

Weekly AI in Higher Education Report — May 15, 2026

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Subject: Weekly AI in Higher Education Report — May 15, 2026

Coverage Period: May 8–15, 2026 (with select items from the past month)

Executive Summary

The following seven developments represent the most significant news in AI for teaching and learning in higher education this week.

1. **Princeton ends 133-year honor code tradition.** Faculty voted to mandate proctoring for all in-person exams after a senior survey revealed that 30% of students admitted to cheating, with 28% having used ChatGPT on prohibited assignments — more than double the previous year's rate. [2]
2. **AI-mediated feedback improves student revisions.** A randomized controlled trial at the University of Michigan found that the AI tool "FeedbackWriter," used by teaching assistants, moved students from the 50th to the 70th percentile in revision quality compared to human-only feedback. [1]
3. **Influential ChatGPT-in-education study retracted.** A 2025 meta-analysis claiming ChatGPT had a "large positive impact" on learning performance was retracted by Springer Nature for methodological discrepancies, despite accumulating over 500 citations. [4]
4. **SUNY mandates AI literacy across 64 campuses.** The State University of New York adopted a systemwide AI policy requiring AI literacy in general education for all incoming undergraduates starting Fall 2026. [5]
5. **Campus tech leaders question AI's ROI.** An *Inside Higher Ed* survey found only 29% of Chief Technology Officers believe AI investments have met or exceeded ROI expectations; only 23% ranked improved teaching and learning among AI's top value-adds. [6]
6. **High AI adoption in Latin American higher education.** A Digital Education Council survey of 29 institutions found 92% of students and 79% of faculty actively using AI, with a notable gap: 50% of students want AI-assisted feedback, but only 19% of faculty currently provide it. [3]
7. **Stanford launches \$1M in seed grants for AI-in-education research.** Stanford's AI Meets Education (AIMES) initiative is offering grants to faculty, students, and staff to

1. Major News and Developments

1.1 Princeton Ends 133-Year Honor Code Tradition Over AI Cheating

Source: *Inside Higher Ed*, May 15, 2026 [2].

Princeton University's faculty voted this week to proctor all in-person exams, fundamentally altering an honor system that had relied on students to monitor and report cheating since 1893. The change was driven by both faculty and students who found it increasingly difficult to detect AI-enabled cheating. A 2025 survey of 501 graduating seniors by *The Daily Princetonian* found that 30% admitted to cheating at least once, and 28% reported using ChatGPT on assignments that specifically prohibited it — more than double the 2024 figure. Additionally, 45% of seniors knew of a peer who had violated the honor code but chose not to report it, compared with just 0.4% who did report.

The new policy, effective July 1, 2026, requires that in-class exams be supervised by instructional staff who will observe and report suspected violations to the Honor Committee. Princeton follows Stanford, which introduced proctoring in 2023 and expanded it further in April 2026. The development reflects a broader institutional reckoning with the limits of traditional academic integrity frameworks in the age of generative AI.

Implications for higher education: The Princeton case signals that even elite institutions with strong honor code cultures are being forced to restructure their assessment environments. Institutions should consider whether their current academic integrity frameworks are adequate and what combination of proctoring, redesigned assessments, and AI literacy education is needed.

1.2 Influential ChatGPT Study Retracted After Methodological Concerns

Source: *Ars Technica*, May 4, 2026 [4].

A widely circulated 2025 meta-analysis published in *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications* (Springer Nature), which claimed ChatGPT has a "large positive impact on improving learning performance" and a "moderately positive impact on fostering higher-order thinking," has been retracted. The paper had accumulated 504 citations and reached the 99th percentile in online attention scores. Springer Nature cited "discrepancies in the meta-analysis" that "undermine the confidence the Editor can place in the validity of the analysis and resulting conclusions."

Critics, including Ben Williamson of the University of Edinburgh, noted that the paper synthesized studies of incompatible methodologies and populations, and that it was implausible for dozens of high-quality ChatGPT studies to have been conducted, reviewed, and published within two and a half years of ChatGPT's release. Williamson expressed concern that the headline finding — "ChatGPT helps learning performance" — may persist in the literature despite the retraction.

Implications for higher education: The retraction is a cautionary signal about the quality of evidence being used to justify AI adoption in classrooms. Institutions and faculty should critically evaluate the research base before making pedagogical decisions, and should prioritize well-designed, peer-reviewed studies over high-citation counts.

1.3 Campus Tech Leaders Question AI's Return on Investment

Source: *Inside Higher Ed*, May 12, 2026 [6].

The *Inside Higher Ed*/Hanover Research 2026 Survey of Campus Chief Technology/Information Officers (130 respondents) found that only 29% of CTOs believe AI investments have met or exceeded ROI expectations, while 50% say the ROI is either unclear or below expectations. Despite this, AI investment is accelerating: 49% of CTOs now rate generative AI as a high or essential priority, up from 34% in 2025, and 61% of institutions now provide students with institutionwide AI tool licenses, more than double the 27% rate from the prior year.

When asked where AI has delivered the most tangible value, 55% of CTOs cited employee productivity gains, while only 23% ranked improved teaching and learning among the top three value-adds. The survey also revealed that 49% of CTOs consider the current pace of technology-driven change unsustainable without new resources, and 55% cited skills and staff capacity as a top limiting factor.

"ROI is going to be a concern when [institutions] are rushing to solutions without first defining the problem they're trying to solve." — Brian Fleming, strategist and former university administrator [6].

Implications for higher education: The data suggest that AI is delivering more value in administrative and productivity contexts than in teaching and learning. Institutions should resist competitive pressure to adopt AI tools without clear pedagogical goals and measurable outcomes.

2. Institutional Implementations

2.1 SUNY Adopts Systemwide AI Policy Across 64 Campuses

Source: *Inside Higher Ed*, May 4, 2026 [5]

The State University of New York Board of Trustees adopted a formal systemwide AI policy at its May meeting, establishing a framework for responsible AI use across all 64 campuses and hundreds of thousands of students. Key provisions include: mandatory AI literacy embedded in general education for all incoming undergraduates starting Fall 2026; requirements for institutions to evaluate AI tools for bias; strengthened data privacy protections; and the creation of 20 "AI for the Public Good Fellows" to help faculty integrate AI into coursework. As the nation's largest integrated public university system, SUNY's policy sets a significant precedent for systemwide AI governance.

2.2 Rasmussen University Adopts AI-Native Learning Management System

Source: PR Newswire, April 20, 2026 [5]

Rasmussen University, a 125-year-old institution with campuses across six states, has selected D2L Brightspace to replace its legacy Blackboard platform. Following a pilot in May 2026, the rollout will prioritize nursing education and deploy D2L's "Lumi" suite, which includes AI-native personalized study recommendations (Lumi Tutor), AI-generated feedback (Lumi Feedback), and performance analytics. The transition signals a broader institutional shift away from legacy LMS platforms toward integrated, AI-first learning environments.

2.3 Penn State Harrisburg Launches AI Degree Program

Source: Penn State University, May 14, 2026 [7]

Penn State Harrisburg will offer a new Bachelor of Science degree in Artificial Intelligence Methods and Applications (AIMA) beginning Fall 2026. The interdisciplinary program equips students with technical expertise in machine learning and generative AI, alongside ethical grounding. Curriculum integrates fields including cognitive science, psychology, public policy, and law. Students complete a two-semester capstone project in their final year. The program is part of Penn State's broader strategy to expand AI literacy across disciplines, with new AI-related courses being offered across subject areas including the humanities and arts.

2.4 Mid-South University AI Research Consortium Formed

Source: Action News 5, April 20, 2026 [5]

The University of Memphis, University of Arkansas, University of Mississippi, and University of Tennessee Health Science Center signed a memorandum of understanding to create the Mid-South AI Research Consortium. The partnership creates a shared "living laboratory"

using high-performance computing resources, targeting five pillars: rural health, supply chain and logistics, energy and data centers, agriculture and food security, and national defense. Workforce development for students and regional citizens is a core mission component.

3. Research and Studies

3.1 AI-Mediated Feedback Improves Student Revisions (University of Michigan)

Source: University of Michigan Engineering, April 16, 2026 [[1](#)]

A randomized controlled trial involving 354 students in an introductory economics course tested "FeedbackWriter," an AI tool that suggests rubric-aligned feedback on student essays while keeping teaching assistants in control of the final evaluation. Students who received AI-mediated feedback produced significantly higher-quality revisions compared to those receiving human-only feedback, with an effect size equivalent to moving a student from the 50th to the 70th percentile. TAs agreed with 88% of the AI's rubric judgments and corrected the remaining 12%. The study, presented at the ACM CHI Conference, was supported by the National Science Foundation.

The researchers emphasized that FeedbackWriter is designed to complement, not replace, human instruction — enabling TAs to provide more consistent, rubric-aligned feedback at scale while freeing time for direct student support.

3.2 High AI Adoption in Latin American Higher Education

Source: Digital Education Council, February 6, 2026 [[3](#)]

The Digital Education Council's AI in Higher Education Latin America Survey 2026, gathering over 30,000 responses from 29 institutions across the region, found that 92% of students and 79% of faculty actively engage with AI. Notably, 94% of faculty expect to use AI in future teaching, with attitudes consistent across years of teaching experience — challenging assumptions that AI resistance is generational. However, a significant implementation gap exists: while 50% of students support AI-assisted feedback on assignments, only 19% of faculty currently provide it. Only 30% of students say their institution's current AI use meets their expectations.

3.3 AI Literacy as a Meta-Skill for Academic Management

Source: *Frontiers in Education*, May 4, 2026 [[8](#)]

Research published in *Frontiers in Education* presents a validated four-domain model of AI literacy — Engaging, Creating, Designing, and Managing — and tests its relationship to academic management innovation in private higher education institutions in China's Sichuan Province. Using structural equation modeling with data from faculty and administrative staff, the study found that all four AI literacy domains significantly predicted innovation outcomes ($p < 0.001$), with "Managing AI" showing the largest effect. The findings suggest AI literacy functions as a strategic, transferable capability that extends beyond technical use to encompass governance, ethical oversight, and institutional alignment.

3.4 Adaptive Learning in 2026: Evidence and Platform Landscape

Source: Nuton Blog, May 5, 2026 [10]

A comprehensive review of adaptive learning platforms in 2026 notes a structural shift from earlier systems that retrieved content from fixed banks to current systems that generate personalized content per student using large language models and retrieval-augmented generation. The review cites a synthesis by Engageli (2025) reporting a 42% average outcome improvement in adaptive learning implementations, though notes that underlying studies vary in design quality. The review also observes that 83% of institutions plan AI teaching-assistant deployment by end-2026, and that the AI tutor sub-market is projected to grow from \$2.11B to \$17.72B by 2033.

4. Policy and Guidelines Updates

4.1 EU AI Act: August 2026 High-Risk Compliance Deadline

Source: *Times Higher Education*, April 27, 2026 [5]

European universities face a significant compliance deadline in August 2026 under the EU AI Act. The Act classifies AI used for student assessment, admissions screening, and academic progress monitoring as "high-risk," requiring transparency and human oversight that popular tools like ChatGPT do not currently meet. Faculty using AI informally to grade students could be operating illegally. The Act's extraterritorial reach means institutions outside the EU that process data from EU students are also potentially in scope.

4.2 White House National AI Policy Framework

Source: EdTech Innovation Hub, March 23, 2026 [5]

The White House released a National Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence, placing education and workforce development at its center. The framework recommends embedding AI training into existing educational programs rather than creating standalone

initiatives, and asks Congress to preempt state-level AI laws to prevent a fragmented compliance landscape. House Republican leadership committed to advancing the framework through legislation.

4.3 FutureEd Tracker: 52 AI Bills Across 25 States

Source: FutureEd, March 10, 2026 [5]

FutureEd's 2026 State AI in Education Legislative Tracker is monitoring 52 bills across 25 states addressing AI in classroom instruction. South Carolina's H.B. 5253 would establish some of the nation's strongest protections, requiring written parental opt-in consent and prohibiting AI from replacing licensed teachers in core instruction. Oklahoma's Responsible Technology in Schools Act would require all districts to adopt written AI policies before the 2027–28 school year. The legislative wave is accelerating, driven partly by President Trump's executive order on AI literacy.

5. Emerging Trends

5.1 The ROI Gap and Institutional Fatigue

Despite rapid AI adoption, a growing body of evidence suggests that institutions are struggling to demonstrate learning outcomes commensurate with their investment. The *Inside Higher Ed* CTO survey [6] reveals that AI is delivering measurable value primarily in administrative productivity rather than in teaching and learning. Strategist Brian Fleming describes this as "innovating through imitation" — institutions adopting AI because peers are doing so, rather than because they have identified specific problems to solve.

5.2 AI Cheating and the Collapse of Traditional Assessment

The Princeton honor code reversal [2] is the most dramatic recent example of a broader trend: traditional assessment frameworks are failing to account for the ubiquity of generative AI. Across higher education, institutions are experimenting with oral exams, in-class handwritten assessments, portfolio-based evaluation, and redesigned authentic assessments that AI cannot easily replicate. The Center for Engaged Learning has explored how AI inverts Bloom's Taxonomy — enabling students to "create" first and then evaluate — which demands a fundamental rethinking of how learning objectives are structured and assessed. [11]

5.3 The AI Literacy Imperative

Multiple studies and surveys this week converge on a single theme: AI literacy is becoming a foundational competency for both faculty and students. The DEC Global AI Faculty Survey

(2025) found that 80% of faculty feel there is a lack of institutional clarity on how AI can be applied in teaching, and only 4% are fully aware of their institution's AI guidelines. [12] The *Frontiers in Education* study [8] frames AI literacy as a "meta-skill" that enables institutional innovation. Stanford's CRAFT program and AIMES initiative [9] represent efforts to build AI literacy resources that are evidence-based and freely accessible.

5.4 Khanmigo and the Limits of AI Tutoring Hype

Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, acknowledged in April 2026 that Khanmigo — the AI tutor he launched in 2023 with great fanfare — was "a non-event" for most students, who simply did not use it much. This admission, reported by Chalkbeat, echoes the broader finding from the ChatGPT study retraction: the gap between AI's theoretical potential and its demonstrated impact in real classrooms remains wide. Khan Academy has since overhauled its product to incorporate Khanmigo more directly into the learning flow. [13]

6. Source Links

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[2] Inside Higher Ed. "Princeton Introduces Proctoring, Changing Century-Old Honor Code." May 15, 2026.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty/learning-assessment/2026/05/15/princeton-introduces-proctoring-changing-honor-code>

[3] Digital Education Council. "92% of Students and 79% of Faculty Actively Engaging with AI: Findings from AI in Higher Education LATAM Survey 2026." February 6, 2026.

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[4] Ars Technica. "Influential study touting ChatGPT in education retracted over red flags." May 4, 2026.

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[5] Pursuit. "Latest AI in Education News: Policies and Innovations | 2026." May 6, 2026.

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[6] Inside Higher Ed. "Half of Campus Tech Leaders Question AI's ROI." May 12, 2026.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/tech-innovation/artificial-intelligence/2026/05/12/half-campus-tech-leaders-question-ais-roi>

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<https://www.psu.edu/news/harrisburg/story/penn-state-harrisburg-adds-ai-methods-and-applications-degree-fall-2026>

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[9] Stanford News. "Stanford education experts put AI into perspective." May 13, 2026.

<https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2026/05/education-experts-ai-risks-opportunities>

[10] Nuton Blog. "Adaptive Learning in 2026: A Complete Guide." May 5, 2026.

<https://nuton.app/blog/adaptive-learning-2026-complete-guide>

[11] Center for Engaged Learning. "Assessment in the Upside Down: Academic AI with Students as the Audience." April 21, 2026.

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[12] Digital Education Council. "What Faculty Want: Key Results from the Global AI Faculty Survey 2025." January 28, 2025.

<https://www.digitaleducationcouncil.com/dec-insights/what-faculty-want-key-results-from-the-global-ai-faculty-survey-2025>

[13] Chalkbeat / AOL News. "Khan Academy's founder says AI tutoring revolution hasn't come for most students." May 2026.

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This report was compiled by Manus AI on May 15, 2026, drawing on sources including Inside Higher Ed, Ars Technica, the Digital Education Council, Frontiers in Education, Stanford News, Penn State University, and the University of Michigan Engineering.