

DISTANCE LEARNING & STUDENT SERVICES NEWS

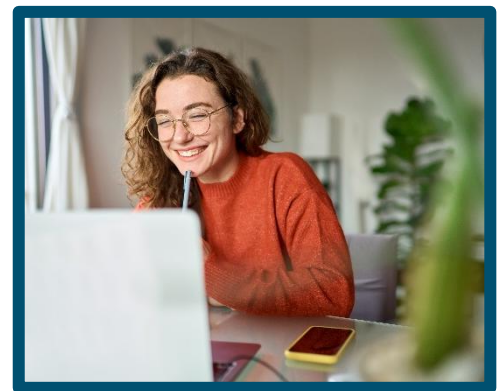


TOP NEWS

Most 4-Year Graduates Work in Same State as Their Alma Mater, Report Finds

“Over half of workers with a four-year degree or higher, 55 percent, work in the same state they grew up in and earned their diploma, [according to a report published early August by the Strada Education Foundation](#). Only 9 percent moved to another state for college and never left.

Overall, states that keep their college graduates tend to have ‘robust employment growth,’ lower income tax rates, and jobs that pay a higher wage premium for those with postsecondary education, the report said.” (Source: Higher Ed Dive)



AI Helped Researchers Win NIH Grants. Will Science Suffer?

[“New research shows that scientists who rely heavily on artificial intelligence to write grant applications are more likely to get funding from the National Institutes of Health.](#) But that tactic could come at the expense of exploring more novel scientific ideas.

That’s one of the central takeaways of a study published this month in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which analyzed more than 125,000 grant applications — including funded, unfunded and pending proposals — submitted to the NIH and National Science Foundation from 2021 to 2025.”

(Source: Inside Higher Education)



AI-Enabled Ghost Student Fraud: How IT Leaders Are Fighting Back

“First, there was the zombie college scam. Now it’s ‘ghost students,’ bad actors leveraging artificial intelligence to create fake identities and enroll imaginary students to scoop up grants and loans.

[AI tools now allow synthetic identities to mimic genuine student behavior long enough to collect financial aid disbursements,](#) and traditional enrollment systems are falling short. The schemes are costing the U.S. taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in siphoned-off federal financial aid packages.”

(Source: EdTech Magazine)





DLSS UPDATES

FL-IDN's August 2026 Webinars Promoted Accessibility Awareness Month

Earlier this month, on August 4, FL-IDN hosted a webinar, “Applying UDL Principles to the Design & Facilitation of Instructor Workshops.” Oftentimes, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is discussed within the context of classroom teaching and learning. However, these same principles can be applied to our design and facilitation of professional learning experiences for instructors. In this interactive session, participants explored how they can leverage UDL to create more engaging and effective workshops for instructors. Participants also discussed how implementing UDL in their workshops can serve as an important model for instructors. They left the session with practical strategies and resources that could help them design and facilitate with UDL in mind.

Tolulope Noah, Ed.D. (California State University, Long Beach) was our guest speaker.

- [Watch the recording from the FL-IDN webinar on August 4.](#)
- [View resources from the FL-IDN webinar on August 4.](#)

Last week, on August 18, FL-IDN hosted a lightning round webinar with two presentations, “Make a Plan for Digital Accessibility” and “Enhancing Accessibility in Course Content: Our Journey from ‘Wait, What?’ to ‘We’re on It!’”

For the first presentation, participants joined a discussion that showed how one institution planned for digital accessibility. Digital accessibility is a best practice for online teaching, and it is also a legal responsibility. However, many faculty created their instructional materials before becoming aware of this responsibility, and they are overwhelmed by the task of addressing accessibility barriers in all those materials.

At the University of Missouri, a workbook was developed to help their instructors create a project management plan for this work, setting priorities and identifying strategies. In this webinar, participants received their own copy of this workbook and guidance for using it.

Laura Foley and Manon Allard-Kropp (University of Missouri) were our guest speakers.

For the second presentation, participants joined a discussion that shared insights on creating and implementing accessible digital course materials at the college level. With the recent updates from the Department of Justice to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding the requirement for accessible web content, it is essential that digital course materials are equitable and accessible for all students. This presentation shared experiences, at Le Moyne College, that addressed accessibility issues within the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS), with a specific focus on its use with screen readers. The insights gained and the strategies employed to ensure that instructional content is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of ability, was highlighted. Participants looked forward to gaining valuable knowledge on effective methods, as well as ongoing efforts to train both faculty and students to navigate and overcome these accessibility challenges.

Mounika Ragula, Ph.D. (Le Moyne College) was our guest speaker.

- [Watch the recording from the FL-IDN webinar on August 18.](#)
- [View slides from the first presentation on August 18.](#)
- [View slides from the second presentation on August 18.](#)

FLVC's Latest Webinar Took Another Deep Dive Into SARA

Earlier this month, on August 14, FLVC hosted a webinar, "Navigating Distance Education with FL-SARA." This session covered critical compliance frameworks for out-of-state distance education, including navigating the institutional application process and evaluation criteria, maintaining strict adherence to core compliance requirements, and implementing vital operational and consumer protections for online students. This was a unique opportunity to strengthen our institutions' compliance efforts and get answers to their most pressing questions.

Brady Lyon (Educational Policy Director, Commission for Independent Education, Florida Department of Education) was our guest speaker.

- [Watch the recording from the FLVC webinar on August 14.](#)
- [View resources from the FLVC webinar on August 14.](#)

FSU Colleges of Nursing and Medicine Awarded \$1.6 Million NIH Grant to Train Next Generation of Nurse Scientists in Digital Health and AI

[“The Florida State University College of Nursing and College of Medicine have been awarded a more than \\$1.6 million Institutional National Research Service Award \(T32\) from the National Institutes of Health to prepare the next generation of nurse scientists to harness technology and artificial intelligence in improving health outcomes for a variety of populations.](#)

The five-year training program, NURTURe: Nurse Scientists Using Research, Technology and AI to Uplift Resilient eHealth Outcomes, prepares nurse-trained postdoctoral fellows for careers as researchers in digital health. Fellows within the program will develop, test and apply digital health and AI tools for preventing disease and managing chronic conditions, with a focus on rural communities where access to care can be limited.”

(Source: FSU News)

USF Researchers Develop AI System That Predicts ACL Injuries Before They Happen

“Dr. Nathan Schilaty, USF Health associate professor, and John Templeton, Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing assistant professor, hope to one day help athletes avoid ACL injuries through artificial intelligence and wearable technology designed to identify risks before they happen.

Using a decade of research across human motion analysis, cadaveric testing (using donated human knees for experiments) and computer modeling, [they are developing an AI-powered wearable that could identify risky movement patterns and provide real-time feedback to help athletes avoid injury.”](#)

(Source: USF Newsroom)



UP NEXT

FL-IDN's Upcoming Webinar Will Highlight Metrics and ROI That Matter

Next month, on September 15, FL-IDN will host a webinar, “Making Instructional Design Visible: Metrics and ROI That Matter.” In the age of AI and growing fiscal pressures in higher education, instructional design teams face increased scrutiny to demonstrate their impact. This session offers a practical framework for using KPIs, evaluation tools, and ROI measures to make that impact visible across student experience, teaching effectiveness, course quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and digital accessibility. Participants will explore strategies for connecting design work to institutional priorities, strengthening accountability, and supporting continuous improvement. Participants will leave with adaptable tools for communicating the value of instructional design in clear, measurable terms.

Rae Mancilla and Anne Doring (University of Pittsburgh) will be our guest speakers.

- September 15, 2026
- 2:00 – 2:50 PM (ET)
- [Registration for the FL-IDN webinar on September 15 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.

WCET's Upcoming “Closer Conversation” Will Explore Emerging Digital Learning Topics

Tomorrow, on August 28, WCET will host an online event, “What’s Next for Digital Learning.” This interactive Closer Conversation will explore emerging digital learning topics that should be on every institution’s watch list.

This member-only discussion will offer space to share insights, ask questions, and consider how evolving learner needs, workforce connections, and flexible pathways may shape the future of online education.

Discuss how online learning is ripe to support apprenticeship models and strengthen connections between education and workforce development.

Gain an understanding of the rise of student-designed online pathways and what greater learner agency means for institutions.

Consider how online student services can better meet the needs of nontraditional learners navigating complex academic, personal, and professional responsibilities.

Dr. Van Davis (WCET) and Dr. John Opper (FLVC) will be our discussion leaders.

- August 28, 2026
- 2:00 – 3:00 PM (ET)
- [Registration for the WCET webinar on August 28 is free.](#)

New Webinar Recording and Resources Coming Soon — Preferred Pricing Agreement for Digital Media Accessibility, Captioning and Transcription Services

FLVC, in partnership with FSU Procurement, is pleased to announce a new statewide pricing agreement for digital media accessibility, captioning, and transcription services. Following a recent ITN process, an agreement has been awarded to 3Play Media.

Agreement Details:

- Initial Term: August 3, 2026 – June 30, 2031
- Renewal Option: One optional 4-year extension
- Documentation: The executed agreement can be found in the [Current Contracts and Agreements folder on SharePoint.](#)

Scope of Services:

Captioning and transcription services help ensure lectures, online courses, and other educational content are fully accessible to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, non-native English speakers, students with learning disabilities, and visual learners. 3Play Media offers seamless integration for live lectures, recorded videos, and virtual events to support compliance with key accessibility laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Webinar Recording and Resources:

We hosted an introductory webinar with 3Play Media today, on August 27, to demonstrate their platform and features. The recording and other resources related to the webinar will be sent to the MCDLSS listserv as soon as they are made available.



SAN BOX

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

Online Learning Quality Is Built Beyond the Course

“One of the most persistent public perceptions surrounding online learning is that online courses are inherently less rigorous or lower quality than courses taught in person. The concern surfaces regularly in conversations among prospective students, families, employers, and even faculty who may still associate online learning with earlier generations of digital education that were often inconsistent in design, support, and execution... The quality of online learning depends on much more than what happens inside an individual course shell. [Students experience online learning through an interconnected set of institutional touchpoints that shape how supported, informed, and connected they feel throughout the learning experience.](#)”

(Source: WCET Frontiers)

Out of Reach? Adults Grade Colleges on Their Affordability.

“[A Lumina Foundation and Gallup survey found widespread cost concerns](#) — but most parents still want their children to pursue postsecondary education. Only 12 percent of surveyed adults said they believe four-year colleges are doing a ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ job of ‘providing an affordable education.’ Community colleges fared much better on the question, with 54 percent of adults rating them highly on their affordability. However, even amid these financial concerns, 74 percent of surveyed parents said they want their children to pursue postsecondary education directly after high school. 38 percent of parents selected a four-year college as their top choice for their child, 19 percent selected a two-year institution, and 17 percent selected a job-training or certification program.”

(Source: Higher Ed Dive)

College Costs for Families Up 10 Percent from Last Year, Poll Finds

“Tuition, fees, housing and other costs averaged \$34,019 in the 2025-26 academic year, per a new Sallie Mae and Ipsos report. [College costs for families averaged \\$34,019 during the 2025-26 academic year, up 10 percent from the previous year, according to an annual report from financial services company Sallie Mae.](#) Families paid out of pocket for 49 percent of those costs — which include tuition, fees, housing and other expenses — drawing from student and parent income and savings, according to a poll for Sallie Mae conducted by Ipsos. They covered another 27 percent through scholarships and grants and 22 percent through borrowing. A much smaller amount, 2 percent, came from gifts from friends and family. How families pay for college could change in the coming years with the implementation of new federal student lending caps. Even so, two-thirds of surveyed families said they support federal lending limits, and 53 percent said colleges should respond by lowering tuition rates.”

(Source: Higher Ed Dive)

Tech Industry Leaders Launch Open Secure AI Alliance

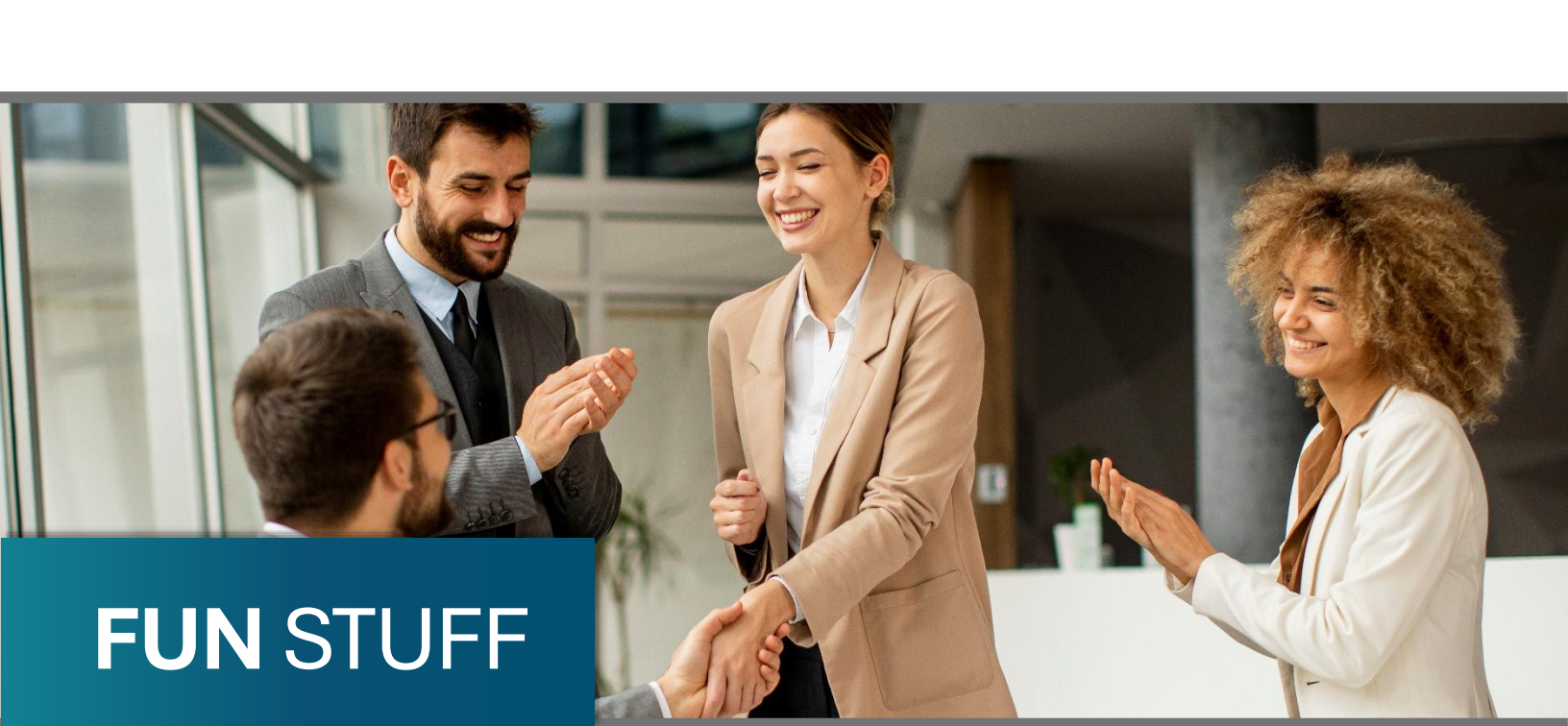
“NVIDIA and 36 other technology, cloud, cybersecurity, and enterprise software organizations have launched [an industry effort to develop and share open technologies for protecting software and AI agents.](#) The Open Secure AI Alliance initiative covers the infrastructure surrounding agents — including identity, permissions, isolation, harnesses, guardrails, logs, and evaluation systems — rather than focusing only on the security of AI models.”

(Source: Campus Technology)

Agentic AI Moves from Pilot Phase to Production, Bringing Governance to the Forefront

“New research from Caylent, an AI-focused Amazon Web Services Premier Tier Services Partner, found that enterprises are already moving agentic AI beyond pilots and into production environments. [At the same time, organizations are putting strict conditions around autonomy, making governance and control the next major challenge for enterprise AI adoption.](#) Conducted by Censuswide, the Enterprise Readiness for Agentic Engineering & Autonomous Cloud Operations Survey Report polled 200 senior enterprise leaders at organizations across the United States and Canada. All respondents reported they are actively exploring agentic AI in engineering or cloud operations. The research found that 59.5 percent of enterprise leaders are already running AI agents autonomously in production environments, moving beyond sandboxes and early experimentation.”

(Source: Campus Technology)



FUN STUFF

Movie Must-See: The Brink of War

“[President Reagan](#) races against time to salvage a deal with [Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev](#) that could dismantle nuclear arsenals — or ignite disaster. With pressure mounting from advisors, intelligence agencies, and history itself, every word spoken brings the world closer to peace... or destruction.”
Starring Jeff Daniels and Jared Harris.

(Source: Rotten Tomatoes)



Spine-Benders: Monthly Picks for August 2026

“It's still summer, which means that you have plenty of time to start (and finish!) a reading list before the cold gusts of fall shuffle in. [With our August Picks, find a great read you won't be able to put down](#), like the story of an unexpected wedding guest, a werewolf romance, the thrilling true tale of an 8,000-mile journey and more.”

(Source: Barnes & Noble)



You Gotta Try It: The Ice Plant (St. Augustine)

“In 1907, this building became Florida’s first power and ice complex. It was expanded in 1917 to generate commercial block ice that boomed alongside St. Augustine’s shrimping, fishing, and produce industries. In 1926, it was purchased by Florida Power & Light to increase ice-making capacity from 60 to 125 tons. The boilers that created the power produced steam, which was collected, condensed, and recycled into the boilers or used to make ice. The demand for ice skyrocketed in the 1930s with the introduction of refrigerators, also known as iceboxes.

Today, [The Ice Plant serves farm-to-table dishes and craft cocktails with custom-cut cubes from a 300-pound block of ice as a nod to the building’s historic past.](#)”

(Source: Historic Coast Culture, The Ice Plant Bar)



You Gotta Go: Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park (High Springs)

“[The park contains a collection of natural springs, including a large second-magnitude spring](#) that produces an average of 44 million gallons of water per day. This spring, known as Gilchrist Blue, has outstanding water clarity and discharges water through a shallow spring run about one-quarter mile to the Santa Fe River.

Paddling, snorkeling and swimming are all popular at the park. Pavilions are available, and a concession stand provides food and beverage service plus paddling equipment rentals. Other popular activities include camping, hiking, nature study and picnicking.”

(Source: Florida State Parks)

