

# Investing in Outsmart: Building the Future of AI-Powered Higher Education

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Some early-stage teams stop you dead in your tracks. A rare combination of deep operational excellence, a unique tenacity for building hard, mission-driven companies from scratch, and, perhaps most importantly, unparalleled founder-market fit that gives an early-stage team a disproportionate advantage.

That was exactly the case with Outsmart, which is on a mission to restructure one of our society's most important yet rigid systems: higher education.

Outsmart CEO and Co-founder Jorge Mazal's background reads like a mission statement for the company. He spent over five years leading product for Duolingo, most recently serving as Chief Product Officer, where he helped define and scale one of the most beloved, modernized approaches to learning that the tech industry has seen. But beyond this, his personal story gives him an unwavering passion for the opportunity. He grew up in Argentina, and by what felt like a stroke of pure luck, had a visa approved for him to come to the US. Despite having no resources or connections, he applied to grad school and got into a Harvard/Wharton dual degree program in Education Policy and Business. He thought he'd won the golden ticket—a life in America with access to some of the most prestigious institutions the nation has to offer.

Yet, when Jorge graduated \$250,000 in debt with a growing family to support, the promise turned into a trap. He worked as a Product Manager at Zynga by day and collected garbage in apartment complexes before dawn to make ends meet. Jorge quickly came to understand that higher ed was not set up to serve people like him: those without financial support and privilege, despite hustle and talent. Even doing everything "right" had led him here.

At Forerunner, we back generational companies that will solve fundamental human needs. No need is more universal than the right to learn—to access knowledge that unlocks

careers and reshapes life trajectories. Yet higher ed has become one of the more polarizing systems in modern life, pricing millions out of opportunity while delivering increasingly questionable returns for those who can afford it. Traditional universities operate on century-old models: fixed schedules, one-size-fits-all curricula, geographic constraints, and costs that require either family wealth or lifelong debt. The breakage is glaring:

- Tuition is up 160% in 25 years
- There's \$1.7 trillion in outstanding student debt
- Over 40% of recent graduates are underemployed
- 36 million college dropouts are carrying debt they can't repay
- Only 36% of Americans trust higher education, a 12-point drop since 2018
- The sector is in the crosshairs politically, with funding being pulled and DEI policies challenged

This isn't just broken, it's getting worse. Millions work multiple jobs, take on crippling debt, or abandon college altogether — not for lack of talent, but because the system wasn't built for them.

To date, alternatives haven't been much better. Online programs lack accreditation. Bootcamps teach skills without credentials. Community colleges offer access but struggle with completion rates. The market has produced scattered solutions, making notable yet incremental progress. Nothing has fundamentally reimaged what's possible when you combine legitimate academic credentials with technology that actually understands how individuals learn.

Jorge has assembled a wildly impressive team to deliver on the potential of what a truly modernized, AI-powered higher ed system can be. His cofounders are past Duolingo executives Gina Gotthilf (former VP of Marketing and Growth) and Daniel Falabella (former GM and VP of Product), who are Outsmart's CMO and CPO, respectively. They are joined by former operators from PayPal, TikTok, Netflix, and more, all bought in on building a new higher ed model that's dramatically more accessible and relevant to how people live and work today.

Outsmart is still early and operating in stealth, but when it launches in 2026, it won't be about replacing elite education. It'll be about expanding access to the millions who've been locked out, and powering new modalities with true personalization, infinite patience, 24/7 availability, and the ability to serve millions without diluting quality.

Ultimately, Outsmart will build the infrastructure to power human potential, making quality education an accessible reality for everyone. We're proud to back this ambitious founding team that's reinstating the very promise of higher education: one where drive and talent can unlock infinite opportunity.