student success. Our progress is a direct reflection of not only the hard work of our team, but the strength of our partnerships with you and the expertise you bring to the students and institutions you serve.

We're excited for the year ahead and the continued successes it will bring. May the break bring you peace, renewal, and times with those you cherish.

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a wonderful Holiday and Happy New Year from the DLSS Team!

Up Next

■ SURVEY ON FUTURE FL-SARA WORKSHOP

If you joined us last week for the NC-SARA Deep Dive Workshop, you may recall that we shared that we're partnering with our colleagues at FL-SARA within the Florida Department of Education to offer a follow-up workshop in late January or early February.

To help shape the content of that session, they would like your input and have developed a short survey to learn what topics you would find most valuable.

You can access the 2-minute survey here:
https://forms.gle/qfTiho5XtbNjCVMs6

We appreciate your feedback and encourage you to share your perspectives **no later than next Wednesday, December 17**.

FLVC TO HOST NATIONAL VOICES IN DIGITAL LEARNING SPEAKER SERIES EVENT ON DEC. 12 ■

In December, FLVC will host a webinar, "**Shaping the Future, Right Now: The Previous Year in AI and Higher Education Policy and Practice.**" This talk will examine the changing approaches to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in higher education over the past year. As college campuses transition from resistance to proactive deployment, AI and GenAI have become a cornerstone in how higher education envisions the future of education. This presentation will take up matters of policy, practice, infrastructure, and compliance in this shifting landscape.

Presenter: Dr. Sid Dobrin, Professor, University of Florida

December 12, 2025 | 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. (ET) | Register **here**.

FL-IDN UPCOMING WEBINAR: COULD AN AI AGENT TAKE MY ONLINE CLASS?

Next month, FL-IDN will host a webinar, "Could an AI Agent Take My Online Class?" This session will take a look at how a working group representing faculty, instructional design, IT, and administration set out to explore the potential of online courses to be disrupted by AI agents working on behalf of students. Rather than relying on theory alone, the group engaged in active experimentation. Through working sessions and honest dialogue, they surfaced practical, course-level strategies that may disrupt AI agents while enhancing the learning experience for students. Our guest speakers, Anna Haney-Withrow (Florida SouthWestern State College), Tim Mousel (Lone Star College), and Jillian Patch (Florida SouthWestern State College) invite others into the conversation, sharing design tactics and lessons learned from a collaborative inquiry into what it takes to keep humans at the center of online education.

Jan. 13, 2026 | 2:00 - 2:50 PM (ET) | Register for free **here**.

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.

FLVC TO HOST VIRTUAL MCDLSS MEMBER RESOURCE WEBINAR ON FEB. 12

A virtual orientation of the FLVC Members Council on Distance Learning and Student Services will be held on Monday, February 12 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. on Microsoft Teams. Registration for virtual attendees is free, and any member is welcome to participate. This is a great opportunity for members, new and old, to learn about the benefits of membership, their responsibilities, FLVC services and resources, key distance learning state and federal statutes and regulations, current contracts and agreements, and much more.

This event will be recorded, and a link to the recording will be shared via the listserv at a later date.

To register, go **here**. We hope to see you there!

SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE TO HOST SPRING MCDLSS MEETING ON FEB. 25-26, 2026

A regular meeting of the FLVC Members Council on Distance Learning and Student Services will be held on Wednesday, February 25 from 1 - 5 p.m. and Thursday, February 26 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at South Florida State College's main campus in Avon Park, Florida. Registration for in-person attendees will be $60.00, and a separate email notification with further instructions will be sent to the members council as soon as the credit card link becomes available.

We're looking forward to seeing each of you again!

SAN Box

■ IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: SAN RELEASED A NEW "HOW TO" HANDBOOK TO BUILD AN INSTITUTION'S STATE-TO-STATE AUTHORIZATION PLAN

The State Authorization Network (SAN) is excited to share SAN's newest comprehensive resource, the State-to-State Institutional Approval for Distance Education Handbook, developed in partnership with Shari Miller, Institutional Compliance MATTERS.

This handbook is the third major SAN report designed to demystify complex compliance requirements when institutions offer interstate opportunities, whether through online courses or experiential learning.

All three major reports align with SAN's concise one-pagers and charts available in the **Getting Started with Compliance Management Gateway** on the SAN website, so institution teams can develop practical action.

■ THE WCET AND SAN POLICY TRACKER

We are pleased to promote the policy tracker developed by WCET and SAN for digital learning policy.

The **WCET and SAN Policy Tracker** provides a centralized resource for timely updates on federal statutes, regulations, guidance, judicial actions, and executive orders relevant to the digital learning community.

More policy items and resources will be added at a later time.

■ FLVC STATE AUTHORIZATION LISTSERV

As a reminder, the Florida Virtual Campus provides an annual group membership to the State Authorization Network (SAN) for all Florida College System (FCS) and State University System (SUS) institutions. Since 2011, SAN—a division of WCET—has been a national leader in providing guidance, professional development, and support on regulatory compliance for out-of-state activities of postsecondary institutions.

You may access the **SAN Member Portal here**.

Username: Florida Virtual Campus | **Password**: SANhelps1819

Article Digests

THE AI TEAMMATE: THREE ROLES TO BUILD STUDENT AI FLUENCY

"AI is now embedded in teaching and learning. As educators, how do we help students benefit from AI without slipping into dependency, surface-level work, or ethical misconduct? I've found a helpful way to clarify conversations with students (and with myself) by thinking of AI as a teammate (or teammates) with clearly defined roles: the Tasker, the Draftsmith, and the Facilitator…" (Source: **Faculty Focus**)

IMMERSIVE AI AND VR EXPERIENCES BRIDGE THE SKILLS GAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

"Higher education IT decision-makers often talk about hardware specs, endpoint security and the networking backbone that keeps digital classrooms running smoothly. But the University of North Carolina Greensboro's immersive learning environment, powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR), was more than a proof of concept. It focused on building students' skills to prepare them for professional success…" (Source: **EdTech Magazine**)

THIS NEW COST COMPARISON TOOL TRIES TO ACCOUNT FOR ANY POSSIBLE EXPENSE

"Niche's True Cost resource includes the price of doing laundry on campus, taking a spring break vacation and buying a laptop. Its goal is to demystify the cost of college, though some experts say it's not accurate for all families…" (Source: **Inside Higher Ed**)

BEYOND THE HYPE: TRANSFORMING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP CULTURE IN THE AGE OF AI

"While most higher education leaders focus on AI's operational benefits — and rightfully so — the deeper transformation lies in how artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping what it means to learn, teach, and lead in the 21st century. The question isn't just whether institutions can keep pace operationally; the real challenge is whether we can maintain academic rigor and cultivate critical thinking in an AI-enhanced world while fostering the leadership culture necessary for sustainable transformation…" (Source: **Campus Technology**)

A NEST FOR ONLINE LEARNING: SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL EDUCATION

"Online nursing education benefits from a supportive nurturing, esteeming, supporting with sensitive listening, and trust-building (NEST) environment. Through personalized outreach, recognition of strengths, compassionate flexibility, reflective activities, and clear, consistent communication, faculty foster connection, confidence, resilience, and trust in virtual classrooms. These strategies not only help students manage the unique challenges of online learning but also cultivate professional values such as empathy, collaboration, and integrity. The NEST framework prepares learners to carry these habits and mindsets into their future careers, enriching their interactions with colleagues, clients, and communities across any field…" (Source: **Faculty Focus**)

OVER 1 MILLION DIGITAL BADGES ON OFFER IN THE U.S.

"A new report from Credential Engine found that out of the 1.8 million credentials offered across the country, digital badges and certificates dominate… The report, released Tuesday, is the fifth in a series tracking the ever-growing variety of credentials and providers cropping up across the country…" (Source: **Inside Higher Ed**)

MOVIE MUST-SEE:
JAY KELLY

"The new film from Academy Award nominee, Noah Baumbach, follows famous movie actor Jay Kelly (George Clooney) and his devoted manager Ron (Adam Sandler) as they embark on a whirlwind and unexpectedly profound journey through Europe. Along the way, both men are forced to confront the choices they've made, the relationships with their loved ones, and the legacies they'll leave behind."

(Source: **Rotten Tomatoes**)

Fun Stuff

YOU GOTTA TRY IT:
JOJO'S SHAKEBAR ORLANDO

"JoJo's ShakeBAR Orlando will transform into a Winter Wonderland complete with festive fare, fun events and sparkling decor from Nov. 14, 2025 – Jan. 4, 2026. The popular Pointe Orlando eatery will feature nearly a dozen specialty items like the Winter Wonderland Biggie Shake, Peppermint Party Hot Chocolate, Santa's Sangria (served in a boot) and Rudolph's Hot Chocolate Flight.

They'll also host Holly Jolly Mixology courses and three holiday dining events in the leadup to Christmas Day. Options with food include Ornament Painting, Gingerbread Decorating, or Photos With Santa, all of which include enjoy your choice of entree and a Winter Wonderland Biggie Shake or Biggie Hot Chocolate."

(Source: **Visit Orlando**)

YOU GOTTA GO:
GINGERBREAD EXTRAVAGANZA

"Jacksonville's 23rd Annual Gingerbread Extravaganza Experience will feature the beloved gingerbread exhibit—now in its new home at the Haskell Building of the Jacksonville History Center (318 Palmetto Street)—along with a holiday gift shop and special events including Kids Day and Gingerbread by Candlelight."

(Source: **The Jacksonville History Center**)

SPINE-BENDERS:
MONTHLY PICKS FOR DECEMBER

"Our monthly picks for November and December are here, and they are brimming with mystery, intrigue, magic and adventure. Espionage, code-breaking and post-apocalyptic worlds await beyond these pages. From secret portals to curious disappearances and WWII stories, we've rounded up a list of books that are worth your time. Whether you're craving chilling suspense or a new YA favorite, find them here." (Source: **Barnes & Noble**)