

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING Issue #1 · March 6, 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: Feb 28 - Mar 6, 2026 · 18 sources · 6 sections

## Executive Summary

The week of March 6, 2026 brought a significant concentration of activity at the intersection of artificial intelligence and higher education, spanning institutional deployments, new research, policy deliberations, and major platform announcements. Seven developments stand out as most consequential for faculty and institutional leaders.

**93%****STEM faculty  
using GenAI**

New peer-  
reviewed study,  
n=29

**1-10%****Student AI  
capability  
utilization**

vs. power-user  
benchmark  
(OpenAI)

**22%****Institutions  
with AI  
strategy**

Despite 57%  
naming it a  
priority

**900M****Weekly  
ChatGPT users**

OpenAI, March  
2026

**TOOLS****OpenAI Education Initiative****INSTITUTIONS****University of Arizona AI Platform**

New certifications piloted at ASU and Cal State, a Learning Outcomes Measurement Suite, and data showing students use only 1–10% of ChatGPT's full capability range.

Campus-wide FERPA-compliant platform built on Amazon Bedrock, supporting Claude, Gemma, Meta Llama, and Amazon Nova — free for all faculty, staff, and students.

#### RESEARCH

### STEM Faculty GenAI Study

93% of STEM faculty already use generative AI for course design, quiz generation, and student-facing activities — but effective integration requires rethinking assessment structures.

#### INSTITUTIONS

### ASU AI Academy

Year-long cross-disciplinary faculty cohort program building AI literacy across humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences simultaneously.

#### RESEARCH

### EDUCAUSE: The Elevated Faculty Role

A major essay argues that AI does not diminish but elevates the faculty role — positioning Centers for Teaching and Learning as among the busiest places on campus.

#### POLICY

### The Governance Gap

57% of leaders name AI a priority, but only 22% have an institution-wide strategy. New frameworks from EdTech Magazine and Core Education address this structural deficit.

## 1 Major News & Developments

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

#### TOOLS

### 1.1 OpenAI's Education Initiative: Closing the AI Capability Gap

OPENAI GLOBAL AFFAIRS • MARCH 6, 2026 | STANFORD HAI • MARCH 4, 2026

OpenAI published a comprehensive education policy statement alongside the launch of several new tools and programs aimed at helping universities close a substantial 'AI capability gap.' The initiative is grounded in de-identified usage data showing that college-aged individuals lead or tie for the lead in five of eleven major ChatGPT capability categories — including writing, analysis, creative work, coding, and learning. Yet even advanced student users engage with only 1–10% of what OpenAI defines as 'power user' behavior, indicating that structured institutional support can meaningfully deepen student AI proficiency.

Implication for higher education: The Learning Outcomes Measurement Suite represents a potentially significant development for institutional research on AI's pedagogical impact. Faculty and administrators should monitor its rollout closely, as it may provide the empirical evidence base that has been largely absent from AI-in-education discourse to date.

*Even advanced student users engage with only 1–10% of what OpenAI defines as 'power user' behavior.*

| TOOL / PROGRAM                      | DESCRIPTION                                                                              | STATUS                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| OpenAI Certifications               | Stackable credentials for students, faculty, and staff demonstrating practical AI skills | Piloting at ASU & Cal State |
| Learning Outcomes Measurement Suite | Tracks AI's impact on reasoning, critical thinking, and mastery at institutional scale   | Coming soon                 |
| ChatGPT Quizzes & Study Mode        | In-product learning tools that guide students through material with calibrated questions | Available now               |
| Prism                               | LaTeX-native research workspace integrating frontier AI models for scholarly writing     | Available now               |
| ChatGPT for Teachers                | Resources developed in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers              | Available now               |

POLICY

1.2 Academic Integrity Under Pressure: AI Cheating in All Modalities

NPR / INSIDE HIGHER ED · MARCH 3-5, 2026

NPR's ongoing investigative series profiled the divergent approaches faculty are taking to generative AI in their courses. English professor Dan Cryer described AI-assisted writing as analogous to 'bringing a forklift to the gym' — a tool that may accomplish the task while defeating the purpose. By contrast, Leslie Clement at Johnson C. Smith University co-created a course called 'African Diaspora and AI' that examines how AI affects communities of African descent globally, actively encouraging students to use AI for outlining, feedback, and source comparison.

Implication: Even face-to-face class participation assignments and in-class exams are now vulnerable to AI-assisted academic dishonesty, as students use smartphones and earpiece devices to access AI tools in real time. The most durable response is pedagogical redesign — shifting assessment toward process documentation, oral defenses, and iterative drafts — rather than detection and prohibition.

*If I'm putting something out, I want it to be something that I'm proud to say this is mine. — Duke pre-med student*

## RESEARCH

### 1.3 EDUCAUSE: The Elevated Faculty Role in the AI University

EDUCAUSE REVIEW · MARCH 3, 2026

A team of five scholars and practitioners — Gamby, Koblic, LeBlanc, Moldoveanu, and Siemens — argued that the age of AI does not diminish the faculty member's role but expands and elevates it. The essay identifies three structural shifts: faculty must learn to work with AI teaching assistants; must shift instruction away from knowledge transfer toward higher-order work (critical thinking, ethical reasoning, professional judgment); and must prioritize genuine relationships with students, recognizing that mentorship and 'mattering' cannot be replicated by any algorithm.

The authors conclude that higher education becomes 'one of the last social institutions capable of cultivating the habits of mind a democracy requires.' This essay provides a compelling intellectual framework for faculty development conversations and is recommended as a foundational reading for AI pedagogy

workshops.

## POLICY

### 1.4 Inside Higher Ed: The Case for Comprehensive AI Governance

INSIDE HIGHER ED — ONLINE: TRENDING NOW · MARCH 6, 2026

Ray Schroeder's column offered a systems-level critique of universities' current 'Whac-A-Mole' approach to AI — responding to each new challenge or opportunity in isolation, accumulating a patchwork of incompatible vendors, inconsistent policies, and uncoordinated upgrade cycles. He draws on striking adoption data: 92% of U.K. students now use AI in some form (up from 66% in 2024), and 86% of students globally use AI in their studies, with 25% doing so daily.

Schroeder argues that universities need tightly structured governance committees with cross-institutional representation — spanning academic affairs, libraries, student services, athletics, financial aid, and operations — to manage AI as the pervasive institutional infrastructure it is becoming.

## RESEARCH

### 1.5 New Research: STEM Faculty Perspectives on Generative AI

ARXIV PREPRINT (CS.CY) · MARCH 4, 2026

A focus group study with 29 STEM faculty members at a large U.S. public university provides granular empirical data on how faculty are integrating generative AI. Key findings: 93% are using GenAI for teaching and learning, primarily for quiz generation, rubric creation, and lecture slides. Students are using AI for brainstorming and code generation, but faculty note that students often cannot debug code they did not write themselves.

The study concludes that effective GenAI integration requires rethinking not just tools but the entire assessment and governance infrastructure of the institution. The finding that 93% of STEM faculty are already using GenAI — largely without formal institutional guidance — underscores the urgency of professional development frameworks.

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## 2 Institutional Implementations

*New programs, platforms, and partnerships launched this week*

### INSTITUTIONS

### 2.1 University of Arizona: Campus-Wide AI Platform

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA NEWS · MARCH 5, 2026

Built on Amazon Bedrock, the U of A AI Platform provides all faculty, staff, and students with free, FERPA-compliant access to five AI tools. The first tool, 'U of A Gen AI,' allows users to choose from five large language models: Claude, OpenAI, Gemma, Meta Llama, and Amazon Nova. By end of 2026, the platform will expand to include a public-facing campus chatbot, an Arizona AI Assistant for custom departmental chatbots, and AI sandboxes for controlled experimentation.

### INSTITUTIONS

### 2.2 ASU: The College AI Academy

ASU NEWS · MARCH 4, 2026

ASU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences launched a year-long, monthly faculty cohort program led by Assistant Dean for AI and Emerging Digital Technologies Kyle Jensen. The interdisciplinary academy spans humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Notable projects: a custom AI lab partner bot for psychology students, a structured AI interview tool for communication courses, and a suite of custom GPTs including tutors, mock debaters, and gamified lecture simulations.

### INSTITUTIONS

### 2.3 University of Northern Iowa: New AI Curriculum

INSIDE UNI · MARCH 3, 2026

UNI launched three new AI-focused programs: an Artificial Intelligence major in the Wilson College of Business, a Certificate in Applied AI for Business, and a Mathematics of Artificial Intelligence undergraduate major. The mathematics-

focused major is notable for its emphasis on theoretical foundations — calculus, linear algebra, probability, optimization, and deep learning mathematics — positioning graduates to understand and improve AI systems at a fundamental level.

#### INSTITUTIONS

### 2.4 NUS School of Computing × OpenAI

NUS NEWS · MARCH 6, 2026

NUS Computing formalized a collaboration with OpenAI to integrate Codex and ChatGPT Edu into over 30 undergraduate courses spanning software engineering, systems development, and industry-linked capstone projects. The partnership aims to produce 'AI-native graduates' who combine strong computing fundamentals with practical AI fluency. Singapore already ranks among the most highly engaged countries globally for Codex usage.

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## 3 Research & Studies

*Peer-reviewed findings and new publications from the past week*

### RESEARCH

#### 3.1 Faculty AI Adoption Trajectories

INTERACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (TAYLOR & FRANCIS) · 2026

A new peer-reviewed study examines how university teachers adopt and practice AI over time, finding that adoption trajectories are neither linear nor uniform. The study notes that over three-quarters of universities had experimented with AI-powered platforms by 2023. The research identifies distinct faculty archetypes — early adopters, cautious experimenters, and resisters — and argues that effective institutional support must be differentiated to address each group's distinct concerns and motivations.

### RESEARCH

#### 3.2 AI and Accessibility in Higher Education

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE / TEACH ACCESS · MARCH 2026

A comprehensive resource examines how AI both enables and potentially hinders accessibility for students with disabilities. The publication identifies specific challenges — including biases and ableist assumptions embedded in training data — while cataloguing AI's potential as an assistive technology. Practical recommendations for educators and administrators on implementing AI inclusively are included, with example activities and discussion questions.

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## 4 Policy & Governance

*Institutional frameworks, governance structures, and regulatory developments*

POLICY

4.1 The Governance Gap: EDUCAUSE 2025 AI Landscape Data

EDUCAUSE 2025 AI LANDSCAPE STUDY

The 2025 EDUCAUSE AI Landscape Study provides the most authoritative quantitative picture of where institutions stand on AI governance. The headline finding is stark: 57% of higher education leaders identify AI as a strategic priority, yet only 22% report having an institution-wide AI strategy, and more than half acknowledge that AI initiatives remain fragmented across their campuses.

A detailed analysis from EdTech Magazine identifies four functional areas that must be represented in any governance structure: academic leadership (to set pedagogical policy), IT services (to provide visibility into campus AI use), IT security (to manage risk and validate tools), and end users — faculty, students, and staff — who will be affected by the policies.

*Bring the people to the table who will enact and be affected by the policy. When people feel safe and heard, true innovation can happen. — ACC Administrator*

| INSTITUTION              | STRUCTURE                                          | KEY FEATURES                                                       |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cornell University       | Vice Provost for AI Strategy + AI Strategy Council | New executive role; interdisciplinary council                      |
| NC State University      | Executive Director, Data Science & AI Academy      | Co-chairs campuswide AI Advisory Group                             |
| Austin Community College | Collegewide AI Strategic Planning Committee        | Inclusive membership; enterprise tool rollout (Gemini, NotebookLM) |
| University of Arizona    | Office of Responsible AI                           | Conducted needs assessment before platform launch; FERPA-compliant |

## 5 Emerging Trends

*Key patterns distilled from this week's coverage*

### 1 The AI Capability Gap as an Institutional Responsibility

OpenAI's data showing students use only 1–10% of AI's full capability range reframes the institutional challenge. The question is no longer whether students are using AI, but whether institutions are helping them use it well. Structured access through programs like ChatGPT Edu demonstrably accelerates capability development, suggesting passive access is insufficient.

### 2 From Tool Adoption to Pedagogical Redesign

The most sophisticated faculty and institutional responses share a common thread: they are not primarily about adopting new tools, but about redesigning the pedagogical structures — assessments, assignments, feedback loops — within which those tools operate. The STEM faculty research, the ASU AI Academy, and the Every Learner Everywhere catalog all reflect this shift.

### 3 AI Governance as Structural Redesign

The EDUCAUSE governance data converges on a single insight: the constraint on AI value in higher education is not AI capability, but institutional design. Fragmented governance, disconnected data systems, and incremental budgeting prevent AI from generating enterprise-level impact. Institutions making the most progress have redesigned their decision-making structures, not just their tool inventories.

## 4 The Relational Imperative

Multiple sources this week converge on the conclusion that the most durable competitive advantage of human faculty in an AI-augmented university is relational: the ability to build genuine relationships with students, provide mentorship, and model ethical reasoning. This is increasingly positioned as the core value proposition of residential higher education.

## 5 Global Acceleration of Institutional AI Partnerships

The NUS-OpenAI and SFBU-OpenAI partnerships, alongside ongoing ChatGPT Edu deployments at dozens of universities globally, signal that the pace of institutional AI adoption is accelerating internationally. Institutions that have not yet formalized their AI access and governance frameworks are falling further behind peers who have.

## 6 Liberal Arts as an AI-Era Asset

Elon University President Connie Book's observation at the ACE conference — that a liberal arts education may be uniquely suited to the AI era because it develops 'connecting the dots and critical thinking' skills that AI cannot replicate — echoes the EDUCAUSE faculty role essay and represents an emerging counter-narrative to the view that AI threatens the humanities.

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## 6 Sources

*All 18 cited references for this issue*

[1] Ensuring AI Use in Education Leads to Opportunity  
OpenAI · Mar 6, 2026

[2] Introducing the U of A AI Platform  
University of Arizona News · Mar 5, 2026