

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING Issue #2 · March 13, 2026

AI in Higher Education

A curated digest of tools, research, institutional deployments, and policy developments shaping the use of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. Prepared for Professor Alan Lesgold, University of Pittsburgh.

Coverage: Mar 7 - Mar 13, 2026 · 10 sources · 6 sections

Executive Summary

The week of March 13, 2026 brought continued evidence that AI adoption in higher education has crossed a threshold from experimentation to near-universality among students, while institutional responses remain uneven. The most consequential developments this week center on student attitudes and confidence gaps, pedagogical redesign, new adaptive tutoring research, and the emergence of governance frameworks for responsible AI deployment.

95% Students using AI HEPI Survey 2026	94% Using AI for assessed work HEPI Survey 2026	65% Concerned about shallow learning Digital Ed. Council, Latin America	\$13.46B AI in higher ed market by 2030 34.7% CAGR — Business Research Co.
NEWS	NEWS		

AI Use Nears Universality, But Confidence Lags

95% of students use AI; 94% use it for assessed work. Yet fewer than half feel their institutions are preparing them to use it effectively for their careers.

AI Exposes Thin Learning, Not Causes It

A computer science professor argues AI is a diagnostic tool that reveals pre-existing weaknesses in course design — the fix is pedagogical redesign, not prohibition.

INSTITUTIONS**Boston University Launches AI & Education Master's**

A new fully online 30-credit MEd in AI & Education prepares educators to guide human-centered AI integration in academic settings.

INSTITUTIONS**Cornell Integrates HiTA and AI Platforms**

Cornell professors are deploying HiTA (hints without answers) and language-learning chatbots, backed by a new Vice Provost for AI Strategy.

RESEARCH**IncluLearn AI: Adaptive Tutoring for Underserved Learners**

A Frontiers in Education study shows significant gains in digital literacy and self-efficacy among women with disabilities using an AI adaptive tutoring system.

POLICY**Multi-Stakeholder Governance Frameworks Emerging**

EY and Campus Technology both call for cross-functional AI councils spanning faculty, IT, compliance, and students — with data governance as the foundation.

1 Major News & Developments

Key stories from the past week across the AI-in-education landscape

NEWS**1.1 Student AI Use Nears Universality, But Concerns Remain**

HEPI STUDENT GENERATIVE AI SURVEY 2026 · MARCH 2026

A new report from the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) reveals that AI use is now almost universal among higher education students, with 95% reporting using AI in some way and 94% using it to help with their assessed work. While AI is widely seen as a time-saver and a tool for improving understanding, a significant number of students express concerns about fairness, skill erosion, and the potential for social isolation.

The report highlights a pronounced gap between students' desire for AI skills and the institutional support they receive. Fewer than half feel that their instructors are helping them develop AI competencies for their future careers — a finding with direct implications for faculty development priorities. Institutions are beginning to respond: 65% of students report significant changes in assessment methods as a result of AI.

Fewer than half of students feel their instructors are helping them develop AI skills for their future careers.

NEWS

1.2 AI Adoption Is Nearly Universal Among Students, But Confidence Is Not

DIGITAL EDUCATION COUNCIL · LATIN AMERICA AI SURVEY 2026

A parallel survey from the Digital Education Council, focused on Latin American higher education, echoes the HEPI findings: 92% of students use AI, yet 65% are concerned that it may lead to shallow learning and discourage critical thinking. Data privacy and the fairness of AI-based assessment are also major concerns.

The convergence of these two independent surveys — one from the United Kingdom and one from Latin America — suggests that the confidence and ethics gap in student AI use is a global phenomenon, not a regional anomaly. The implication for institutional policy is that access to AI tools is no longer the primary challenge; developing students' capacity to use those tools critically and responsibly is.

NEWS

1.3 AI Exposes Where Learning Was Thin to Begin With

INSIDE HIGHER ED — OPINION · MARCH 10, 2026

An opinion piece in Inside Higher Ed argues that AI is not the root cause of shallow learning but rather a diagnostic tool that exposes pre-existing weaknesses in course design and assessment. The author, a computer science professor, notes that while AI can generate correct answers, it often does so without fostering a deep understanding of the underlying concepts.

This has led the author to shift the focus of assessments from correct output to the reasoning and justification behind the answers — requiring students to explain their work, predict outcomes, and compare different solutions. The article suggests that by redesigning assessments around process rather than product, educators can leverage AI as a catalyst for deeper learning rather than treating it as a threat to academic integrity.

AI is not the root cause of shallow learning — it is a diagnostic tool that exposes pre-existing weaknesses in course design and assessment.

2 Institutional Implementations

New programs, platforms, and partnerships launched this week

INSTITUTIONS

2.1 Boston University Launches Online Master's in AI & Education

BU VIRTUAL · MARCH 12, 2026

Boston University has announced a new fully online Master of Education in AI & Education, designed to prepare educators and leaders to guide the human-centered integration of AI in academic settings. The 30-credit program focuses on evaluating AI tools, designing AI-supported instruction, and using data to inform decisions about teaching and learning.

The university is also hosting a forum on 'AI and the Future of Education' to discuss the promises and risks of AI in education. The program represents a significant institutional commitment to building faculty capacity — one of the most frequently cited gaps in the HEPI survey — and positions BU as an early mover in credentialing educators specifically for AI-augmented pedagogy.

INSTITUTIONS

2.2 Cornell Professors Introduce AI Platforms to Manage Coursework

THE CORNELL DAILY SUN · MARCH 2026

Cornell University professors are integrating various AI platforms into their courses to supplement student learning and improve efficiency. These include HiTA, a platform that provides hints and conceptual help without giving direct answers, and Chitter Chatter, a language-learning chatbot. The university has also appointed a Vice Provost for AI Strategy and established a GenAI Education Working Group to guide responsible AI use in the classroom.

Cornell's approach is notable for its emphasis on AI tools that augment rather than replace instructor feedback. HiTA in particular is designed to provide students with immediate support while preserving the pedagogical value of productive struggle — a principle well-supported by the learning sciences literature.

INSTITUTIONS

2.3 UIC Professor Builds AI Tool to Support Teachers and Students

UIC TODAY · MARCH 2026

A professor at the University of Illinois Chicago is developing SkillTree, an AI-enabled platform designed to help teachers provide timely and personalized feedback to students. The tool visualizes the skills students need to succeed in a course and uses AI to detect which skills are demonstrated in their submitted work.

Critically, the AI does not grade assignments — it provides a report to the teacher, who then uses that information to tailor instruction and support. The platform is designed to be transparent, allowing teachers to verify the AI's reasoning at every

step. This human-in-the-loop design philosophy reflects a growing consensus that the most effective AI tools in education are those that enhance rather than supplant instructor judgment.

INSTITUTIONS

2.4 MindHYVE AI and California Northstate University Deploy Agentic AI Learning Platform

PR NEWswire · MARCH 2026

MindHYVE AI and California Northstate University have announced the deployment of what they describe as the first agentic AI learning platform in U.S. health sciences education. The platform uses agentic AI — systems capable of taking multi-step autonomous actions — to personalize learning pathways for health sciences students. This deployment represents an early indicator of a broader shift from reactive AI tutoring systems toward proactive, goal-directed AI agents in higher education.

3 Research & Studies

Peer-reviewed findings and new publications from the past week

RESEARCH

3.1 IncluLearn AI: An Adaptive Tutoring System for Women with Disabilities

FRONTIERS IN EDUCATION · MARCH 2026

A study published in Frontiers in Education details the development and evaluation of IncluLearn AI, an adaptive AI-driven tutoring system designed to provide digital literacy training for women with disabilities. The system is grounded in Universal Design for Learning and Explainable AI principles, ensuring that its reasoning is interpretable by both learners and instructors.

The study found that IncluLearn AI significantly improved digital literacy

performance and self-efficacy compared to a traditional self-paced course. This finding is particularly significant given the persistent underrepresentation of women with disabilities in digital skills training programs. The research demonstrates that intentionally designed AI tools can foster digital skill acquisition and empowerment among marginalized learners.

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RESEARCH

3.2 Leveraging AI in Assessments to Impact Student Outcomes: A Systematic Review

COMPUTER SCIENCE REVIEW (SCIENCEDIRECT) · 2026

A systematic review in Computer Science Review examines the impact of AI-assisted assessment on student outcomes in higher education. The review finds that AI tools can enhance feedback quality, student engagement, and learning outcomes when implemented thoughtfully. The authors provide a thematic overview of AI assessment types — including automated feedback, adaptive testing, and learning analytics dashboards — and their differential effects on student performance.

RESEARCH

3.3 AI in Literacy Education

PURDUE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION · MARCH 11, 2026

Researchers at Purdue University's College of Education are examining how AI tools can support literacy development across K-12 and post-secondary contexts. Early findings suggest that AI can provide the kind of individualized, immediate feedback that research has long identified as effective for literacy development but that has been difficult to scale in traditional classroom settings.

4 Policy & Governance

Institutional frameworks, governance structures, and regulatory developments

POLICY

4.1 Building Responsible Universities in the Age of AI

EY INDIA / FINANCIAL EXPRESS · MARCH 10, 2026

An article from EY emphasizes the need for universities to adopt multi-stakeholder governance frameworks for AI. These frameworks must involve faculty (to uphold academic standards), students (as primary AI users who need transparency and protection), IT and compliance teams (to ensure cybersecurity and data privacy), and institutional leadership (to oversee strategy and regulatory compliance).

Many institutions are forming central AI councils to develop principles and review emerging risks; others are adopting federated models that set shared guardrails while allowing flexibility across disciplines. The article also highlights the importance of complying with data protection regulations — a consideration that applies globally as governments move to regulate AI systems used in educational settings.

Responsible AI governance frameworks for universities must be collaborative and multi-layered — spanning faculty, students, IT, and institutional leadership.

STAKEHOLDER	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
Faculty	Uphold academic standards; develop discipline-specific AI guidelines
Students	Consistency, transparency, and protection from opaque algorithmic decisions
IT & Compliance	Cybersecurity, system integrity, and student data privacy protocols
Institutional Leadership	Strategy, accountability, and regulatory compliance oversight

POLICY

4.2 Beyond the Hype: 5 Actionable Steps for Higher Ed to Master AI in 2026

CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY · MARCH 12, 2026

An article in Campus Technology outlines five practical steps for higher education institutions to integrate AI effectively in 2026: (1) refresh data governance strategies; (2) experiment with AI tools in controlled settings; (3) choose the right tool for the specific pedagogical or administrative job; (4) establish dedicated AI roles or cross-functional teams; and (5) foster a culture of responsible innovation that rewards experimentation and tolerates productive failure.

The article stresses that a robust data governance strategy is the foundation of any successful AI initiative — a finding consistent with the EDUCAUSE governance data from the previous week, which showed that only 22% of institutions have an institution-wide AI strategy despite 57% naming AI a strategic priority.

POLICY

4.3 Teaching in the Age of Generative AI: Threats and Opportunities

UMASS AMHERST IDEAS · MARCH 2026

A faculty spotlight from UMass Amherst examines how individual instructors are navigating the pedagogical challenges and opportunities presented by generative AI. The piece highlights faculty who have redesigned their courses to treat AI as a collaborator rather than a threat — requiring students to document their AI use, reflect on its limitations, and demonstrate understanding that goes beyond what AI can produce.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

AI in Higher Education Market: \$13.46 Billion by 2030

The Business Research Company projects the AI in higher education market will grow from \$3.03 billion in 2025 to \$4.09 billion in 2026 (CAGR 35.0%), reaching \$13.46 billion by 2030 (CAGR 34.7%). Growth drivers include the expansion of online learning, demand for personalized learning experiences, smart campus

initiatives, and deeper integration of AI with learning management systems.

\$3.03B

Market size 2025

\$4.09B

Market size 2026

\$13.46B

Projected 2030

5 Emerging Trends

Key patterns distilled from this week's coverage

1 The Confidence Gap as the New Access Gap

With AI use now near-universal among students, the primary challenge has shifted from access to competence. The HEPI and Digital Education Council surveys converge on a single finding: students are using AI extensively but lack confidence in using it well, and institutions are not yet closing that gap. The next frontier for higher education AI strategy is not tool deployment but structured AI literacy development.

2 A Shift Towards Assessing Process Over Product

The increasing prevalence of generative AI is forcing educators to rethink assessment strategies. As highlighted in the Inside Higher Ed opinion piece, the focus is shifting from grading the final output to assessing the student's thinking process, reasoning, and ability to justify their work. This trend is leading to more creative and engaging forms of assessment that are less susceptible to AI completion.

3 The Rise of AI-Powered Adaptive Tutoring

The development of tools like SkillTree and HiTA, and the research on IncluLearn AI, points to a growing trend of using AI to provide personalized and adaptive learning experiences. These tools aim to supplement, rather than replace, the role of the instructor by providing students with targeted support and feedback.

4 Agentic AI Enters the Classroom

The MindHYVE AI deployment at California Northstate University signals the beginning of a new phase in educational AI: agentic systems capable of taking multi-step, goal-directed actions on behalf of learners. This development warrants close monitoring, as it raises new questions about learner agency, instructor oversight, and the appropriate boundaries of AI autonomy in educational settings.

5 Growing Importance of AI Literacy as a Credential

Boston University's new MEd in AI & Education is one of several signals that AI literacy is becoming a credentialed competency in higher education. As AI becomes more integrated into all aspects of academic and professional life, institutions are beginning to recognize that structured, assessed AI education — not just informal exposure — is necessary to prepare both students and faculty for an AI-augmented world.

6 Data Governance as the Foundation of AI Strategy

Multiple sources this week — EY, Campus Technology, and the HEPI report — converge on the conclusion that data governance is the non-negotiable foundation of any responsible AI initiative in higher education. Institutions that have not yet established clear policies for data collection, use, retention, and sharing are poorly positioned to deploy AI systems responsibly, regardless of the quality of those systems.