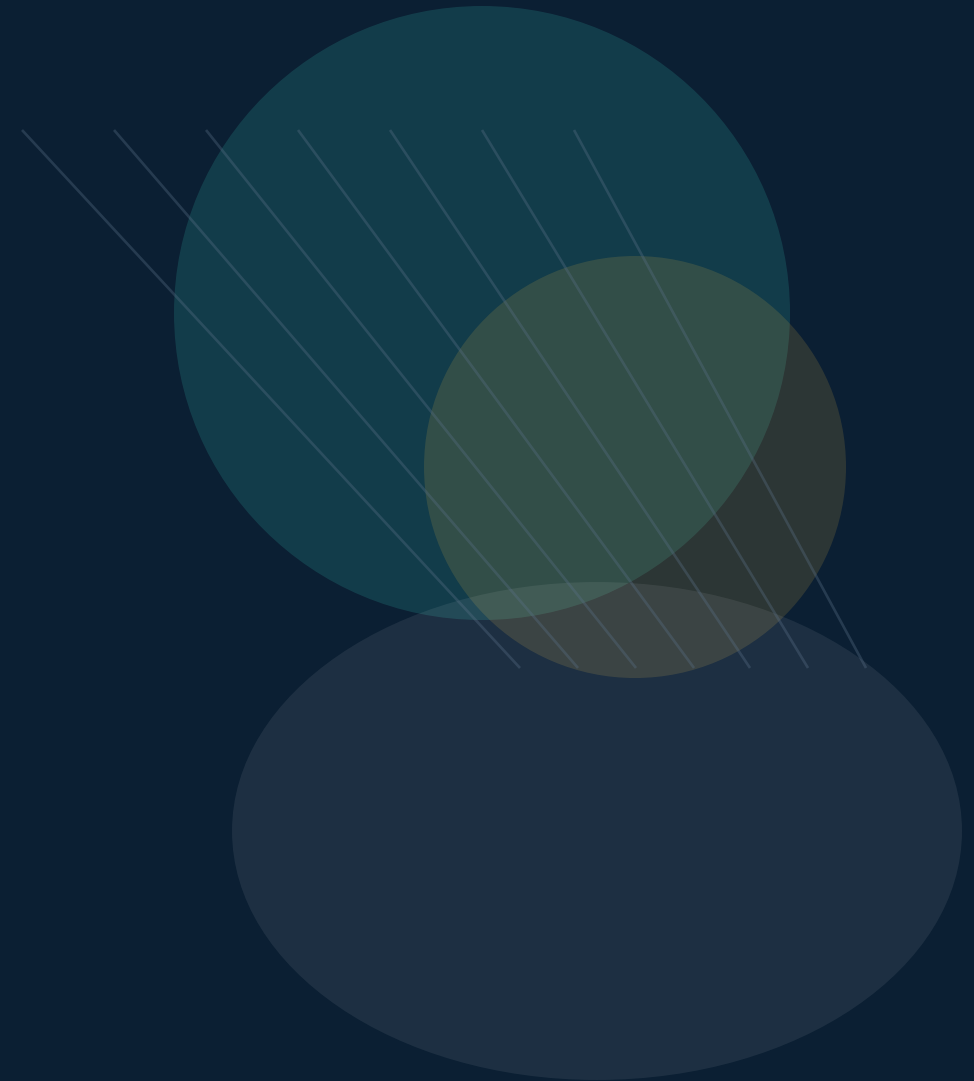


AI in Higher Education

Promise, reality, and what we learned from the AAC&U Conference

Rapid capability gains,
Agentic workflows,
We are behind but ahead of many schools,
Questions



The promise is superhuman. The reality is “alien machine, no manual.”

THE PROMISE

Superhuman speed
Elegant answers
Effortless productivity



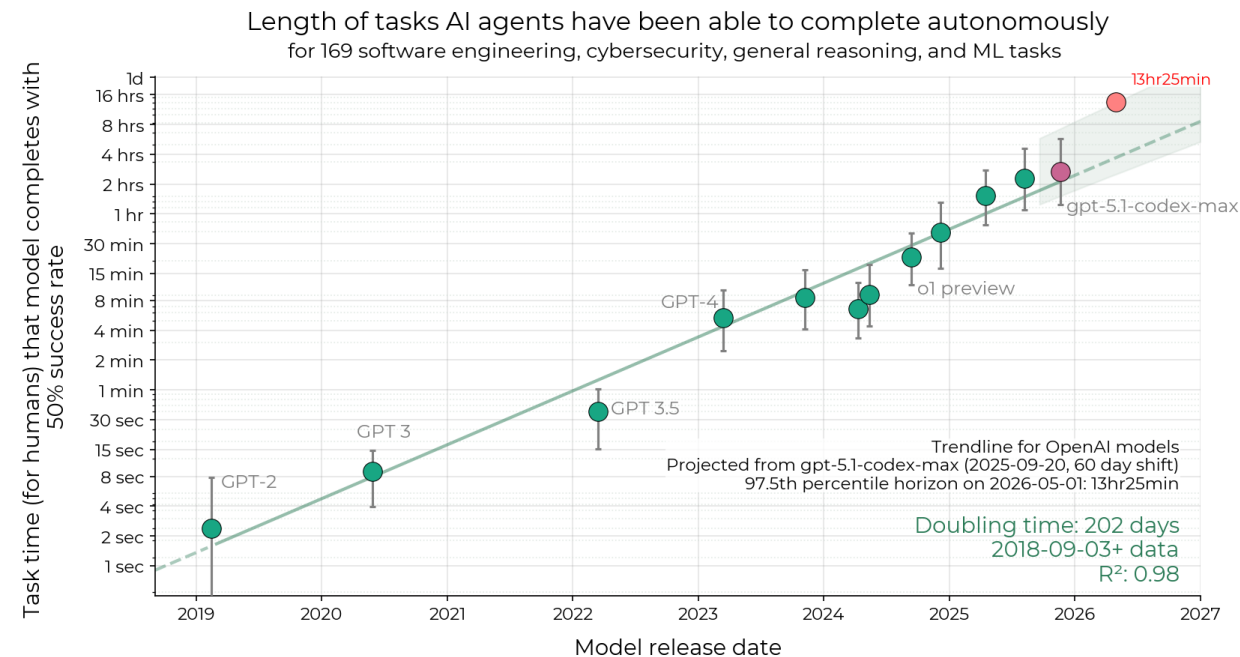
THE REALITY

Alien technology
No instructions
Sometimes comically bad



...and yet it still saves the day often enough that ignoring it is no longer a serious option.

The important change: capability is still moving fast



METR current-model time-horizon chart

Since late 2024, the practical jump has been less about “chat” and more about reliable execution, iteration, and tool use.

88%

Organizations using AI

4 in 5

University students using genAI

60% → ~100%

SWE-bench Verified in one year

Bottom line: if you are comparing AI in April 2026 to what you saw a year ago, you are comparing different eras.

Sources: METR 2026; Stanford HAI AI Index 2026

Top AI developments in the last 7 days

My quick top 3 by breadth of rollout and likely near-term impact

Big theme this week

Less about better chat.
More about execution, research, and multimodal production.

1 MULTIMODAL PRODUCTION

OpenAI ChatGPT Images 2.0 / gpt-image-2

Apr. 21 rollout

ChatGPT plans + API + Codex

Stronger editing, layout control, text rendering, and instruction following

Why it matters: image generation and editing is becoming mainstream production software.

2 AGENTIC RESEARCH

Google Deep Research Max

Apr. 21 announcement

Built on Gemini 3.1 Pro

MCP support, native visualizations, and research across the web or custom sources

Why it matters: research and analyst workflows are moving toward longer-horizon agents.

3 FRONTIER MODEL UPGRADE

Anthropic Claude Opus 4.7

Apr. 16 general availability

Stronger software work, image analysis, instruction following, and creative tasks

Another step up in high-end general-purpose and agentic work


Why it matters: the frontier models are still improving in practical, work-relevant ways.

Runner-up: Gemini 3.1 Flash TTS for real-time voice interfaces

Sources: OpenAI (Apr. 21, 2026); Google (Apr. 21, 2026); Anthropic (Apr. 16, 2026)

Agentic AI


Autonomous. Goal-Driven. Cross-Workflow.

 Coordinates across goals, tools, and workflows



Agent

Scoped. Tool-Using. Task-Focused.

 Operates within a defined scope

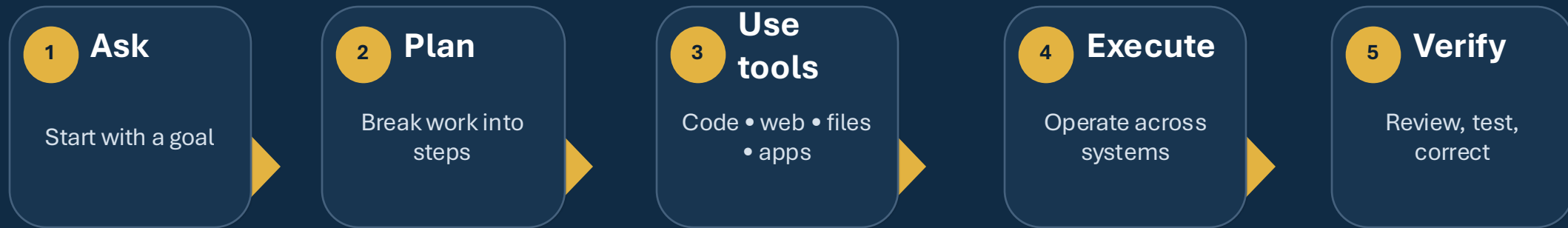
Chatbot

Answers. Explains. Helps.

技術で世界を変える

Rise of agentic AI

From answering questions to planning, using tools, executing, and checking work



Examples right now

- Claude Code • Claude Cowork • Codex
- Computer Use • Claude Design

**If you are not using them,
you are behind the AI curve.**



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Adam Pryor
Keynote Speaker



May 7, 2026
8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m.



Williamson Conference Center
Youngstown State University



**YOUNGSTOWN
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UNIVERSITY**

What it means for research

The production function for research is changing.

An economic-impact project that once looked like an NSF grant + a sabbatical can now start as a pilot.

The bottleneck shifts from raw drafting toward problem selection, judgment, and verification.

Your example to demo:

Isaiah Andrews (MIT), April 2026:

“Failing to figure out how to take full advantage of these tools would leave you at a major disadvantage... Experimentation, verification, and division of labor are core skills.”

Source: Isaiah Andrews, *Some Thoughts on AI and Research* (MIT, Apr. 3, 2026)

Experiment

Try aggressive uses of better paid models

Verify

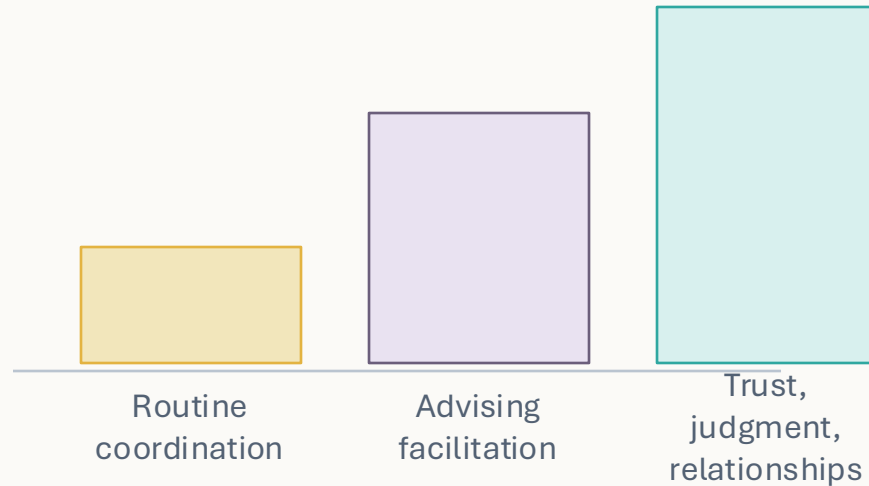
Audit outputs that look plausible

Reorganize labor

Redistribute effort across people + AI

What it means for service

As commodity cognitive work gets cheaper, relational work gets more valuable.



Alex Imas, 2026:

As AI makes commodity production cheap, “spending and employment shift toward ... sectors where human involvement still carries value.”

Source: Alex Imas, “What will be scarce?” (2026)

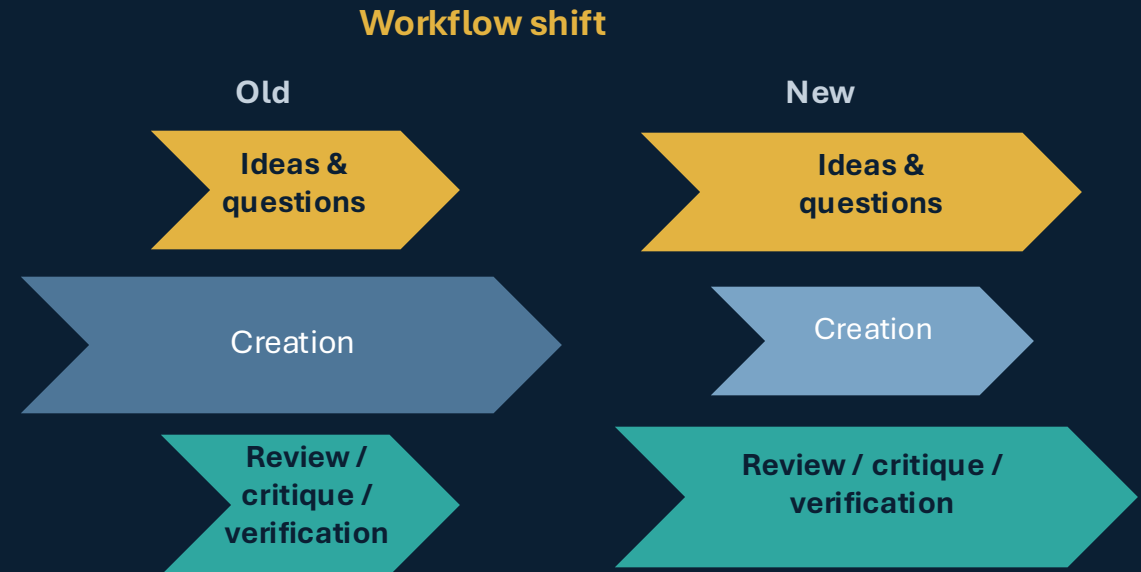
For faculty service, that means the human work of advising, coalition-building, interpreting context, and maintaining institutional trust becomes more central, not less.

What it means for teaching

The larger effect may be structural, not just assignment-level

My read from AAC&U: most places are still 1–2 years behind the curve.

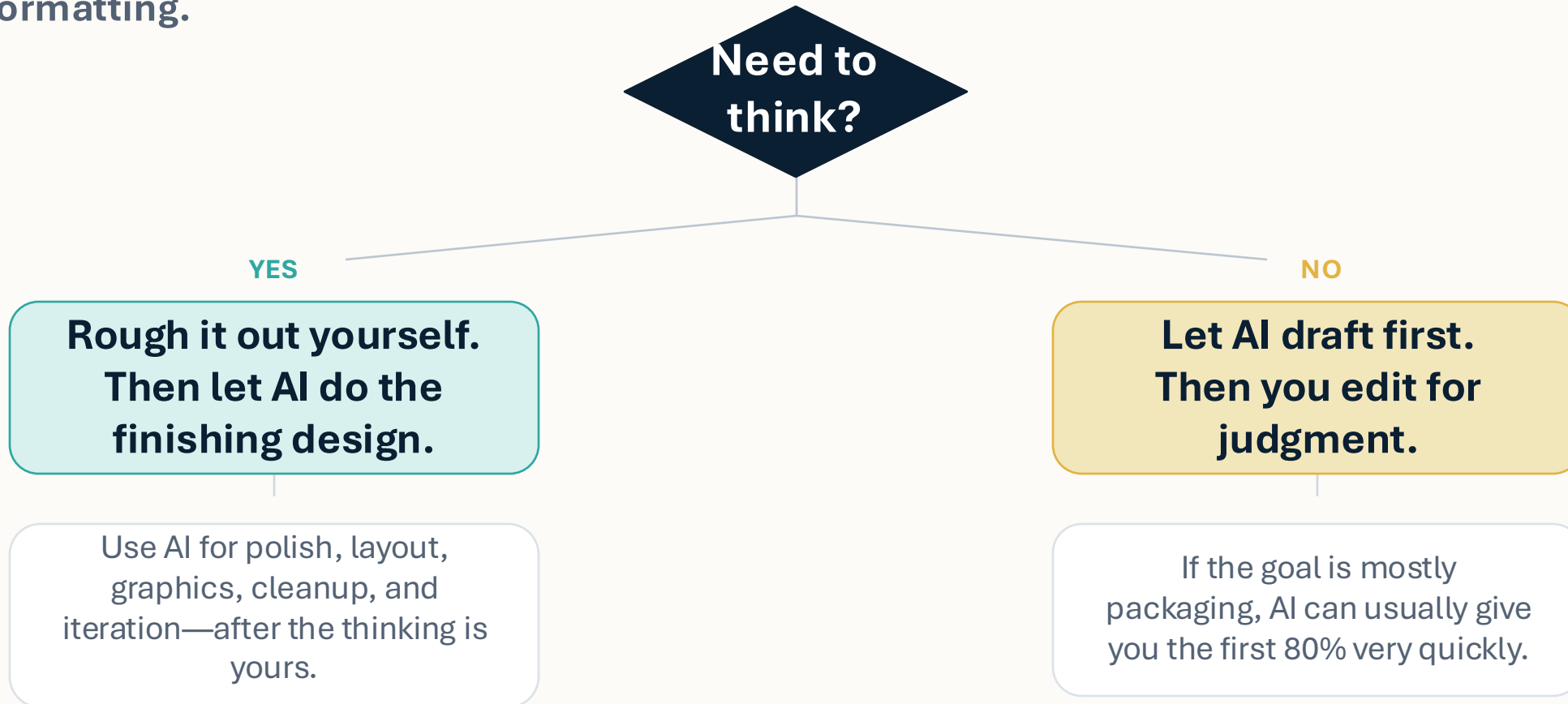
- Students already live in an AI environment. Policy cannot pretend otherwise.
- Online learning is the hardest case right now; good solutions are still immature or nonexistent.
- Dynamic, customized curriculum is coming faster than our governance and pedagogy.
- A few institutions are already building serious roles and structures around this work.



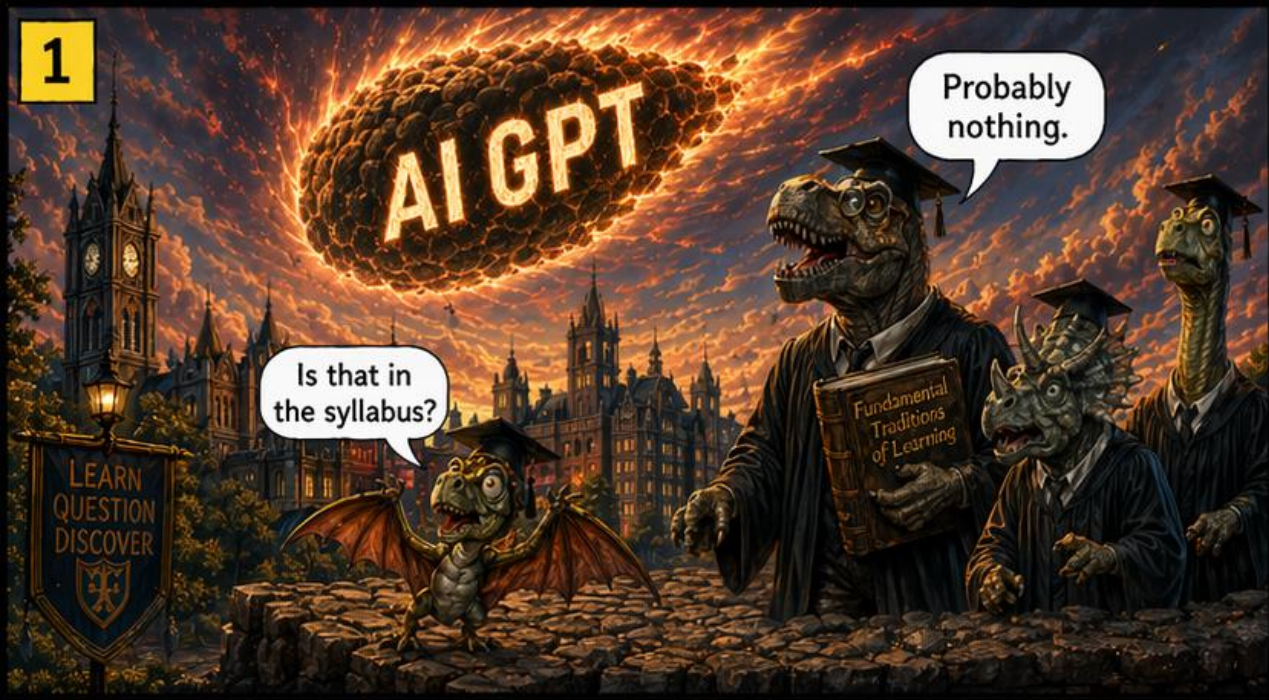
ASU example: AI Learning Solutions Specialist in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Should we still be writing PowerPoints?

My answer: it depends on whether the task is mainly thinking or mainly formatting.



And maybe we should build more things in HTML, LaTeX, notebooks, and other programmatic formats anyway.



Personal recommendation

No instructions means the only real curriculum is experimentation.

1 Equip people

Give people a serious local machine (Mac mini / NUC-style) and budget for a frontier subscription.

2 Try impossible things

Run pilots that feel implausible. That is how you learn the real edge of the tool.

3 Judge ruthlessly

Many outputs look great at first and turn out to be junk. Learn to inspect, not just admire.

**Recommended baseline: a small compute box + ~ \$100/month for a serious frontier model account.
Keep it separate from school and student data**

Structures That Keep Us Sane

How to avoid overtrust, polished nonsense, and institutional self-deception

What goes wrong

- Fluency gets mistaken for truth
- Speed gets mistaken for competence
- Output gets mistaken for learning
- Confidence gets mistaken for judgment
- Isolation gets mistaken for expertise

Structures that help

- Verification for high-stakes uses
- Oral defense, demonstration, and performance
- Visible evidence trails: sources, prompts, revisions
- Peer review and human sign-off
- Shared norms for where AI helps and where it should not decide

The answer is not “ban AI” or “trust AI.” The answer is better structures.

Build an Experimental University

The future will not be designed by policy alone. It will be learned through experimentation, reflection, and shared practice.

Experiment

- Run small, real pilots
- Try tools in teaching, research, and service
- Test before writing rigid rules

Share

- Make workflows visible
- Make failures discussable
- Learn across departments instead of reinventing everything locally

Rebuild

- Redesign assignments and assessments
- Redesign faculty workflows
- Recenter judgment, trust, and verified performance

Questions we should be asking now

- What should students still have to demonstrate directly?
- What becomes more valuable when first drafts become cheap?
- What should AI accelerate, and what should remain deeply human?
- What kind of university do we want to become?

Experiment. Share. Rebuild.

YSU CONFERENCE ON AI IN TEACHING & LEARNING

Thursday, May 7, 2026 Williamson Conference Center

Keep the Conversation Going

YSU Conference on AI in Teaching & Learning

May 7, 2026 · 8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m.
Williamson Conference Center

The conversation has moved beyond “What is AI?” Now we ask: how do we actually teach with it? Join YSU faculty and staff for a day of real strategies, concrete activities, and honest classroom conversation about AI in teaching and learning.

Free to YSU faculty and staff

ysu.edu/ysu-conference-ai-teaching-learning

Sponsored by the Lariccia Family and the YSU Institute for Teaching and Learning

YSU CONFERENCE
ON AI IN TEACHING & LEARNING
Thursday, May 7, 2026 Williamson Conference Center



Scan the QR for session details

Sessions & Schedule

	Room	Presenter	Title
8:30 – 9:10	Gathering Room (3422/23)		Registration and continental breakfast
9:10 – 9:20			Welcome
SESSION 1 9:30 – 10:20	3415	Billy Green	AI as a Teaching Partner: Practical Supports for Planning, Engagement, and Reflection
	3418	AI Mentors	What the Mentors Learned: Insights from a Year of Listening to Faculty and Piloting AI Integration
	2234	Sean Melnik	AI-Supported Assignment Design: Transforming a Traditional Midterm into a Communication-Rich, Collaborative Assessment
	2235	Diana L. Awad Scrocco	Using Student Survey Data and Think-Aloud Data to Develop Ethical Academic Writing Instruction in an Era of Generative AI
SESSION 2 10:30 – 11:20	3415	Jill Tall	The Augmented Instructor: Partnering With AI to Refine and Innovate Course Assessments in an Upper-Level Biology Course
	3418	Patrick Bateman & Christina Saenger	Academic AI Use and Practices: Is It Legitimate? Is It Ethical? Diagnosing Ethical Legitimacy Gaps
	2234	Sarah Gary & Louise Campbell	Augmenting, Not Replacing: Scaffolded & Engaging AI Strategies for Student Success
	2235	Erica Neuman	Teaching at Scale with a Course-Specific GPT
11:20 – 12:30	Gathering Room (3422/23)		Lunch + Student Panel
SESSION 3 12:45 – 1:35	3415	Patrick Bateman	Creating High-Quality Instructional Audio with AI: A Faculty Workflow
	3418	Moderated by Mark Vopat	Perspectives on Academic Integrity Panel: Panel Discussion
	2234	Courtney Borruso	CoPilot Powered Business Analysis in Excel
	2233	Kalyn Huff	Prompt to Presentation
	2235	Ron Davis	Integrating AI to Enhance Quantitative Research Literacy in Social Work Education
1:45 – 3:15	Gathering Room (3422/23)		KEYNOTE Adam Pryor, Ph.D. AI in the Classroom: Practical Strategies for Today's Faculty

AI Efficiencies

Practical tools & workflows

Integrity Perspectives

Ethics, policy & academic integrity

Co Pilot

CoPilot Assignment design & General Use

AI and Assignment Design

Curriculum, writing & assessment design



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