

Supporting AI readiness in higher education

30.9.2026 - | Google Italia

At the EDUCAUSE annual conference, Google.org announced its support of three higher education initiatives to scale ethical AI readiness, modernize institutional planning, and expand student success.

Editor's note: This week we're joining thousands of faculty and administrators at EDUCAUSE, one of the United States' biggest higher education technology exhibitions. Visit us at Booth #700, where you can see demos of Gemini for Education, Gemini Notebook, and the latest Google Cloud AI solutions. Follow along on X and Facebook for the latest updates.

As higher education leaders gather this week at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference, AI is undoubtedly top of mind for all. While this technology offers significant opportunities to support students, faculty, and staff, many institutions — especially community colleges and public university systems — face resource constraints. Recent studies indicate that 41% of higher-ed educators say they have not received any formal training on using AI tools in learning environments.

To help close this gap, Google.org is supporting two higher education initiatives focused on keeping educators at the heart of using AI:

Supporting adult learners

Despite making up at least a third of higher education enrollments for decades, adult learners 25 and older are more likely to drop out, returning for their second year at a rate 35 percentage points lower than traditional-age students.

To address systemic barriers for these students, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU), in partnership with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), is enhancing its Urban Adult Learner Institute (UALI).

Supported by Google.org, USU is integrating Grow with Google resources and AI-integrated lessons into its professional development certification. By equipping higher education practitioners, including faculty and advisors, with practical, hands-on tasks, schools can offer students better career guidance and help them succeed. Educators across 30 universities will test these new methods so other schools can easily replicate what works to ensure success for adult learners.

Creating new models for career-connected learning

While traditional internships have long been the standard for career readiness, overwhelming demand from students and employers has created a need for scalable new approaches.

To meet this moment, USU is leading a project to scale career-focused community-based learning (CBL) enhanced by AI. Over the next 15 months, USU will collect and qualitatively analyze 10 models at member institutions, publish case studies, and convene a working group to develop a research and practice agenda. The initiative will create flexible work-based learning pathways across diverse academic disciplines, expanding workforce readiness for a wide range of students.

Reimagining strategic planning

Strategic planning at community colleges is often treated as a compliance exercise rather than an engine for innovation. Through its Reimagining Community Colleges (RCC) initiative, Education Design Lab (The Lab) is helping two-year institutions transform that dynamic and prepare students for the future of work with support from Google.org.

Following a successful summit of educators this week and a cohort of five colleges launching redesign plans, a new national competition will launch in early 2027 for a state-level community college system to undergo a two-year initiative to use technology-enabled solutions to better serve their students. This upcoming phase will apply The Lab's Future of Learning framework to build scalable, durable solutions that strengthen continuous innovation across campuses.

To explore free training resources and learn more about our education initiatives, visit the Google for Education Learning Center or connect with our teams this week at EDUCAUSE.

<https://blog.google/company-news/outreach-and-initiatives/google-org/educause-2026>