

AI in Higher Education: Weekly Progress Report

Period: April 10 – April 17, 2026

The past week has seen a decisive shift from AI experimentation to **institutional integration** and **policy formalization**. Major announcements at the ASU+GSV Summit 2026 and new federal guidelines indicate that higher education is moving toward a "competency-first" model, where AI literacy is no longer elective but a prioritized outcome.

Executive Summary

- **Federal Mandate for AI Literacy:** The U.S. Department of Education finalized a rule (April 13) prioritizing grant funding for projects that integrate AI literacy and ethical use into teacher preparation and student outcomes.
- **Rise of the "Khan TED Institute":** A landmark partnership between ETS, Khan Academy, and TED was announced (April 14) to launch a \$10,000 AI-era higher education program focused on competency-based learning.
- **LMS Ecosystem Integration:** Google and Moodle announced a major integration (April 13), bringing Gemini and NotebookLM directly into the Moodle LMS to power automated summarization and personalized study aids.
- **The Usage Paradox:** New Gallup data (April 17) reveals 57% of college students use AI weekly, yet nearly half report that their institutions still discourage or prohibit its use, highlighting a significant policy-practice gap.
- **Agentic AI for Faculty:** Instructure's "IgniteAI Agent" and new Moodle updates (April 13-15) show a shift toward "agentic" tools that can handle multi-step administrative workflows (grading rubrics, module organization) rather than just text generation.

Detailed News Coverage

1. U.S. Dept of Education Finalizes AI Grant Priorities

- **Source:** *K-12 Dive / Federal Register* (April 14, 2026)
- **Key Announcements:** The Department will now give "extra weight" to grant applications that focus on the ethical use of AI, AI literacy, and the use of AI to support students with disabilities.
- **Implications:** This signals a multi-billion dollar shift in federal support. Higher education

institutions seeking discretionary funding must now demonstrate how they are embedding AI skills into teacher preparation programs and classroom practice.

2. Launch of the Khan TED Institute

- **Source:** *ETS Newsroom / TED Vancouver* (April 14, 2026)
- **Key Announcements:** A new collaboration aiming to "reimagine higher education for the AI age." The program will cost under \$10,000 and focus on three pillars: core academic knowledge, applied AI skills (like building AI agents), and human communication/leadership.
- **Implications:** This challenges the traditional degree model by focusing on "verified competencies" rather than seat time, potentially accelerating the move toward skills-based credentials in the broader higher ed market.

3. Google Gemini & NotebookLM Education Updates

- **Source:** *Google Blog* (April 13, 2026)
- **Key Announcements:** Google is doubling limits for NotebookLM (notebooks and sources) for "Education Plus" users. Critically, Gemini is now an official provider for Moodle, allowing for AI-powered text summarization and LTI support directly within the LMS.
- **Implications:** By embedding AI into the existing LMS workflow, Google is lowering the barrier to entry for faculty. Educators can now assign a "Gem" or specific notebook directly to students without requiring them to leave the university's secure ecosystem.

4. Gallup: The State of Student AI Usage

- **Source:** *Gallup News* (April 17, 2026)
- **Key Findings:** 57% of students use AI weekly; 11% are prohibited entirely; 42% are "discouraged" but allowed to use it. The top reasons for use are "understanding complex material" (46%) and "saving time" (38%).
- **Implications:** There is a growing friction between student behavior and institutional rules. Schools that maintain "prohibit" policies risk graduating students who lack the competitive AI skills now being prioritized by federal and corporate entities.

Emerging Trends

- **Agentic Workflows:** Moving beyond chatbots, new tools (like Instructure's IgniteAI) are becoming "agents" that can execute end-to-end tasks like reorganizing a course syllabus

or creating 24/7 responsive outreach for at-risk students.

- **The "Double-Edged" Research Focus:** Student-led studies (notably from Prairie View A&M) and faculty critiques (Lake Forest College) are moving toward a more nuanced view: AI as a tool to improve *teaching* by offloading rote tasks, allowing faculty to focus on the "hard work of honing human intellect."
- **Skill-Based Portability:** There is an increasing demand for "portable" digital credentials (highlighted by Instructure/Harris Poll) that allow AI skills learned in one institution to be easily recognized by employers.

Notable Institutional Implementations

Institution	Implementation Description	Date
University of Utah	Launched AI Acceptable Use Scale templates; clear faculty guidance on using AI for rubric-based feedback while maintaining human oversight.	April 16, 2026
Carnegie Mellon	Recognized for a "Virtual Craft Master" AI system that provides real-time, adaptive vision-language feedback for skilled trades training.	April 15, 2026
Arizona State (ASU)	Unveiled "CreateAI" , an enterprise platform with 21,000+ creators now producing "AI in a Box" solutions for specific course needs.	April 14, 2026

University College Cork	Partnered with Anthropic to launch a suite of AI Fluency Open Courses for national AI literacy across Ireland's higher ed sector.	April 10, 2026
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Links to Original Sources

- [Gallup: AI Is Routine for College Students](#)
- [ETS/Khan Academy/TED Institute Announcement](#)
- [Google Blog: New AI Tools for Education](#)
- [K-12 Dive: Dept of Education AI Grant Priorities](#)
- [University of Utah: AI at the U Forum](#)