



Reimagining Postsecondary Success in the Age of AI

Inland Empire Regional Spotlight

SEPTEMBER 2025

At a Glance

In the Inland Empire, artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform how postsecondary students, especially adult learners, access education and navigate career paths to quality jobs. This can help overcome persistent barriers such as time constraints, fragmented supports, and limited digital access. To realize this potential, postsecondary institutions will need to be more flexible, rethinking traditional systems and structures to better manage rapid change. It will also require regional, cross-sector collaboration to ensure accessible AI adoption by addressing key challenges like the digital divide, limited AI literacy, and mistrust of AI.

KEY TERMS

Adult Learners

This report focused on postsecondary learners ages 25–54 with some college education, but no postsecondary degree.

Quality Jobs

Quality jobs offer competitive pay, benefits, stability, opportunities for learning and career growth, and a safe, supportive, and engaging work environment. For businesses and communities, quality jobs lead to a stronger, more resilient workforce with the skills needed to drive economic success today and in the future.

For more information, see [JFF's Quality Jobs Framework](#).

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of the California Postsecondary Artificial Intelligence (CAPSAI) Working Group and external stakeholders consulted throughout the initiative.

In particular, we would like to recognize the contributions of the following organizations, which have helped to shape the research insights through stakeholder interviews and participation in our collective sense-making sessions:

- Inland Empire Growth Organization
- California State University San Bernardino
- Growing Inland Achievement
- Inland Empire Regional Consortium
- UC Riverside
- Chaffey College
- San Bernardino Valley College
- LAUNCH

ABOUT THE CAPSAI WORKING GROUP

The California Postsecondary Artificial Intelligence (CAPSAI) Working Group was formed in November 2024 as a collaborative effort bringing together leaders from higher education, workforce development, community-based organizations, and government, and to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping the future of learning and work. Many of the organizations named in the acknowledgements section participated in the CAPSAI Working Group.

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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is shifting how economic value is created, how work is organized, and which sectors are driving job growth. The pace of this transformation raises the stakes for postsecondary institutions, especially in regions like the Inland Empire, where longstanding barriers already limit economic mobility for postsecondary learners. The Inland Empire, encompassing Riverside and San Bernardino counties, is one of the fastest-growing regions in California and half the population is identified by the Census as African American, Latino, or Native American. Despite this growth, the region faces persistent challenges in postsecondary attainment. Only [25% of Inland Empire adult learners](#) (aged 25-54) hold a bachelor's degree, significantly below the [statewide average of 41%](#).¹

Postsecondary institutions in the region are beginning to experiment with AI-enabled tools that support learner success by streamlining advising, offering personalized instruction, and improving access to career navigation. These applications hold real promise, particularly for adult learners balancing work, caregiving, and financial insecurity.



However, focusing only on technology adoption risks missing the broader transformation underway. AI is not just a tool to improve service delivery; it is a force fundamentally reshaping the labor market. In the Inland Empire, many jobs in logistics, transportation, and advanced manufacturing are at risk of automation, while new opportunities in AI-aligned sectors like cybersecurity, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing are growing. To remain relevant and responsive, postsecondary institutions must evolve in how they prepare learners for this fast-changing world of work.

This transformation exposes deeper institutional barriers that must be addressed. Many colleges face slow curriculum approval processes, limited real-time labor market data, and few opportunities to engage employers in program design. Faculty and staff often lack the resources, incentives, or training to integrate new technologies or adapt to emerging workforce demands. Meanwhile, cultural resistance to change, siloed decision-making, and minimal alignment between workforce and academic priorities further slow progress. These challenges—alongside persistent issues like the digital divide, limited AI literacy, and low trust in new technologies—stand in the way of AI serving as a transformation.

This report, developed by Jobs for the Future (JFF) and informed by conversations with Inland Empire learners, postsecondary leaders, and regional stakeholders, offers a framework for action within the region. Based on national insights from JFF’s AI Call to Action, it presents concrete recommendations for how postsecondary institutions, workforce intermediaries, and employers can integrate AI responsibly and accessibly. The report calls on Inland Empire leaders to build the capacity, agility, and alignment needed to ensure adult learners are prepared to thrive in the age of AI.



About This Document

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About This Document

This document draws from a broad research base, including a statewide survey of over 500 workers and learners, three focus groups with 18 adult learners, and more than 25 interviews with stakeholders from the Inland Empire and the state. Together, these insights provide a framework for understanding how regional, place-based strategies can create new opportunities for adult learners in an economy being rapidly transformed by artificial intelligence.

As AI reshapes the economy, workforce demands, and how people engage with education, Jobs for the Future (JFF) explores its potential to catalyze upward mobility, especially for adult learners navigating complex postsecondary and employment systems. Our central question is: How can AI support postsecondary attainment and improve career navigation, ultimately connecting learners to quality jobs and accelerating economic mobility?



Research Approach

The insights and recommendations presented in this report have been informed by three complementary data gathering approaches at the regional, state, and national levels:

Three focus groups with 16 learners in the Inland Empire:

- Postsecondary learners
- Adult learners
- Dual enrollment

Survey with 500+ workers and learners across California

- Survey to gauge perceptions, barriers, and uses of AI
- Focused on priority populations

Interviews with 25+ regional and statewide leaders spanning:

- Postsecondary
- Philanthropy
- Regional intermediaries
- State/policy leaders
- Employers

Inland Empire Regional Insights

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Inland Empire Regional Insights

This document is a strategic guide for postsecondary leaders, regional intermediaries, philanthropic organizations, and employers working to expand access to meaningful education and career pathways within the Inland Empire and across California.

Together, these insights provide a framework for understanding how regional, place-based strategies can create new opportunities for adult learners in an economy being rapidly transformed by artificial intelligence.



AI for Economic Opportunity: A Call to Action

JFF's [AI for Economic Opportunity and Advancement call to action](#) is a strategic framework designed to prepare people and systems for the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on the workforce and education. The Call to Action has been used to categorize thematic insights from stakeholder interviews and statewide survey findings. For more information, read the full [call to action](#).

VISION

AI development and use should make us all better off, by advancing quality jobs, livelihoods, and human agency and potential.

ACTIONS

WORK & LIVELIHOODS	LEARNING & NAVIGATION	TECHNOLOGY	SYSTEMS
Use AI to create and grow • New products, services, and businesses • Employee-driven innovation Design quality jobs to unlock uniquely human capabilities, with AI as a partner • Understand human skills • Prioritizing job quality	Empower learners and workers with the skills and supports they need to pursue economic opportunities in the age of AI • AI literacy • Future-ready skills • Social capital • Career navigation and coaching	Ensure all can shape and benefit from AI's potential to fuel opportunity • Access • Talent pathways • Training data • Responsible use	Prepare education and workforce systems for a transformed future • Real-time labor market data • Lifelong learning infrastructure • Institutional readiness and technology enablement • A new future of work

Automation and Job Replacement

The Inland Empire is a powerful example of how AI is simultaneously displacing and creating jobs, bringing to life a national trend in real time.

Many regional low-wage occupations, such as packers, laborers, and stockers, within the transportation, logistics, and advanced manufacturing industries are being replaced by automation, underscoring the importance of **reskilling opportunities for workers to transition into quality jobs**.

As of March 2025, the Inland Empire employed **193,600 workers in transportation and warehousing**, with an average annual income of \$36,747², substantially below the median annual income in California of \$95,521 (as of 2023).³ This sector lost 1,400 jobs in April 2025, after gaining 1,300 jobs over the previous year.

Experts anticipate that this trend will accelerate with the integration and advancement of robotics. The potential for logistics, manufacturing, and warehousing automation is particularly high due to the data-rich, process-driven, and cost-sensitive nature of these sectors. Regional experts estimate that **as many as two-thirds of current jobs may be automated or partially automated in the next decade**.



WORK & LIVELIHOODS

At the same time, AI presents a critical opportunity to expand access to future-ready careers in growing industries such as **cybersecurity, health care, and green technology**; these industries were cited by stakeholders as expected to experience high growth with new developments in AI technology.

EXAMPLE INDUSTRY: CYBERSECURITY

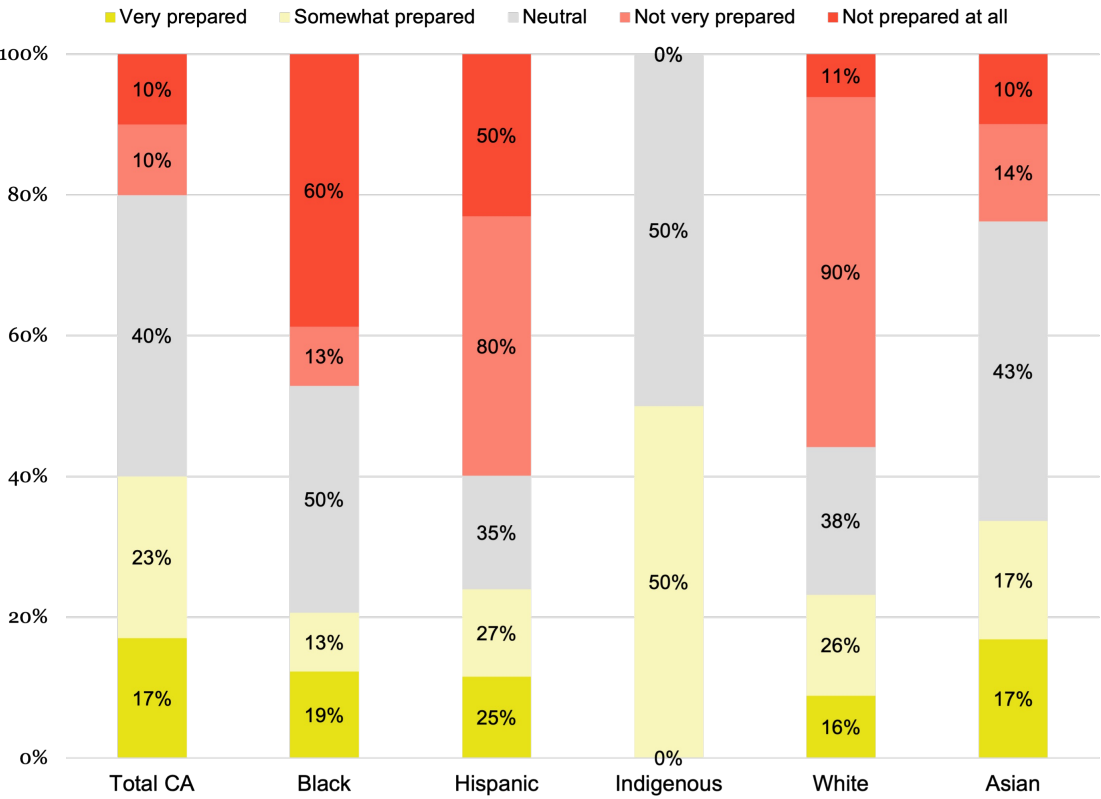
The California Jobs First initiative recognizes [cybersecurity as a key sector for fostering innovation and creating quality regional jobs](#). The increasing demand for professionals skilled in AI-driven threat detection, incident response, and cloud security fuels this expansion, creating new pathways for learners to enter well-paying, in-demand fields. As of early 2025, Riverside alone has nearly 700 unfilled cybersecurity positions, with a **projected job growth of 22% by the end of the year.**⁴



Regional stakeholders, including community college leaders, workforce boards, and industry partners, highlighted **uncertainty around how to effectively reskill workers at high risk of job loss due to automation**. While preparing workers and learners to take advantage of new opportunities in high-growth AI-related fields felt urgent, many felt unclear on translating evolving industry needs into practical training programs.

At the same time, there was consensus that **postsecondary institutions are uniquely positioned to capitalize on this growing demand by expanding existing programs to incorporate a new skills taxonomy needed in the age of AI**. This taxonomy must include both technical competencies—such as data literacy, prompt engineering, and AI system oversight—as well as **durable skills like critical thinking, ethical reasoning, adaptability, and cross-disciplinary collaboration**. Aligning curricula with this blended skill set will better prepare learners for AI-augmented roles across industries.

California survey findings show that 39% of workers and learners surveyed felt prepared to use AI successfully in their jobs



Note: Small sample size for demographic breakdown; base size = 252

AI Adoption Barriers

Across the Inland Empire, postsecondary institutions and regional leaders are beginning to embrace AI's potential to personalize learning and offer flexible learning modalities, particularly for adult learners.

Colleges have hosted regional AI summits, such as the PROPEL AI Symposium, hosted by CSU San Bernardino, and many institutions have launched **AI training workshops** on tools like ChatGPT and Gemini to provide more **tailored learning experiences**.

A narrower set of faculty leaders in AI has initiated curriculum redesign across a broad set of disciplines, including technical and non-technical fields, to explore how AI can be integrated into instruction and assessment. Although most postsecondary institutions across the region are in the early stages of AI adoption, some leading institutions, such as UC Riverside, are taking a broader approach to AI integration. In 2024, UC Riverside launched a campuswide AI initiative focused on embedding AI across teaching and learning, career advising, and other student support services. In May of 2025, the university convened an AI advisory board that brought together industry leaders, learners, and career services staff to shape a collaborative strategy for preparing students for an AI-driven future. A CSUSB Career Services staff member highlighted that job seekers are increasingly expected to discuss AI competency:

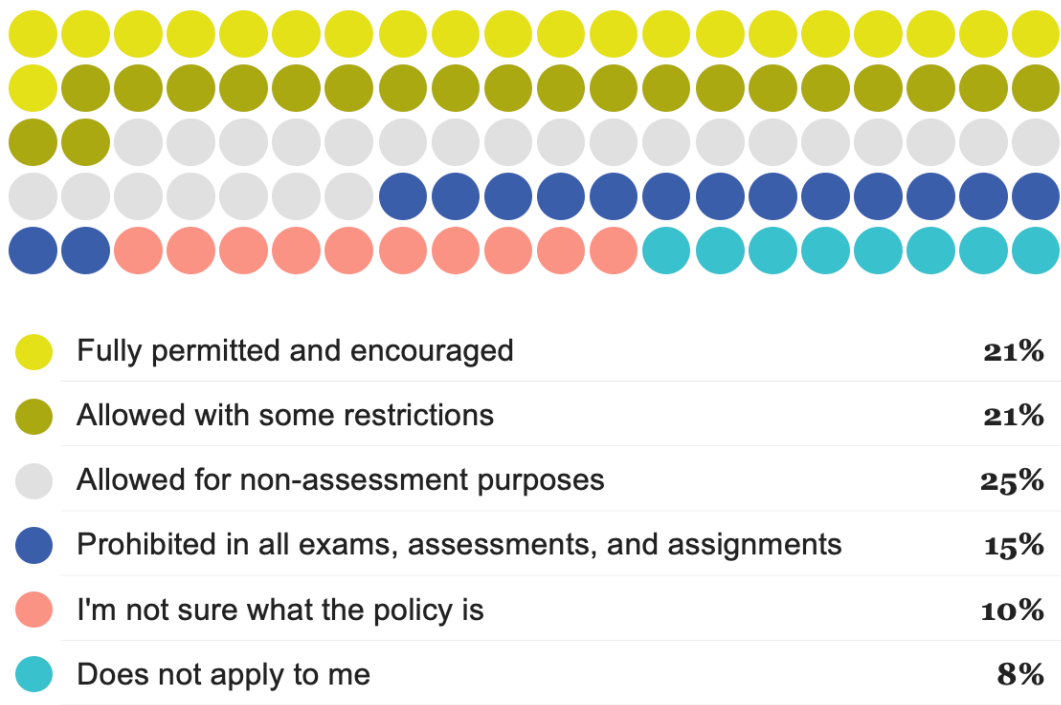
“When you go for job interviews, they are going to ask you, ‘How do you use AI to enhance your work?’”

This regional insight is supported by [JFF's research on national trends](#): job postings naming “AI” or “Artificial/Intelligence” increased by 108% between December 2022 and December 2024 (from 730,000 job postings in December 2022 to 1.5 million in December 2024).

JFF’s **focus groups with 16 learners across the region** revealed specific learner populations—particularly adult students, English language learners, and undocumented students—still have limited access to and awareness of AI.⁵ Mistrust and misinformation remain common, with learners equating AI with surveillance or academic dishonesty. **Programs that build trust, demystify AI tools, and connect usage to tangible goals will be critical to scaling adoption across the region.** The Chancellor’s Office Generative AI Guidance focuses on professional development opportunities to reduce fear and common misconceptions about AI centered on the [HUMANS framework](#)⁶:

- Human-Centered Approach
- Universal Support
- Managed Privacy Controls
- Algorithmic Discrimination Protections
- Notice and Explanation
- Safety and Security

California survey findings revealed that only 21% of students reported that AI is fully permitted and encouraged



AI has proven to be a valuable tool in career navigation, especially for learners in regions like the Inland Empire that have limited institutional capacity and career advising staff. As observed through interviews with UC Riverside's and CSU San Bernardino's Career Services Offices, custom-built career support tools, such as CareerVillage and Quinncia, are freeing up capacity for college advisors by automating routine tasks, like resume feedback and college matching, allowing staff to focus on deeper, relationship-based coaching.

At the same time, **AI tools are creating more opportunities for learners to “self-serve” career navigation support** through free, consumer-available large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, rather than seeking support from an advisor. In learner focus groups facilitated by JFF, one dual enrollment learner shared that he used AI to figure out what business-related profession he wanted to pursue and even to find part-time job opportunities to support his family while in school. Another student used AI to narrow down college choices: he input his criteria into ChatGPT and narrowed his search down to the top three universities it provided.

Although these AI tools can add capacity and provide more personalized career advising support, there is a risk of taking the AI responses at face value and without additional support from career services staff on how to interpret AI responses and make informed decisions. Postsecondary institutions must rethink the role that career services staff can play to provide **tailored coaching and augment information shared through AI tools**.

The California survey with more than 500 respondents showed only 20% of respondents used AI tools to get a better job, with the primary uses being resume building, analyzing job listings, and interview preparation



Digital Divide and Access

Access to AI tools remains imbalanced, amplifying the existing digital divide across the region.

As of 2023, within Riverside County **77% of households possess a wired internet connection**, such as fiber or cable, which is essential for stable and high-speed access.⁷ **This gap is particularly pronounced in rural and low-income areas**, where infrastructure investments lag, leaving many communities without reliable internet services. Many communities in the region continue to face unreliable internet, lack of devices, and minimal access to AI-enabled platforms, which will continue to be exacerbated by the federal government's termination of California's Digital Equity Capacity Grant in May of 2025.

This gap in access compounds the impact of inconsistent institution-supported access to AI. While some progress has been made, such as CSU campuses offering ChatGPT access for all learners, along with the California Community Colleges launching AI initiatives in partnership with OpenAI, these efforts have not yet been implemented across the system. **Learners risk falling further behind as AI literacy becomes embedded in education and the workplace as a foundational skill.**

PROMISING MODELS AND EXAMPLES

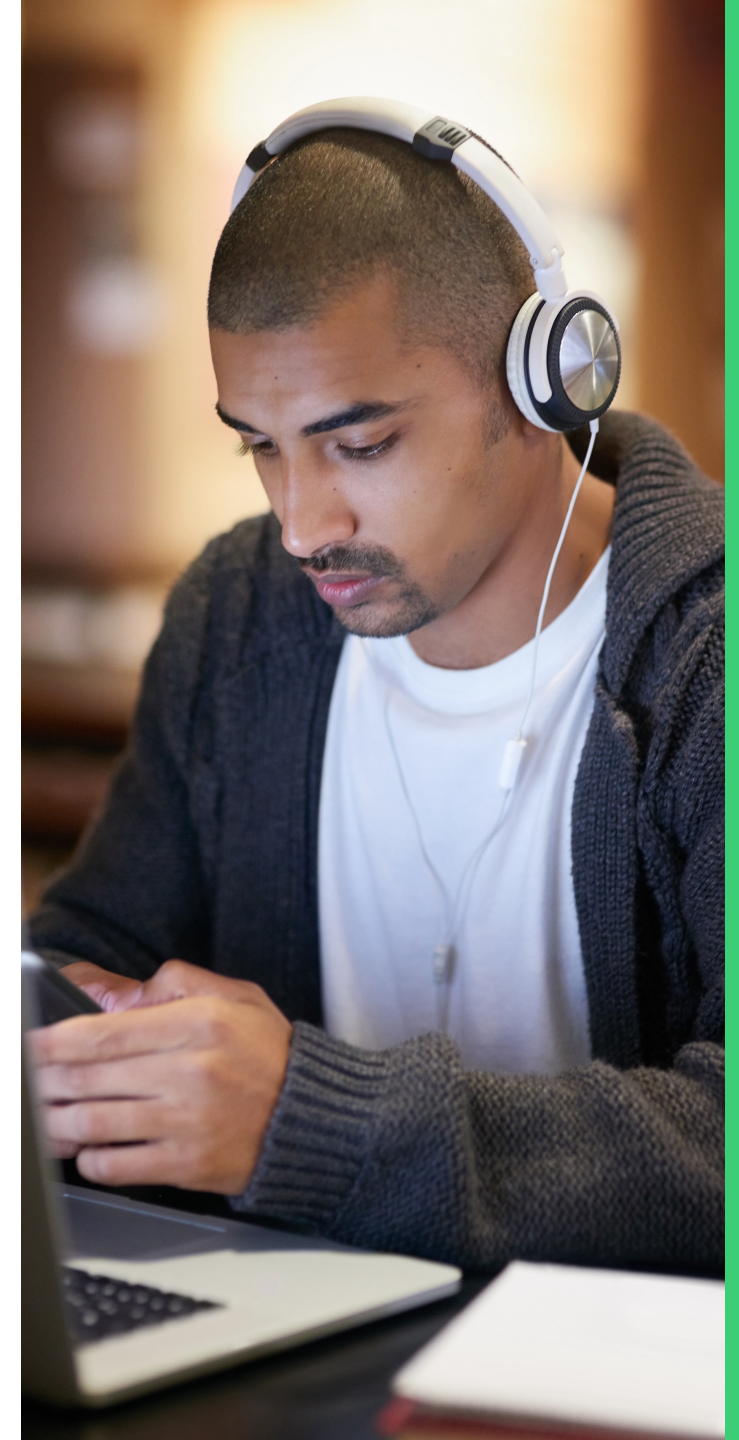
Investing in Programs That Offer Free or Low-Cost AI

Investing in programs that offer free or low-cost AI tools to community college students and adult learners across the region can help to address the growing impact of the digital divide in both access and skills. For example, pilot programs distributing laptops pre-loaded with AI software, PCs that can run AI with little or no internet access, or library kiosks with AI chatbots could close gaps in access. The Inland Empire is ripe for this type of innovation, which could build on programs like Rivco's Digital Equity Program in Riverside County, focusing on providing internet-ready computers to households without them.

TECHNOLOGY

Regional leaders emphasized the **urgent need to build talent pathways that lead populations facing barriers to access and advancement into tech and AI-aligned careers**; at JFF these populations are defined as people without a four-year college degree, people of color, even those with a four-year degree, women, even those with a four-year degree, and people with criminal records.

As AI rapidly transforms the labor market, there's a growing risk that populations including Black, Latine, Indigenous, and low-income communities, as well as people with records, will be left out of the jobs driving future economic growth. Leaders stressed that closing this gap requires more than just exposure to AI; it demands intentional, sustained efforts to develop pathways that start early, offer ongoing support, and lead to real career opportunities. This includes investing in **culturally relevant curriculum, hands-on learning, and partnerships that bridge education, workforce, and industry** to ensure that the people shaping the future of AI reflect the diversity of the communities it will impact.



Enabling Policy Conditions

Leaders across the region stressed the importance of creating enabling AI policies and guidance around AI usage.

Across the region, **a climate of institutional hesitation persists**; faculty members don't feel supported in experimentation and perceive a lack of clear leadership on AI integration. Across the different types of postsecondary institutions we interviewed, including CSUs, UCs, and California Community Colleges, only one institution, UC Riverside, had developed campuswide guidance on which AI tools were supported, which use cases fit best for each tool, and how to gain access to the tools.

Across other institutions, faculty members were developing their own AI policy included in their course syllabi, but their AI policies varied greatly, ranging from full AI prohibitions to specific tool recommendations. In some cases, a lack of AI policy guidance and leadership support has led faculty members to feel that they cannot openly discuss their use of AI tools, fearing punitive action, as evidenced by our interview with leaders at a local community college. **Enabling AI policy frameworks at both the postsecondary institution and regional level** in the Inland Empire is essential to ensure postsecondary learners can **harness the benefits of AI while safeguarding responsible AI deployment, privacy, and workforce resilience.**



SYSTEMS

Regional intermediaries and leaders across the Inland Empire are laying the groundwork for a **coordinated, cross-sectoral AI strategy**. Stakeholders emphasized that for AI to become a true engine of postsecondary attainment and create pathways to quality jobs, the region must align efforts across K–12, community colleges, universities, workforce boards, and employers. As one leader at a regional intermediary noted,

“We need a coordinated AI regional strategy and think about how that can jumpstart postsecondary attainment and preparation for jobs.”

However, the region faces **structural limitations**, such as underinvestment compared to coastal metro areas, which makes the role of intermediaries like the Inland Empire Community Foundation, Inland Empire Growth Opportunity (IEGO), Growing Inland Achievement (GIA), and regional K–16 collaboratives more critical. These groups are well-positioned to broker innovative partnerships, such as AI fellowships or apprenticeships linking students to tech employers, and to help direct state-level investments, like Strong Workforce or K–12 CTE funding initiatives.



Institutional Spotlights

04

UC Riverside Career Services

AI powering career navigation

As AI continues to transform the world of work and learning, [UC Riverside \(UCR\) Career Services](#) is leading campus-wide initiatives to equip students, especially those in STEM and business fields, with the tools and guidance they need to navigate this evolving landscape. Two of UC Riverside's career services specialists, Karina Augustus and Guadalupe Saldivar, are integrating AI-based platforms like Quinnia, which offers tailored support in resume and cover letter development, enabling counselors to shift their focus to deeper, one-on-one career exploration and strategy sessions with students.

Career services staff are actively training their proprietary version of the AI platform based on student needs, while also helping students understand how AI will impact various industries, from engineering to health care. Though platforms like ChatGPT are not widely used in direct advising with students due to institutional caution, Gemini has been approved for use, and safe-use guides are being created to ensure responsible adoption.

In May of 2025, the university convened an AI advisory board that brought together industry leaders, learners, and career services staff to shape a collaborative strategy for preparing students for an AI-driven future. What sets UCR leaders apart from other postsecondary institutions in the region is their focus on cross-disciplinary dialogue to ensure fair and responsible deployment of AI tools across campus.⁸



“When decision-makers are making decisions and they decide this [AI tool] will be much more efficient or much more productive... Who do they have in mind? And who is it that they are leaving out? The limitations of being a human being is that we do have these biases, so the representation in those decision-makers is going to be very essential. And it might come from representation in gender, class, and race, but might also come from discipline. A lot of the decision-makers around AI are coming from technical fields...Having these cross-discipline conversations can be really fruitful in ensuring that there are safeguards when implementing AI.”⁹

GUADALUPE SALDIVAR, UC RIVERSIDE BUSINESS CAREER SPECIALIST



Action Steps and Recommendations

05

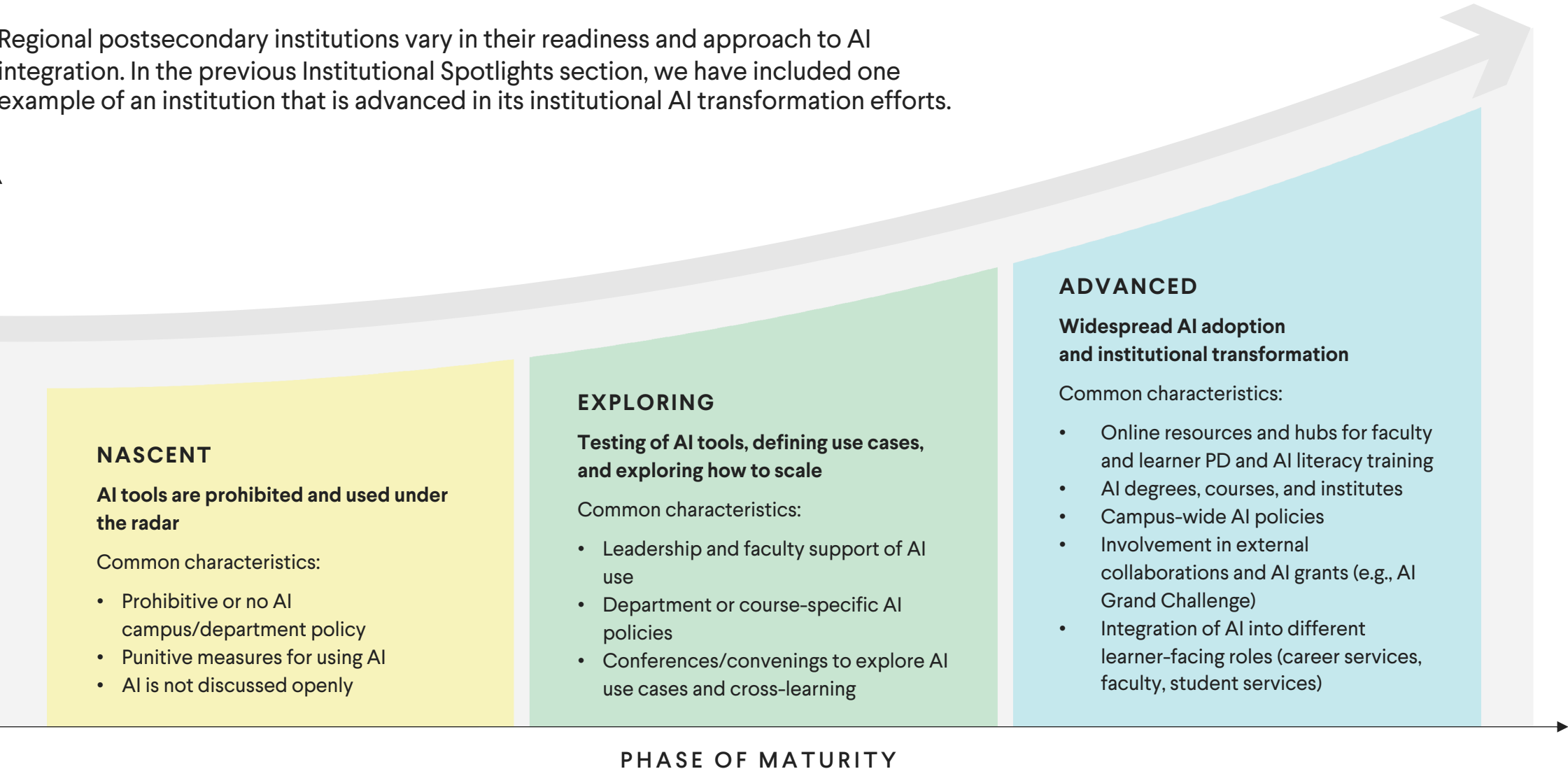
Recommendations Overview

The recommendations are organized by stakeholder type to provide targeted, actionable guidance aligned with the audiences for this report: primarily **postsecondary institutions**, with additional focus on **regional intermediaries** and **philanthropic organizations**. While the promise of AI to advance postsecondary attainment and economic mobility is widely recognized, realizing that potential requires differentiated strategies across these audiences. Postsecondary institutions are positioned to implement programs and support learners directly; regional intermediaries facilitate cross-sector collaboration and elevate community priorities; philanthropic organizations catalyze innovation and fill critical funding gaps; and statewide system leaders set policy, incentives, and infrastructure at scale. Organized into thematic goals to support economic mobility through AI adoption, the recommendations for postsecondary institutions aim to meet organizations where they are in their AI adoption journey, offering actionable pathways from early exploration to advanced integration.

These recommendations build on others for postsecondary and other stakeholders developed in JFF's [AI-Ready Workforce](#) transformation blueprint and [Skills Development in the Age of AI](#) training provider toolkit, and span all four pillars of JFF's AI Call to Action: Work and Livelihoods, Learning and Navigation, Technology, and Systems. They aim to strike a balance between **bold reimagining of the future of postsecondary institutions** and **actionable, immediate action steps**.

Stages of AI Adoption

Regional postsecondary institutions vary in their readiness and approach to AI integration. In the previous Institutional Spotlights section, we have included one example of an institution that is advanced in its institutional AI transformation efforts.



Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

OBJECTIVE 1:

Build awareness and applied knowledge around AI to equip leaders, faculty, and staff with the understanding needed to make informed decisions and integrate AI into teaching, learning, and operations.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE*	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Develop cross-disciplinary dialogue spaces, such as a Community of Practice (CoP) to share promising practices on responsible, accessible AI use. Support faculty in embedding AI tools and concepts and basic AI literacy training into humanities, business, career technical education (CTE), and other fields. Host interdisciplinary trainings and create space for experimentation, especially for non-technical faculty. <i>Reference Resource: PlayLab AI, UC Berkeley School of Education, Chancellor's Office: Playlab Professional Learning Community</i>	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators Faculty
2	Support learner adoption by addressing ethical and security concerns. Offer and/or require training for learners that includes information on responsible data use of AI tools; invest in AI tools that have enhanced security features to keep data safe. <i>Reference Resource: Educause: AI Ethical Guidelines</i>	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators Student Support Services

Stage indicates the level of institutional AI adoption at which this recommendation is most relevant (see previous slide for definitions).

RECOMMENDATION

STAGE

RELEVANT ROLES

3	Invest in faculty and staff AI literacy training, by providing hands-on, applied, and experiential learning opportunities for faculty and staff members. For nascent postsecondary institutions: Consider hosting AI workshops and convenings to discuss key challenges and barriers to AI adoption, such as mistrust of AI. For exploring to advanced: Support experiential learning opportunities, such as hackathons, design labs, and AI "sandboxes," that allow faculty, staff, and students to experiment with emerging AI tools in real-world contexts. These hands-on experiences build institutional readiness and foster a culture of innovation grounded in equity and learner impact. Reference Resource: Educause: AI Literacy in Teaching and Learning: A Durable Framework for Higher Education; Reference Resource: National Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee (NAAIC) (Members Only)	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators Faculty
4	Integrate AI into teaching and learning practices, including curriculum redesign, across disciplines outside of STEM. Support faculty in embedding AI tools into course design, curriculum development, instruction, and assessment to enhance student engagement, personalize learning, and build critical AI literacy. Prioritize hands-on use of AI in assignments and projects so learners gain real-world experience navigating and applying emerging technologies. Reference Resource: American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): Artificial Intelligence Incubator Network; Reference Resource: National Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee (NAAIC) (Members Only)	NASCENT	Administrators Faculty

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

OBJECTIVE 2:

Elevate learner voice and uplift success stories of early adopters on campus to highlight opportunities for innovation with AI that enhance educational experiences and advance institutional priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

STAGE

RELEVANT ROLES

1	Codesign AI supports with learners and provide opportunities for learners to provide direct input through advisory councils and focus groups. Engage learners directly in designing and testing AI tools, programs, and literacy training to ensure the technology and programs are responsive to their needs. Reference Resource: Office of Educational Technology: AI and the Future of Teaching and Learning	NASCENT	Administrators Faculty
		EXPLORING	
2	Integrate career services innovations into academic programs in institutional contexts where career services departments are leading the way. As observed through the Inland Empire research, career services departments are often early adopters of AI and are in close proximity to industry leaders. Leverage the expertise of career services teams by actively listening to their insights and creating structured pathways for their innovations to inform and shape academic programs.	EXPLORING	Administrators (Lead) Student Support Services
		ADVANCED	

RECOMMENDATION

STAGE

RELEVANT ROLES

3	Develop and implement clear, campuswide AI policies that guide responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI across teaching, learning, advising, and operations. These policies should be co-created with input from faculty, students, staff, and industry partners to ensure alignment with institutional values, academic integrity, data privacy standards, and evolving workforce needs. <i>Reference Resources:</i> ASCCC Academic Integrity Policies in an AI World; CSU AI Commons – Ethical and Responsible Use	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
4	Establish current learner and alumni advisory committees to provide a real-time perspective on employment opportunities and workplace skills expectations. These committees can help institutions align programs with evolving industry demands and ensure students are equipped with the skills and experiences that employers value most, especially as AI reshapes job roles, required competencies, and the pace of change in the workplace.	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

OBJECTIVE 3:

Establish the technical infrastructure necessary to enable the responsible and scalable adoption of AI across campus operations, teaching, and learning.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
	Bridge the digital divide to expand access to AI opportunities so that every learner has access to high-quality AI tools.		
1	Invest in broadband infrastructure, distribute laptops pre-loaded with AI software, and offer digital fluency programs to ensure all learners, particularly adult learners and rural residents, can benefit from AI-enabled tools. <i>Reference Resource: AI and Access to Education: Bridging the Digital Divide</i>	NASCENT	Administrators
	Ensure all faculty members, staff, and student support services have access to AI tools and training.		
2	Invest in universal access to AI tools, training, and support for faculty to enable effective integration into teaching and learning. Equip educators with the resources and time needed to lead AI-driven innovations that improve student success and institutional capacity.	EXPLORING	Administrators Student Support Services Faculty
	Develop clear guidance and key decision-making to evaluate whether to adopt existing AI tools (“buy”) or develop custom solutions in-house (“build”) for use in student services and academic programs.		
3	Include considerations such as cost, scalability, data privacy, integration with existing systems, and institutional capacity. <i>Reference Resource: Buy versus build: AI tool adoption in academic settings</i>	EXPLORING	Administrators

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

OBJECTIVE 4:

Develop clear and actionable AI policies that provide guidance on the ethical, effective, and responsible use of AI tools across campus.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Create an institutional scan to map current AI uses, applications, and potential future opportunities across campus. Begin by conducting a comprehensive scan of AI use across the institution to understand where and how it is being applied. Engage departments, faculty, staff, and students to identify existing tools, pilots, and informal uses. Document use cases by function (e.g., instruction, advising, career services, operations) and assess both risks and opportunities. <i>Reference Resource:</i> Developing Institutional AI Policies and Practices: A Framework	NASCENT EXPLORING	Administrators
2	Develop and implement clear, campuswide AI policies that guide responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI across teaching, learning, advising, and operations. These policies should be co-created with input from faculty, students, staff, and industry partners to ensure alignment with institutional values, academic integrity, data privacy standards, and evolving workforce needs. <i>Reference Resource:</i> ASCCC: Academic Integrity Policies in the Age of Artificial Intelligence	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
3	Establish an institutional AI task force composed of faculty, staff, administrators, and student representatives to make critical decisions and provide guidance on appropriate uses on campus. This task force will guide the strategic integration of AI across campus operations and learning, ensure alignment with responsible and accessible deployment of AI tools, and help the institution remain responsive to emerging workforce demands. <i>Reference Resource:</i> UC Riverside: Generative AI at UCR	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators (Lead) Engage Faculty and Staff

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

OBJECTIVE 5:

Build institutional agility to anticipate and respond effectively to the rapid changes AI brings to education and the job landscape.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Conduct a comprehensive review of current degree programs to assess alignment with emerging labor market needs in the age of AI. In partnership with Centers of Excellence and using up-to-date labor market information (LMI), identify programs that are becoming less relevant due to AI-driven industry shifts and consider phasing them out. Use these insights to project future workforce demands and inform the development or expansion of programs that prepare learners for high-growth, AI-resilient careers.	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
2	Develop and institutionalize streamlined curriculum approval processes that allow for rapid updates in response to evolving industry needs driven by AI. This includes creating cross-functional curriculum innovation teams, establishing industry advisory boards with real-time labor market input, and implementing rolling review cycles that enable programs to pilot and scale AI-relevant content quickly.	ADVANCED	Administrators

RECOMMENDATION

STAGE

RELEVANT ROLES

3	Address postsecondary affordability and re-entry barriers faced by adult learners by implementing AI tools that can facilitate enrollment barriers, reduce the time-to-degree, and offer flexible, personalized learning paths. To support the redesign of current degree pathways, leverage AI tools to help learners navigate faster, more efficient routes through their education by analyzing prior learning, career goals, and real-time performance to suggest tailored course selections and interventions. This can shorten the time (and cost) students spend completing degrees or credentials. <i>Reference Resources:</i> Department of Education: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance	ADVANCED	Administrators System Leads
4	Leverage employer partnerships to align education with AI-driven workforce needs. Augment existing employer advisory boards and partnerships to prioritize employer representatives with AI expertise, increasing the frequency of connections and experimenting with innovative work-based learning (WBL) models. <i>Reference Resource:</i> Guide to Essential AI Competencies	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

Objective 2: Elevate learner voice and uplift success stories of early adopters on campus to highlight opportunities for innovation with AI that enhance educational experiences and advance institutional priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

STAGE

RELEVANT ROLES

1	Codesign AI supports with learners and provide opportunities for learners to provide direct input through advisory councils and focus groups. Engage learners directly in designing and testing AI tools, programs, and literacy training to ensure the technology and programs are responsive to their needs. Reference Resource: Office of Educational Technology: AI and the Future of Teaching and Learning	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators Faculty
2	Integrate career services innovations into academic programs in institutional contexts where career services departments are leading the way. As observed through the Inland Empire research, career services departments are often early adopters of AI and are in close proximity to industry leaders. Leverage the expertise of career services teams by actively listening to their insights and creating structured pathways for their innovations to inform and shape academic programs.	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators (Lead) Student Support Services
3	Develop and implement clear, campuswide AI policies that guide responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI across teaching, learning, advising, and operations. These policies should be co-created with input from faculty, students, staff, and industry partners to ensure alignment with institutional values, academic integrity, data privacy standards, and evolving workforce needs. Reference Resources: ASCCC Academic Integrity Policies in an AI World; CSU AI Commons – Ethical and Responsible Use	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
4	Establish current learner and alumni advisory committees to provide a real-time perspective on employment opportunities and workplace skills expectations. These committees can help institutions align programs with evolving industry demands and ensure students are equipped with the skills and experiences that employers value most, especially as AI reshapes job roles, required competencies, and the pace of change in the workplace.	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

Objective 3: Establish the technical infrastructure necessary to enable the responsible and scalable adoption of AI across campus operations, teaching, and learning.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Bridge the digital divide to expand access to AI opportunities so that every learner has access to high-quality AI tools. Invest in broadband infrastructure, distribute laptops pre-loaded with AI software, and offer digital fluency programs to ensure all learners, particularly adult learners and rural residents, can benefit from AI-enabled tools. Reference Resource: AI and Access to Education: Bridging the Digital Divide	NASCENT	Administrators
2	Ensure all faculty members, staff, and student support services have access to AI tools and training. Invest in universal access to AI tools, training, and support for faculty to enable effective integration into teaching and learning. Equip educators with the resources and time needed to lead AI-driven innovations that improve student success and institutional capacity.	EXPLORING	Administrators Student Support Services Faculty
3	Develop clear guidance and key decision-making to evaluate whether to adopt existing AI tools (“buy”) or develop custom solutions in-house (“build”) for use in student services and academic programs. Include considerations such as cost, scalability, data privacy, integration with existing systems, and institutional capacity. Reference Resource: Buy versus build: AI tool adoption in academic settings	EXPLORING	Administrators

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

Objective 4: Develop clear and actionable AI policies that provide guidance on the ethical, effective, and responsible use of AI tools across campus.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Create an institutional scan to map current AI uses, applications, and potential future opportunities across campus. Begin by conducting a comprehensive scan of AI use across the institution to understand where and how it is being applied. Engage departments, faculty, staff, and students to identify existing tools, pilots, and informal uses. Document use cases by function (e.g., instruction, advising, career services, operations) and assess both risks and opportunities. Reference Resource: Developing Institutional AI Policies and Practices: A Framework	NASCENT EXPLORING	Administrators
2	Develop and implement clear, campuswide AI policies that guide responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI across teaching, learning, advising, and operations. These policies should be co-created with input from faculty, students, staff, and industry partners to ensure alignment with institutional values, academic integrity, data privacy standards, and evolving workforce needs. Reference Resource: ASCCC: Academic Integrity Policies in the Age of Artificial Intelligence	NASCENT EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
3	Establish an institutional AI task force composed of faculty, staff, administrators, and student representatives to make critical decisions and provide guidance on appropriate uses on campus. This task force will guide the strategic integration of AI across campus operations and learning, ensure alignment with responsible and inclusive deployment of AI tools, and help the institution remain responsive to emerging workforce demands. Reference Resource: UC Riverside: Generative AI at UCR	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators (Lead) Engage Faculty and Staff

Recommendations for Postsecondary Institutions

Objective 5: Build institutional agility to anticipate and respond effectively to the rapid changes AI brings to education and the job landscape.

	RECOMMENDATION	STAGE	RELEVANT ROLES
1	Conduct a comprehensive review of current degree programs to assess alignment with emerging labor market needs in the age of AI. In partnership with Centers of Excellence and using up-to-date labor market information (LMI), identify programs that are becoming less relevant due to AI-driven industry shifts and consider phasing them out. Use these insights to project future workforce demands and inform the development or expansion of programs that prepare learners for high-growth, AI-resilient careers.	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators
2	Develop and institutionalize streamlined curriculum approval processes that allow for rapid updates in response to evolving industry needs driven by AI. This includes creating cross-functional curriculum innovation teams, establishing industry advisory boards with real-time labor market input, and implementing rolling review cycles that enable programs to pilot and scale AI-relevant content quickly.	ADVANCED	Administrators
3	Address postsecondary affordability and re-entry barriers faced by adult learners by implementing AI tools that can facilitate enrollment barriers, reduce the time-to-degree, and offer flexible, personalized learning paths. To support the redesign of current degree pathways, leverage AI tools to help learners navigate faster, more efficient routes through their education by analyzing prior learning, career goals, and real-time performance to suggest tailored course selections and interventions. This can shorten the time (and cost) students spend completing degrees or credentials. <i>Reference Resources:</i> Department of Education: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance	ADVANCED	Administrators System Leads
4	Leverage employer partnerships to align education with AI-driven workforce needs. Augment existing employer advisory boards and partnerships to prioritize employer representatives with AI expertise, increasing the frequency of connections and experimenting with innovative work-based learning (WBL) models. <i>Reference Resource:</i> Guide to Essential AI Competencies	EXPLORING ADVANCED	Administrators

Recommendations for Regional Intermediaries

1 Lead the development of a regional AI strategy designed to drive economic growth and opportunity for all.

The AI strategy should include components such as recommendations for the development of AI skills from K-12 into lifelong learning, anticipating and building talent for future in-demand roles, supporting employer use of AI for quality jobs, and seeking opportunities to support populations to use AI in pursuit of quality jobs and economic opportunity. Several of the regional intermediaries, such as Inland Empire Growth Opportunity and Growing Inland Achievement and well-positioned to serve as the convener to bring together K-12, postsecondary, employers, workforce boards, and philanthropy around a shared AI road map.

2 Translate employer needs into responsive and accessible AI training pathways.

Collaborate with employers to identify emerging AI-related competencies and ensure that training providers, especially community colleges and workforce partners, can adapt quickly to integrate future-ready competencies into curriculum and learning experiences. This includes integrating digital fluency, uniquely human skills, and the ability to collaborate with AI tools into new and existing programs.

3 Continue to spotlight and scale accessible AI innovations.

Building on the examples included in this document, share effective models around how AI can accelerate economic mobility and postsecondary attainment. Use storytelling, convenings, and regional communications platforms to spread practices that advance both innovation and inclusion.

4 Bridge grassroots and institutional perspectives in AI program design.

Center the lived experiences of postsecondary learners by hosting regular listening sessions, establishing learner advisory boards, or funding participatory design efforts. These insights should directly shape AI-related interventions and help build trust between communities and institutions.

Philanthropy Recommendations

1 Fund regional AI literacy and trust-building efforts.

Invest in community-based AI literacy programs that go beyond technical skills to include emotional and cultural trust-building, particularly for the populations identified by our focus groups: adult students, English language learners, and students who are undocumented or face other barriers to advancement.

2 Support infrastructure for responsible experimentation.

Provide flexible, multi-year grants for colleges and intermediaries to pilot AI-integrated programs in learning, advising, and workforce development. Prioritize initiatives that include safeguards around ethics, privacy, and transparency. Include in-kind supports where appropriate, such as access to technical fellows or advising.

3 Build local AI capacity in rural and under-resourced communities.

Target grantmaking to fill geographic gaps in AI access—such as areas with weak broadband, limited faculty professional development opportunities, or no AI-aligned workforce training. Partner with local libraries, adult schools, and community colleges to extend reach.

4 Catalyze cross-sector collaboration across the region to support responsible and ethical AI implementation.

Building on existing statewide funder AI collaboratives, align efforts across K–12, postsecondary, workforce, and economic development in service of helping local employers identify which jobs will be in demand and how the postsecondary ecosystem can train workers to meet those needs. Use philanthropy’s convening power to reduce duplication and accelerate shared learning.



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Endnotes

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Endnotes

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