

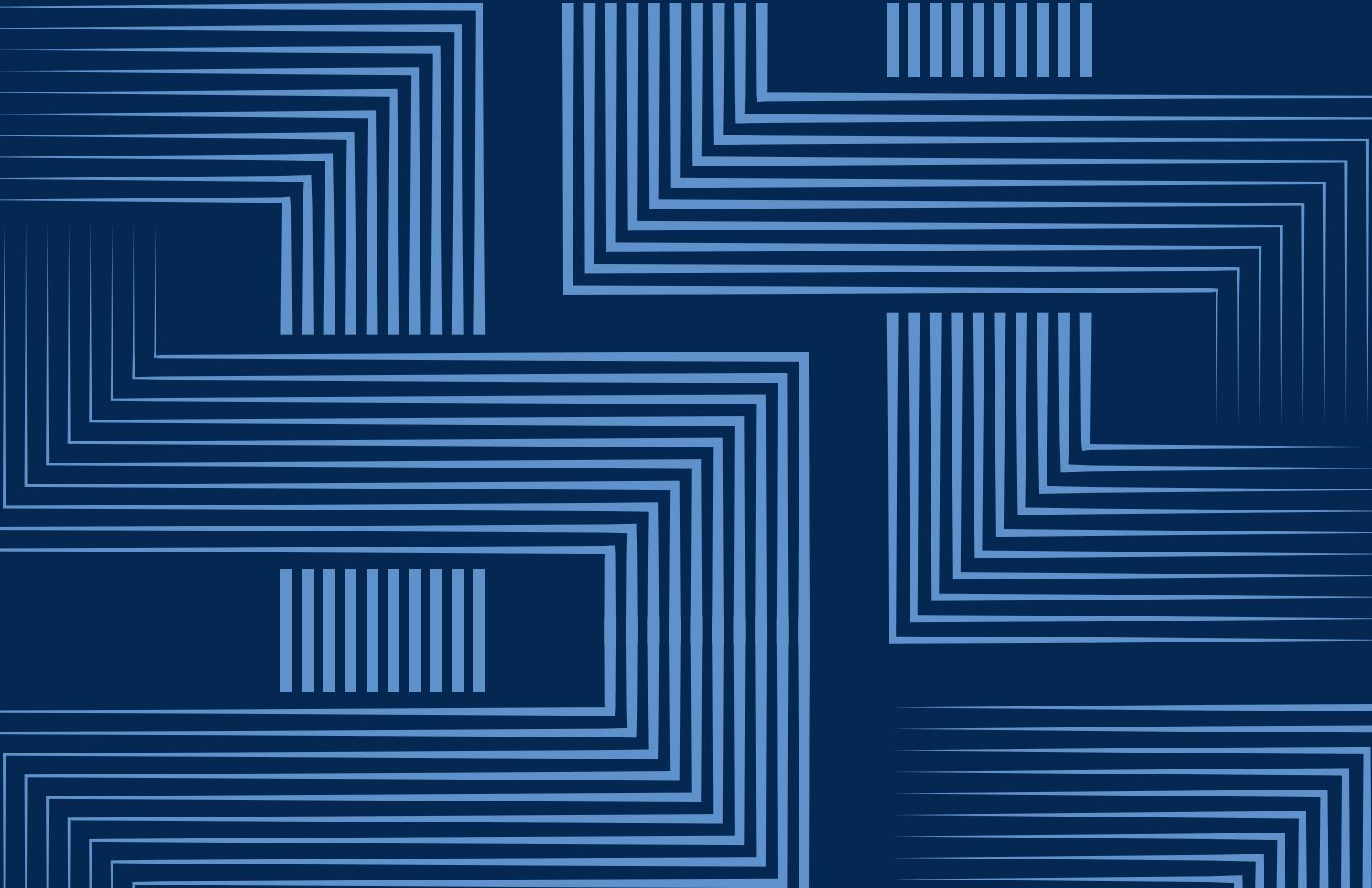


CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
DIGITAL CENTER
INNOVATION · TRANSFORMATION · EQUITY

Activity Report

Digital Center for Innovation, Transformation & Equity

September 2025



Executive Summary

Launched in September 2024 under the direction of the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor's Office in partnership with the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, the Digital Center for Innovation, Transformation, and Equity (Digital Center) represents a strategic approach to support Vision 2030. The Digital Center:

- Serves as a systemwide hub for piloting, evaluating, and scaling AI and technology innovations across California's community colleges—research, practice, and policy
- Leverages technology and philanthropic partnerships, both public and private
- Serves students as they move into an AI-powered workforce, with a focus on improving outcomes and reducing equity gaps.

Currently, the Digital Center leads or supports a portfolio of projects that benefit the CCC system, including:

AI Infrastructure: Scaling Through Local Collaboration

- The **LightleapAI** platform detects and blocks fraudulent applications and enrollments in real time. Over 80 California community colleges have adopted this solution that leverages existing CCC infrastructure.

AI Literacy & Professional Development: Building Faculty and Student AI Literacy and Fluency Across the State

- The **AI Summer Bootcamp** reinforces peer leadership while bringing CCC students into real-world problem solving with AI.
- The **AI Literacy Guidelines**, being developed by Digital Center leadership and the CCC AI Council, provide a template for colleges to improve AI Literacy on their campuses.

AI Integration in Teaching and Learning: Reimagining Pedagogy for the Future Classroom

- **PlayLab AI** showcases how CCC faculty customizing AI to better serve students and streamline their work. Faculty participants learn to create custom bots, directly translating AI theory into practical student and administrative support.
- **Nectir AI** supports dialogue-based, inquiry-driven learning using the Socratic method. Instead of shortcuts, students engage in deeper thinking, with AI nudging them toward discovery.
- **Dreamscape Learn** deploys a 2D version of Biology lab modules for biology faculty. The goal of the partnership is to provide faculty members with another tool to enhance access to high-quality biology lab education for online learners.



- The **Instructure Early Adopter Program** provides an opportunity for faculty to participate in Canvas AI tools before their release to the general public. Faculty provided feedback about the AI-powered features, their utility in teaching and learning scenarios, and the equity implications of their use.

AI in Workforce: Making Real-World Impact by Embedding AI in Professions & Entrepreneurship

- The **NVIDIA Deep Learning Institute** invites faculty to participate in the Fundamentals of Deeper Learning training. Beyond training cohorts, this initiative lays critical groundwork to scale and sustain AI education across California.
- **AI Certifications for Nursing Apprenticeships/Allied Health** integrates AI Literacy Certifications into healthcare.
- The **Faculty Founder Program** nurtures an innovation pipeline, cultivating faculty and student AI entrepreneurs who create, not just consume, AI-generated content.
- The **IT Workforce Initiative** develops an implementation framework for Google, Adobe, IBM, Microsoft, and other partnerships preparing faculty and students for an AI-powered workforce.

AI in Student Services: Supporting Students Where They Are, When They Need It

- The **Cali Platform by Mainstay** cuts through administrative red tape by helping community college students complete the application and registration processes, including filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- **GenzAI Focus** consists of an interactive workshop that explores student experiences with AI across three domains: learning, job search, and early career experiences.

Principal and Founding Partner Projects & Initiatives

Led by Founding Partners, the following initiatives partner with the Digital Center:

- Foothill-De Anza Community College District: The **California Virtual Campus** (CVC) supports the CCC system by managing and offering resources such as the CVC Exchange; the Online Course Design Rubric, CVC@ONE online educator certification, adoptable courses, webinars, and other professional development opportunities; and shared technology such as Canvas, the state's common course management system, and other tools including Canvas Studio, Impact, NetTutor, and Pisces.
- Coast Community College District: The **Common Cloud Data Platform** (CCDP) unifies data infrastructure for California's community colleges, enabling better data sharing, analytics and student support. It aims to improve data-driven decision making and streamline administrative processes.

Future activity reports will feature Founding Partner projects that help expand the CCC system's capacity to explore equitable and effective AI-powered solutions. [Visit the Digital Center website](#) to find updates about these projects.



Project Details

AI Infrastructure

LightleapAI

Project Stage: Scale-Up & Roll Out

California's community colleges have confronted a dramatic surge in fraudulent admissions and financial-aid applications. Foothill-De Anza Community College District (FHDA) partnered with N2N Services to co-develop LightLeapAI, a machine-learning platform and AI model that detects and blocks fake applicants in real time. Developed through rapid iteration in the summer of 2024 and piloted at FHDA in fall 2024, LightLeap has expanded to more than 80 colleges via the Digital Center. With LightLeapAI colleges are protecting financial aid dollars, reclaiming classroom seats for genuine students, and saving staff hundreds of hours each term.

The solution leverages existing statewide API infrastructure investments deployed for CVC Exchange to enable rapid deployment and aligns squarely with Vision 2030 and the mission of the Digital Center. In short, LightLeapAI represents a compelling success story of local, rapid, collaborative innovation that is safeguarding resources and students, and it offers a model for scaling technology-driven solutions across the California Community Colleges system.

Symbolic of the immense progress possible through systemwide collaboration, CollegeBuys has partnered with the Digital Center to expand access to the LightLeapAI platform to colleges of all sizes and resource levels. Effective July 1, 2025, Chancellor's Office funding covers the majority of subscription fees as part of a broader, systemwide effort to eliminate fraud. Districts are asked to contribute only \$3,000 per college under a shared responsibility model.

AI Literacy & Professional Development

NVIDIA Deep Learning Institute

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

The NVIDIA Deep Learning Institute partnership has made significant progress in its foundational year. The first cohort launched successfully in January 2025, with 15 faculty participants from colleges across California, representing every major region including the North, Central Valley, Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Southern California. These educators are now poised to lead the implementation of AI instruction on their campuses, with support from NVIDIA's "Fundamentals of Deep Learning" workshop. Planning is currently underway for the second cohort, which will be delivered in Fall 2025 in an online format to further increase statewide accessibility.

Beyond training cohorts, this initiative has laid critical groundwork to scale and sustain AI education across

California Community Colleges. Strategic efforts are in motion to expand offerings in AI Entrepreneurship, AI applications in workforce programs, and AI computer science pathways for transfer students. In parallel, statewide conversations are focused on eliminating curriculum adoption barriers to ensure AI-related programs can be easily shared and implemented. These efforts align closely with Vision 2030 and the long-term goal of advancing generative AI capacity across the system.

AI Summer Bootcamp

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

The inaugural California Community Colleges AI Summer Bootcamp is a joint project between Amazon Web Services (AWS), the Cal Poly Digital Transformation Hub, and the Digital Center. The CSU Digital Hub partners with public sector organizations to tackle challenges and bring solutions to life, and the summer camp is a perfect opportunity for students to apply the knowledge they have gained in the CCC system to do so. AWS provided funding for 50 students from Founding Partner districts, and another 50 from non-Partner districts to attend the camp.

Over 2,000 students applied to attend the camp, which took place on the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo campus. Students were housed in dorms and treated to meals in one of the campus dining halls. After a welcome event, they were divided into teams and presented with one of the challenge statements submitted by colleges. In addition to being mentored by Cal Poly students, the campers learned from several industry experts throughout the week.

Challenge statements submitted by colleges ranged from developing a chatbot to assist non-native English speakers with the college application process to a tutoring platform based on a student's learning preferences. At the end of the week, each team pitched their project to a professional panel for prizes and a chance to make their project a reality by continuing to work with the Digital Hub throughout the academic year.

College of San Mateo student Evgeniya Olneva had this to say about the experience. "I am so grateful for this camp! It is giving me an opportunity to share my skills with other students and learn from them too. I was nervous when I first arrived, but now I have many new friends and feel confident getting up in front of the group and sharing what I am creating. Thank you!"

AI Integration In Teaching & Learning

Playlab

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

Playlab's approach is rooted in professional learning, hands-on coaching, and co-design. Faculty, staff, and

administrators from across the California Community College (CCC) system are collaborating with PlayLab AI on an exciting pilot opportunity for educators to create impactful AI-powered tools to enhance the teaching experience, improve student learning, and complete administrative tasks.

In fall 2024, more than 450 CCC professionals enrolled in a three-week course at the UC Berkeley School of Education focused on:

- Creating custom bots to provide tailored solutions to support student needs
- Enhancing educational outcomes
- Supporting administrative efforts with automated, time-saving tools

At the conclusion of the course, participants received a digital badge and certification. A second cohort is currently being planned. The participants created more than 200 practical AI tools (from student success chatbots to bilingual support and degree planning apps) demonstrating the potential for systemwide innovation at scale.

NectirAI

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

In July 2024 the Chancellor's Office undertook a pilot of a promising new AI technology platform designed to answer student's questions about the class syllabus and to aid students with engaging with class assignments in a supportive manner. Developed by Nectir AI, the platform utilizes the Socratic method to encourage student learning and engagement without directly providing answers or responses to assignments. Faculty members can upload relevant course materials into the AI course assistant to allow it to provide more specific and helpful support to students. The AI course assistant is available at no cost to students or faculty during the pilot period of 2024-25.

Early results from a small, private college (Los Angeles Pacific University) indicate that this technology has the potential to greatly increase student engagement, learning, and class grades. The pilot is being extended to allow faculty more time to familiarize themselves with the interface and to expand the size of the pilot. The project is on track to recruit 100 more instructors who will have access to the AI course assistant in the spring. This project will connect with the Digital Center support structure to provide an initial project and to assist with the final evaluation and dissemination of results.

Dreamscape Learn

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

During the summer of 2025, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, in partnership with the Digital Center, launched a pilot project with Dreamscape Learn. The pilot focuses on bringing unique online biology lab courseware to faculty and students statewide. Following a spring semester that included a joint webinar with the

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) and multiple meetings with colleges across the state, a community of practice was formed through the California Virtual Campus, comprising 15 colleges and 25 faculty members.

The goal of this partnership is to provide faculty members with another tool to enhance access to high-quality biology lab education for online learners. Additionally, multiple districts already have individual contracts with Dreamscape Learn, including Glendale Community College, Kern Community College District, Long Beach City College, and Merced College. The community of practice includes faculty members and administrators from colleges around the state:

- Barstow Community College
- Citrus College
- Coalinga College
- College of San Mateo
- Cuyamaca College
- El Camino College
- Feather River College
- Foothill College
- Fresno City College
- Lake Tahoe Community College
- Lemoore College
- Los Angeles Mission College
- Merced College
- Merritt College
- Moorpark College
- Mt. San Jacinto College

Over the next three years, faculty will be able to participate in the community of practice and implement the Dreamscape Learn courseware while learning about new methods for content delivery.

Instructure AI Tools

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

Several CCC faculty were invited to participate in a Summer 2025 Canvas AI tools beta test. Faculty gained firsthand experience with cutting-edge AI features before they became widely available. Faculty feedback will directly impact not only the functionality of these features but also their adoption across the education landscape.

During this beta test faculty tested and provided feedback about one or more new AI-powered features:

- Discussion Insights: Tools to summarize, evaluate, and optionally score discussions.

- Discussion Summaries: Tools to summarize, evaluate, and optionally score discussions.
- Rubric Generation: Create rubrics based on activity instructions and course content.
- Grading Assistance: First-pass assessment of student work using rubrics.
- Translation: Translation features seamlessly integrated into Canvas workflows—specifically Discussions and Inbox.
- Ignite Agent: An experimental AI agent designed to streamline administrative tasks (e.g., "extend due dates for students X, Y, Z").
- Smart Search: Tool allows searching course content with relativistic or adjacent keywords.

Faculty were able to enable or disable these features based on their individual comfort level. Active faculty participation and candid feedback are crucial as the Instructure team refines these tools in preparation for broader release. Faculty will have more opportunities to participate in further testing in fall 2025 and beyond. To build on this relationship, the CCC system will participate in Instructure's new Early Adopter Program.

AI in the Workforce

AI Certification for Nurses

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

As part of a grant project funded by Salesforce, a team of CCC faculty and professional is creating an AI Certification for Nurses, designed to equip nurses with essential AI skills to enhance their practice. Through this project the team will pilot and develop a framework for offering the certification. The program aims to create a scalable and replicable model for integrating AI into healthcare education, ultimately benefiting a broader range of sectors.

Significant progress has been made in advancing AI integration into nursing education through both student-focused and faculty-focused initiatives. The development of a 60-hour, multi-module AI in Healthcare Certificate for nursing apprentices is on track for completion and scheduled to launch in Winter 2025. This certificate will be piloted through the DAS-approved nursing apprenticeship program at Riverside City College, with stipends provided to support student participation and a dedicated faculty lead overseeing implementation. An initial cohort of 50 apprentices will test this innovative model, serving as a proof of concept for potential statewide expansion. In tandem, planning has begun for a parallel 60-hour certificate tailored to community college nursing and allied health faculty, ensuring educators are also equipped to integrate AI into teaching and practice.

Complementing student preparation, faculty professional development has been a key area of investment. A new six-hour, in-person workshop titled "Generative AI: Nursing Educators – AI Tools, Applications, and Academic Integrity" has been designed to give faculty hands-on training in using AI effectively while maintaining academic

standards. Eighteen nursing programs across California will benefit from this training at no cost through the Salesforce Grant, with sessions beginning in August 2025 and continuing through 2027. To further expand access, an additional \$85,000 is being sought to extend the workshops to 10 more nursing schools. Participation data will be tracked to measure reach and outcomes.

Together, these efforts represent the first coordinated push in California to prepare both nursing apprentices and faculty for a healthcare environment increasingly shaped by AI. By equipping new nurses with foundational AI skills and ensuring faculty can confidently teach these tools, the initiative is building a scalable model that strengthens the state's nursing workforce and positions it at the forefront of technology-enabled care.

Faculty Founder Program

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

Salesforce funding will support initiatives aimed at fostering AI entrepreneurship among both California Community College students and faculty. The project will be implemented in two key stages:

Stage 1: Build on Existing Programs to Foster Student AI Entrepreneurship

- Expand Santa Ana College's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program.
- Launch the Bay Area Consortium's AI entrepreneurship concept.

Stage 2: Launch the California Community College Founder Program

- Provide faculty and classified professionals with funding and mentorship.
- Support the development and commercialization of faculty-led research and innovations.

During the foundational Setup phase the team will develop courses on Canvas, set up equipment and facilities, implement project management infrastructure, and conduct comprehensive program planning. In Year 1, they will launch at four pilot colleges, serving up to 120 students (~30 per college). Also in Year 1, they will introduce the initial apprenticeship program, host events and competitions, and implement targeted marketing efforts. In Year 2, the team will expand the program to eight colleges, enrolling approximately 256 students (~64 per college), scale apprenticeship opportunities, and enhance event programming. In Year 3, the program will grow to twelve colleges, serving approximately 300-400 students (up to 34 per college). Also in Year 3, the team will incorporate equipment refreshes, expand apprenticeship opportunities, and enhance support services, ensuring sustainable scaling and program quality.

IT Workforce Initiative

Project Stage: Pilot & Evaluate

Governor Gavin Newsom announced California has signed agreements with four of the largest technology companies in the GenAI sector, as the state continues to speed forward as the global leader in technology. Working

with Google, Adobe, IBM, and Microsoft, the state will help train California's workforce for a wide range of jobs in AI.

- **Google:** The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and Google will collaborate to provide over 2 million students and faculty across California's 116 community colleges with free access to [AI training](#), [Google Career Certificates](#), and some of Google's cutting edge AI tools including Gemini for Education and NotebookLM. Chancellor Christian has established a goal to make a variety of AI tools available to all CCC students, in an effort to prepare them for an AI-powered workforce. Colleges must determine which tools best align with their institutional needs and culture, work within their infrastructure and existing technology ecosystem, and support their students, faculty and staff.
- **Adobe:** The CCCCO and Adobe will collaborate to ensure students and faculty a) have access to learn industry-standard AI tools for creativity and productivity; b) have access to certifications, including micro-credentials, certificates, and professional certifications, to demonstrate workforce readiness in essential, in-demand AI skills; c) have content and curriculum to teach and learn AI literacy for innovative and responsible academic and industry use; d) are trained on essential workforce AI literacy and skills; and e) have access and incentives to teach and learn essential AI literacy skills for workforce readiness.
- **IBM:** The CCCCO and IBM will offer the IBM SkillsBuild program as a free education program focused on skilling communities in the information technology industry that helps adult learners and high school and university students and faculty develop and enhance valuable skills and access career opportunities. The full agreement with IBM includes access to AI resources; customized curriculum integration and development; expert engagement, networking and industry exposure; faculty development initiatives; joint research and innovation; certifications and credential programs; and job creation for public sector and commercial enterprises.
- **Microsoft:** The CCCCO and Microsoft will deliver a bootcamp learning series including training related to AI Foundations, Cybersecurity and Microsoft Copilot in partnership with the Foundation for California Community Colleges. Training will be conducted using authorized curriculum and executed through authorized Microsoft Training Services Partners. Training will be attended by faculty members across the Colleges who will use these learnings to help train students across the Colleges.

AI in Student Services

Mainstay Cali Platform

Project Stage: *Pilot & Evaluate*

The rural college pilot project involves implementing Mainstay's Cali platform to proactively guide students through their entire student lifecycle. In addition to serving as an interactive student coach, Mainstay's platform sends

reminders, conducts student interviews, registers students for events, and engages students with a live human when needed. Exciting features include but are not limited to a) Cali's multi-modal approach—it can nudge or interact with students via text message, social media, voice or web chat; b) focus on all aspects of application and enrollment processes, including completing the new FAFSA form; and c) ability to address basic needs questions and challenges.

In fall 2025, three rural colleges from the North/Far North region—led by Butte-Glenn CCD, a Digital Center Founding Partner—will complete the onboarding process in time for students to use the platform for Spring 2026 registration at the end of October.



Principal Partners



California Community Colleges

Chancellor's Office

Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Foothill - De Anza Community College

District

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