

DISTANCE LEARNING & STUDENT SERVICES NEWS



TOP NEWS

Small Gain in Undergrads Lifts the Latest Spring Enrollment Numbers

“[Enrollment crept up to 18.6 million students this spring](#), a mere 1 percent increase over 2025. The small gain mirrored growth seen in fall 2025 and was again driven by undergraduate students, mainly at public institutions, according to the latest data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Spring enrollment at community colleges grew by 3 percent and at public four-year institutions by 1.5 percent...”

(Source: University Business)



‘All or Nothing’ Approach to AI ‘Risks Shutting Down Innovation’

“[Banning the use of artificial intelligence \(AI\) in higher education risks shutting down conversations about how to innovate in pedagogy](#), according to a learning expert at Google Deepmind. Miriam Schneider, director of learning initiatives in the technology firm’s main AI research division, said that AI does not have to ‘change pedagogy’ but instead can ‘reinforce it.’ As many universities grapple with how best to approach the use of AI in assessments and learning, the “confrontation” between “what should remain uniquely human” and what can be done by AI ‘can have a meaningful role to play,’ she told *Times Higher Education*.”

(Source: Inside Higher Education, Times Higher Education)



Why Has Youth Unemployment Risen So Dramatically? It May Not Be AI.

“[Remote work may explain up to 64 percent of the recent rise in unemployment among recent college graduates](#), according to an analysis from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Researchers compared unemployment rates among younger and experienced workers in “remotable” jobs — those that can easily be done remotely — and “non-remotable” jobs, finding that younger workers’ unemployment rate went up one percentage point in remotable jobs, while older workers’ unemployment rate in those jobs slightly declined. Younger workers’ unemployment rate fared better in non-remotable occupations, researchers found.”

(Source: Higher Ed Dive)





DLSS UPDATES

FL-IDN’s June 2026 Webinars Promoted AI in Education Awareness

Earlier this month, FL-IDN hosted a webinar, “Lights, Camera, AI: Accelerating Course Design with Generative Tools,” that explored how a cross-functional team of learning designers and media specialists leveraged generative AI tools to design and develop a Spring 2025 course. The team utilized platforms like ChatGPT and HeyGen to develop key course assets, from course mapping and script writing to video production. Generative AI supported the creation and refinement of the course description, learning outcomes, weekly objectives, and video scripts.

With HeyGen, the media team produced high-quality video segments using minimal input from faculty, overcoming one common barrier in content development: instructor availability for on-camera work. This presentation shared behind-the-scenes insights into the collaborative process, highlighted how each tool was used at different phases, and reflected on the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI tools into course development workflows.

Brianna Stines (University of Notre Dame) was our guest speaker.

- [Watch the recording.](#)
- [View the presentation slides.](#)

Earlier this week, FL-IDN hosted a second webinar, “Generative AI Meets Active Learning.” Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and others are creating new opportunities to enrich active learning environments. In this webinar, attendees explored practical ways instructional designers and educators can integrate AI into student-centered learning experiences that foster engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Participants also examined strategies for designing AI-supported activities while maintaining the essential human element in teaching and learning. Through real-world examples and thoughtful implementation practices, attendees gained ideas for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of online learning.

Dr. Gloria Washington (University of South Carolina) was our guest speaker.

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.

FAU Receives \$1 Million Gift for AI Engineering Learning Lab

[“Florida Atlantic University has received a \\$1 million gift from the Levine Family Foundation to establish the Michael R. Levine AI-Enabled Hands-On Engineering Lab at the College of Engineering and Computer Science.](#) The lab will offer students practical artificial intelligence experiences, with a focus on real-world challenges, applied learning and career readiness.

“The foundation is pleased to be joining with Florida Atlantic University to help train students at the forefront of AI technology innovation,’ said Michael Levine, president of the Levine Family Foundation. ‘As AI becomes more integrated, it is even more important that students are prepared as they enter the workforce.’

The lab will give students the opportunity to develop skills using AI applicable to their educational and career goals. They will gain experience applying AI knowledge in practical settings, engaging with emerging technologies responsibly, and working closely with faculty on experiential learning projects.”

(Source: FAU News Desk)

Tallahassee State College Named Finalist for Aspen Prize

[Tallahassee State College last week was named one of 10 finalists for the \\$1 million 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.](#)

According to a press release from the Aspen Institute, the Aspen Prize “honors colleges that achieve strong outcomes, focusing on whether students complete credentials that lead to bachelor’s attainment and jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.”

The Aspen Prize is awarded every two years.

(Source: Aspen Institute)

FLVC RSI Website is Live

On behalf of the Regular & Substantive Interaction (RSI) Website Workgroup, [we are excited to share that the FLVC RSI website is now live!](#)

Developed through the collaborative expertise of colleagues at key institutions across Florida's higher education community, this portal serves as a vital guide for instructors, instructional designers, and administrators working to ensure compliance with federal distance education standards. By clarifying the critical differences between interactive distance education and self-paced correspondence courses — a distinction vital for maintaining Title IV financial aid eligibility — the hub offers practical tools, legal frameworks, and implementation guidelines. This collaborative initiative aims to move beyond simple regulatory compliance, empowering educators to foster dynamic, faculty-initiated engagement that directly boosts student success and learning outcomes.

We would like to recognize and thank the current members of the RSI Website Workgroup:

- Kevin Corcoran, University of Central Florida
- Nashla Dawahre, FLVC
- Rozalind Jester, Florida SouthWestern State College
- Golf Kanjanapongpaisal, Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Carleigh Okwali, University of South Florida
- Josh Strigle, College of Central Florida
- Sarah Michael Trupiano, FLVC

Thank you again for your partnership and commitment.



UP NEXT

FL-IDN's Upcoming Webinars Will Promote the Learner-Centered Approach

Next month, FL-IDN will host a lightning round webinar with two presentations, “Bear-ing the Load Together: Collaborative Course Design for Impactful Online Learning” and “Your Crystal Ball is Broken: Why Student Behavior Still Surprises Us.”

For the first presentation, join a dynamic dialogue between learning experience designers and lecturers as they share how collaborative partnerships, shared frameworks, and values-driven processes have led to innovative, high-quality course designs — both for new courses and redesigned ones. Grounded in instructional design principles and adult learning theory, this session will showcase practical examples that reflect a strong commitment to student-centered learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and accessibility. Participants will walk away with research-based strategies and course development practices they can apply or adapt within their own institutions.

Lindsey Morris, Kristen Risinger, Ryann N. Shelton, and Leanne Howell (Baylor University) will be our guest speakers.

For the second presentation, join a discussion that uncovers a surprising complexity in the way we think and act. Anyone can be lazy in certain circumstances; high-performing students can still have gaps in their understanding; and unmotivated students can demonstrate great focus and enthusiasm in unlikely scenarios. It's not unusual to hear student behavior defined by these supposed personality traits. These statements speak to the frustrations of many instructors but fail to provide a workable solution. The implicit conclusion is that it's just the way students are. In this session, participants will look at research in neuroscience and human behavior to better understand these complexities in order to create workable solutions for their students.

Caitlin Malone (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) will be our guest speaker.

- July 7, 2026
- 2:00 – 2:50 PM (ET)
- [Registration is free.](#)

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.

Later next month, FL-IDN will host another webinar, “Revolutionizing Learning with Interactive Avatars.” Imagine immersive learning environments where lifelike avatars simulate real-world scenarios, adapting their words, tone, and emotions in real time. These generative AI-driven avatars move beyond scripted responses, allowing learners to engage in dynamic, authentic role play that fosters empathy, critical thinking, and practical skill development. From healthcare to leadership training, they offer diverse, flexible opportunities across disciplines and delivery modes. This session explores how to design hyper-realistic avatars that reflect complex traits like emotion, unmet needs, and conflict — breaking from AI’s traditional helpfulness. Learn best practices for avatar creation, integration strategies, and methods to boost learner engagement and performance, equipping learners for high-stakes real-world challenges.

John Bellotti and Rebecca McLagan (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh) will be our guest speakers.

- July 21, 2026
- 2:00 – 2:50 PM (ET)
- [Registration is free.](#)

The recordings and other resources related to these webinars will be sent to the FL-IDN and MCDLSS listservs as soon as they are made available.



SAN BOX

SARA Institution Application: Effective July 1, 2026

The [Application and Approval Form for Institution Participation in SARA](#) has been updated, and the new version will be effective July 1, 2026. Through June 30, 2026, please use the current application.

To easily identify the updates and changes you will find a “redline version” of the July 1, 2026 institution application on the NC-SARA website. The latest SARA policy can be found in the [SARA Policy Manual](#).

- New disclosure requirement per [PMP25-0746: Submitting Teach Out Plans to States](#)
- Added language to the preamble at the beginning of the application per [PMP25-0750: SPE's Ability to Review a New Institution Applicant](#)
- New disclosure requirement per [PMP25-0751: Provisional Status Disclosure](#)
- New disclosure requirement per [PMP25-0753: SPE Notification of Changes to FRC Scores](#)

The current institution application will be utilized as long as it is either emailed to your SPE by 11:59 PM (MT) no later than June 30, 2026 or postmarked by June 30 if mailed to the SPE. Beginning on July 1, 2026 at 12:00 AM (MT), the updated institution application must be used.

Below is an example of an institution that is renewing during this application transition period.

Example:

XYZ University — Participation Period: July 2, 2025 to July 2, 2026.

1. Their renewal period opens 90 days before July 2, 2026, which is April 2, 2026.
2. As of April 2, 2026, the institution can submit their renewal application to the SPE.
3. If the institution submits to the SPE by June 30, 2026, they will use the current application.
4. If the institution submits on July 1, 2026, or after, they will use the updated application.

Please contact your [SARA State Portal Entity \(SPE\)](#) with any questions.

Program Integrity and Institutional Quality Rulemaking: Effective July 1, 2026

- Final Rules: [Program Integrity and Institutional Quality: Distance Education and Return of Title IV, HEA Funds](#) (published January 3, 2025).
- 34 CFR 600.2: Definition of Distance Education Course (effective July 1, 2026).
- 34 CFR 668.41(h): Distance Education Enrollment Data Reporting to National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) (effective July 1, 2026, but reporting not due until July 1, 2027).
- [December Federal Rulemaking Activity — New Final Regulations & Withdrawn Provisions](#); WCET *Frontiers*; January 7, 2025).
- WCET and SAN Policy Tracker: [Federal Regulations](#).

PSLF Committee Rulemaking: Effective July 1, 2026

- Prominent Issue: focus is on the definition of a qualified employer for a student to be eligible for public service loan forgiveness, excluding organizations that engage in activities deemed to have a “substantial illegal purpose.”
- Final Rule — [William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan \(Direct Loan\) Program — Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\) program under 34 CFR 685.219](#) (published October 31, 2026).
- [Live Webinars and Virtual Office Hours — OBBBA-Implementing Regulations Training Series May through July 2026](#).
- Training opportunities to implement regulations developed by the RISE and AHEAD rulemaking committees.

RISE Committee Rulemaking: Effective July 1, 2026

- Prominent issue: Definition of Professional Student for the purpose of loan limitations.
- Final Rule — [Reimagining and Improving Student Education: Federal Student Loan Program](#) (published May 1, 2026).
- Two lawsuits have been filed challenging the professional degree limitations.
- WCET and SAN Policy Tracker: [Federal Regulations](#).

AHEAD Committee - Pell/Workforce Pell Rulemaking: Effective July 20, 2026

- Prominent issues: Pell Grant limitations when non-federal aid fully covers cost of attendance and the new Workforce Pell Program parameters and implementation.

- Final Rule — [Accountability in Higher Education and Access Through Demand-Driven Workforce Pell: Pell Grant Exclusion Relating to Other Grant Aid; and Workforce Pell Grants](#) (published May 19, 2026).
- State Agency Comment Request: [Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Comment Request; State Workforce Pell Program Certification](#); Comment Deadline July 1, 2026.
- [Workforce Pell Final Rules: Turning Policy into Practice for the Digital Learning Community](#); WCET Frontiers; May 29, 2026.
- WCET and SAN Policy Tracker: [Federal Regulations](#).

AHEAD Committee - Accountability Rulemaking: Expected July 2026

- Prominent issue: Accountability measures to be applicable to all institutions regardless of sector.
- Final Rules — Undersecretary Kent indicates publication by July 1, 2026.
- Expedited effective date; due to statutory direction and will be stated in the final regulations.
- Proposed regulations: [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking — Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell: Student Tuition and Transparency System \(STATS\) and Earnings Accountability](#) (Published April 20, 2026).
- WCET and SAN Policy Tracker: [Federal Regulations](#).

Florida State Authorization Network Listserv

FLVC has launched the Florida State Authorization Network Listserv to help institutional contacts stay informed with timely updates, alerts, and developments related to state authorization. We also encourage you to use this Listserv to ask questions, share resources, and exchange best practices with your colleagues across the state. 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. FLVC has periodically hosted SAN representatives at Members Council meetings to share expertise and insights.

- [SAN Member Portal Access](#)
- **Username:** Florida Virtual Campus
- **Password:** SANhelps1819



ARTICLE DIGESTS

Survey: Americans View AI Use on Campus as Important, Yet Remain Skeptical

“Americans generally believe that it is important for colleges to incorporate artificial intelligence into their curriculum, yet they remain skeptical about whether it’s possible to do so without threatening the overall quality of students’ education, [a new survey from Quinnipiac University shows.](#)”

(Source: Inside Higher Education)

AI Agents in Education: What’s Working and What’s Missing

“Some experts predict the fastest growth in agentic AI for education will take place in areas where the value is clear, like advising and administrative workflows. Farther out, [an expert] sees a future in which agents act as research collaborators and teaching assistants. [As agentic AI expands, experts say training staff on responsible use will be key and should be incorporated into professional development efforts around AI.](#)” (Source: Government Technology)

Meta Expands into Physical AI with Acquisition of Robotics AI Startup

“[Meta Platforms has acquired Assured Robot Intelligence \(ARI\), a robotics artificial intelligence startup focused on humanoid systems,](#) as the company expands its AI work beyond software and into models that could help robots operate in physical environments.... ARI works on robotic intelligence intended to help robots understand, predict, and adapt to human behavior in complex settings.”

(Source: Campus Technology)

Turnitin Adds Customizable AI Assistance to Support Different Assignments, Grade Levels

[“Turnitin has introduced new customizable settings Turnitin Clarity's built-in AI assistant, enabling instructors to specify AI's role and response complexity for each assignment.](#) The granular controls allow instructors to define what responsible use of AI looks like, whether it's used for brainstorming, outlining, proofreading, or structural support, the company explained in a news release. Instructors can also select from three levels of AI response complexities — Foundational, Standard, or Advanced — to best suit student grade levels and disciplines. In addition, a preview tool provides teachers with example interactions ‘to ensure that every AI-driven output directly supports their pedagogical goals,’ the company said.” (Source: Campus Technology)

What It Really Means to Put Students First in Higher Education

“Putting students first appears constantly in institutional rhetoric but rarely shows up in institutional policy, a gap two higher education leaders address from different angles with a shared focus on the more than 40 million Americans who hold some college credit and no degree. The executive director of distance education at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications argues that online education can be an equalizer for working professionals, caregivers, veterans, and career-changers. [Institutions should examine their enrollment practices, credit transfer policies, and advising structures, discussing openly with prospective students about whether enrolling actually aligns with their goals rather than enrolling for enrollment's sake...](#)” (Source: The EDU Ledger)

What the Canvas Cyberattack Revealed About Higher Education’s Digital Dependence

“Technology in general, and the LMS in particular, is not going away. It is a critical tool for all faculty, but especially for faculty teaching online courses. [We must find a path forward for when technology fails, because it is not a question of if, but when.](#) Some critics believe that ed tech exists to line the pockets of vendors, but we know that these technologies, including the LMS, can expand educational access. The truth is that in those “good old days” before technology, you had to physically show up on campus, and hundreds of thousands of learners didn’t have that luxury...” (Source: WCET Frontiers)

Accreditation Reform Takes Shape: What the Consensus Draft Means for the Digital Learning Community

“Accreditation is not typically front-page news in digital learning circles, but the latest federal rulemaking effort could reshape how our community operates for years to come... While the draft rules will focus on the implications for accreditors, institutions should pay close attention as well. The proposed framework could prompt accreditors to revisit and revise their standards... [For the digital learning community, the draft regulations repeatedly signal that accreditors should avoid creating unnecessary barriers...](#)”

(Source: WCET Frontiers)



FUN STUFF

Movie Must-See: Disclosure Day

“Steven Spielberg tackles aliens again in *Disclosure Day*... The first reviews are now online and very positive, with some saying it’s the director’s best movie in years. [Emily Blunt also gives one of the best performances of her career as a meteorologist drawn into a government conspiracy to hide evidence of decades’ worth of extraterrestrial sightings and contact.](#) The majority of reviews recommend it as a thrilling yet hopeful blockbuster from the filmmaker who defined the summer movie season a half-century ago.” Now showing in theaters.

(Source: Rotten Tomatoes)



You Gotta Try It: Runabout Brewing – Kitchen – Raw Bar in Orlando

“Blending craft beer with a refined raw bar menu, [Runabout is making waves with its coastal-inspired dishes and small-batch brews.](#) It’s a relaxed-yet-elevated space perfect for seafood lovers and beer enthusiasts alike.”

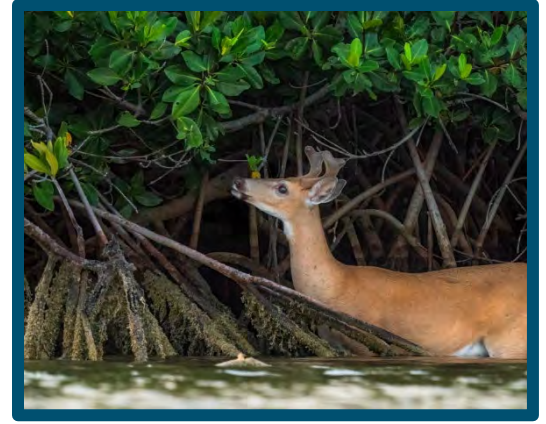
(Source: Tasty Chomps)



You Gotta Go: National Key Deer Refuge in the Lower Florida Keys

“The National Key Deer Refuge was established in 1957 [to protect and preserve the national interest in Key deer and other wildlife resources in the Florida Keys](#). The Refuge is located in the Lower Florida Keys, a hundred-mile stretch of islands that extends south and west from south Florida. Habitats in the refuge consist of pine rockland forests, tropical hardwood hammocks, freshwater wetlands, salt marsh wetlands, and mangrove forests. National Key Deer Refuge is home to more than 20 endangered and threatened plant and animal species. The endangered Key deer are the smallest subspecies of white-tailed deer that are found throughout much of North America. Key deer are unique to the lower Florida Keys; they are found nowhere else in the world.”

(Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)



Spine-Benders: Monthly Picks for June 2026

“Summer officially kicks off this month, so the big question is: what are you reading? If you need some new picks to throw in a beach bag or take to the park, you're in luck! [Our June Picks feature stories for everyone](#), including Our Children's and YA Awards winner *A School for Thieves*. Check out our monthly picks and dive in today.” (Source: Barnes & Noble)

