



Three Pillars for Embracing AI at University of Phoenix

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Executive Summary

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is completely reshaping workforce expectations, and higher education must evolve to ensure learners are prepared to apply these tools responsibly and effectively. University of Phoenix has made generative AI a core component of how we prepare working adult learners to succeed in a rapidly evolving workforce. Our academic functions quickly identified generative AI opportunities, establishing use policies, creating resources and tools for students and faculty to develop their skills, building an introductory course, and launching programmatic and course integration. This approach is grounded in the [Digital Education Council AI Literacy Framework](#) and reflects a broader commitment to human-centered, ethical AI use aligned with employer needs.

University of Phoenix AI curriculum development and active use among students and faculty has been a model for adapting and championing technical change and making it a core part of our identity—just as we did when we adopted online learning. With this ethos in mind, we have taken a committed, institution-wide approach to integrating generative AI for students, faculty and staff.

At University of Phoenix, that commitment is already operationalized across the learning environment and student experience. Blackboard AI Conversations has been deployed in five courses across multiple disciplines, the general Phoenix Academic Support Service (PASS) available to all students enrolled in courses via the learning management system can act as a writing and math tutor and has delivered more than 10,000 AI responses inside the learning environment, and the University's Center for AI Resources and updated AI philosophy were introduced to more than 90,000 users through LMS-connected adoption

efforts. AI responses inside the learning environment, and the University's Center for AI Resources and [updated AI philosophy](#) were introduced to more than 90,000 users through learning management systems (LMS)-connected adoption efforts. Beyond the classroom, Phoebe®, the University's AI-powered student support assistant, conducts 1,700+ chats daily, giving working adult learners another way to access timely information and support. We were early adopters of the notion of building AI-fluency in our students, and we have made significant progress to this end. In fact, our efforts have been recognized publicly in the media, as well as in our selection as one of 175 institutions nationwide to participate in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) [2025–26 Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum](#).

University of Phoenix advances this work through a framework of three academic AI pillars spanning curriculum, support and policy:

- Embedding AI into Programs and Course Content
- Leveraging AI Tools to Enhance the Learning Experience
- Weaving AI Into Processes, Policies, and Workflows

This framework establishes University of Phoenix as a scalable model for how higher education can integrate AI in ways that are practical and directly aligned to real-world workforce outcomes.

Embracing AI at a Glance

Actions taken to support the three pillars for AI at University of Phoenix have included:

Embed AI into programs and course content	Leverage AI tools to enhance the learning experience	Weave AI into processes, policies and workflows
- Refreshing 20+ degree programs to embed AI tools and skills in FY26–FY27 - Adding CSS/201: <i>Generative AI in Everyday Life</i> as an academic plan option for elective or science/technology general education credit, as appropriate - Redesigning programs to include AI skills assessments and skill-building activities informed by workplace needs - Deploying an interactive tool for creating Socratic dialogues in five courses, reaching approximately 1,300 students across disciplines through scenario-based faculty-reviewed practice	- Providing direct learning support for classroom questions and inquiries. - Embedding Center for AI Resources access points in course interfaces - Creating more engaging learning interactions, including scenario-based practice - Launching a support chatbot inside the LMS environment, where it has delivered 10,000+ AI responses - Supporting students through Phoebe®, an AI-powered assistant leveraging Natural Language Processing and Conversational Design to fields on average 1,738 chats per day	- Integrating AI into workflows and processes to support students, boost efficiency and enhance AI literacy - Enhance curriculum through AI-enabled design tools that support faculty and instructional designers in creating engaging, outcomes-aligned and workforce-relevant learning experiences - Building on resources, policies and training that enable responsible AI use through the Center for AI resources - Advancing research and thought leadership on AI best practices and learning design as part of the University's higher education mission for working adult learners - Introduced the Center for AI Resources and updated AI philosophy to 90,523 users, resulting in 60,000+ unique visits - Faculty coach students towards the ethical use of AI tools, supported by a centralized team of professionals who handle referrals from faculty, ensuring our AI policy is followed; 900+ students have been referred for additional coaching since the policy inception

Together, these implementations demonstrate that AI is already embedded at scale across the University's academic and student support systems.

Pillar One – Embedding AI into Programs and Course Content

As an institution providing career-ready skills to working adults, University of Phoenix is integrating AI into curriculum, both from a program level as well as individually to courses and students' needs. As a result, students are being presented with opportunities to learn AI skills at the foundational level as well as at the discipline level in alignment with workforce trends.

Some of these changes are happening at the programmatic level: 20+ degree programs are being refreshed to embed AI skills or tools throughout FY26 and FY27, with at least two AI-integrated summative assessments in every program by March 2027. In October 2024, the University added an introductory Gen AI course, CSS/201: Generative AI in Everyday Life, to student academic plan options for students needing to take elective or science/technology general education credits. University of Phoenix provides AI resources for all programs and students, including Microsoft Copilot through the Office 365 suite.

Courses are already being redesigned to embed AI-oriented assessments or skills activities that appropriately match the workplace needs of how jobs in that discipline are already leveraging AI. The Phoenix Success Series, the introductory course sequence for first-year students, will also introduce generative AI as a support tool for student learning in 2026.

This work enables students to build both foundational AI literacy and field-specific AI skills in ways that reflect real workforce expectations. By aligning AI integration to career-relevant learning, University of Phoenix can provide working adult learners with hands-on experience with the tools, judgment and applied practices they are increasingly expected to use in professional settings.

Implementing AI at this scale reflects the University's broader commitment to using technology strategically, ethically, and in service of student learning. It also reinforces an important principle in the University's AI approach: Responsible use is best developed not only through guidance, but through repeated, supported practice—reinforcing our human-centric approach that recognizes AI as a tool for our learners to benefit from.

In practice: AI Essentials Collection

In order to facilitate AI understanding across all programs and courses, University of Phoenix developed the AI Essentials Collection, a set of brief, self-paced modules students can take to help them develop AI literacy and confidence. These are available in the Blackboard UOPX classroom in all courses with start dates of June 16, 2026, or later, and provide students the opportunity to practice and hone important AI skills. Current modules include:

- **Using Generative AI:** Generative AI is already part of how people work, learn, and communicate — and it's becoming a larger part of higher education every year. Understanding what it is, how it works, and where it falls short will help you use it more effectively and more responsibly in your coursework and career.
- **Using AI Responsibly at UOPX:** Generative AI tools can support your learning, writing, research, and career preparation—but they must be used responsibly. At University of Phoenix, AI is meant to enhance your learning, not replace your original thinking, research, writing development, or academic integrity.
- **Writing Generative AI Prompts:** AI prompting is becoming an essential skill for learning, research, and career preparation. In this module, you'll learn how to write effective prompts that guide AI tools to generate more useful results—helping you improve your work and use AI as a thoughtful support, not a shortcut.

By making these universally available, the University provides the opportunity for important hands-on training to every student; moreover, faculty have universal access to these modules, and can not only incorporate them into their coursework, but also guide students to particular modules based on their performance or individual need.

Spotlight on Skills-Mapping

University of Phoenix is uniquely situated to embed generative AI at scale. Operating with five decades of innovation in higher education for working adult learners, the University was also an early adopter of scaled online and technological innovation for career-focused learners. After previously [implementing a skills-mapped curriculum](#) across 100% of our associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs available for enrollment, the University curriculum was uniquely positioned to take action to move quickly and effectively in understanding the potential for adding and measuring generative AI skill building within appropriate courses.

The University's broader skills-aligned, career-focused ecosystem includes a curriculum approach informed by labor market data, external standards, subject-matter expertise and industry advisory council input and designed to validate skill acquisition and connect learning outcomes to workplace relevance.

Within this ecosystem, the academic AI pillars position University of Phoenix students to meet employer demand for AI-literate workers across business, healthcare, education, IT and public sector roles. Skills-mapping and incorporating academic AI pillars that align to the [Digital Education Council AI Literacy Framework](#) and the [Department of Labor AI framework](#) helps the University identify where AI knowledge, ethical judgment and field-

specific applications belong within the student learning experience, making it easier to connect AI literacy to the workplace context students are preparing to enter.

		Competency Level		
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Literacy Dimensions	 Dimension 1 Understanding AI and Data	AI and Data Awareness	AI and Data in Action	AI and Data Optimisation
	 Dimension 2 Critical Thinking and Judgement	Question AI Output	Evaluate AI Output	Challenge AI Output
	 Dimension 3 Ethical and Responsible Use	Understand Risks	Apply Responsible Practices	Shape Responsible Practices
	 Dimension 4 Human-Centricity, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity	Awareness of Human-AI Interaction	AI as Collaborative Tool	Develop Human-Centred AI Practices
	 Dimension 5 Domain Expertise	Applied AI Awareness	AI Application in Professional Contexts	Strategic AI Leadership

Figure 1: DEC AI Literacy Framework

This framework was leveraged across the initiative to integrate AI, including in planning phases as well as with faculty and curriculum designers implementing AI directly into programs and courses.

Pillar Two – Leveraging AI Tools to Enhance the Learning Experience

University of Phoenix's embrace of generative AI includes implementing AI tools that can be accessed across our organization—both for our students as well as our faculty. These tools improve the learning experience by making it easier to navigate so students can focus on their coursework with greater clarity and ambition. Implementing these tools ensures that students also have hands-on access to tools they will be expected to use in the workplace. This holistic approach ensures learners have practical experience with generative AI tools and interactions they may encounter in the workplace.

These tools also offer faculty a chance to improve productivity, saving time and effort by leveraging generative AI tools, so they have more resources available to their students. Moreover, our practitioner faculty—who are observing generative AI use cases in their own fields and workplaces—can discuss and model appropriate AI use for students, in real time.

These tools include use cases currently being piloted and available to users at every level, including:

- General AI assistance for students
- Academic services related questions in the classroom environment
- Faculty-specific AI assistance
- Course-specific AI assistants supporting students with content and curriculum related inquiries connected to the course they are enrolled in

This pillar also includes forms of AI-enabled support, from broad student-service assistance to course-connected academic help inside the learning environment.

Student support at scale: Phoebe®

Phoebe®, the University's AI-powered student support assistant, was designed as a 24/7 point of contact for students seeking information related to their educational journey. In the five years following its launch, Phoebe supports students with an average of 1,700 chats per day. Designed to understand natural conversation, ask meaningful follow-up questions, and help resolve issues in real-time, Phoebe reflects how AI can reduce friction and save time for working adult learners balancing multiple responsibilities. Phoebe also frees up our student support teams to address more complex, critical issues that may be facing our adult learners who juggle numerous responsibilities while pursuing their programs.

Support inside the learning environment: PASS

University of Phoenix has also deployed its Phoenix Academic Support System (PASS) within the LMS environment to provide both academic and service-level support without requiring students to leave the LMS. PASS can assist with questions ranging from library and transcript support to writing-related guidance, and to date has delivered 10,000+ AI responses. This LMS-embedded model gives students access to institutionally aligned AI support in the same environment where learning occurs.

Our learners have real experience with generative AI—experience relevant to the environments in which they study and work.

Pillar Three – Weaving AI Into Processes, Policies, and Workflows

In addition to understanding how AI impacts our students and faculty, University of Phoenix is applying AI to improve both academic and business efficiencies. The University actively integrates AI into workflows and core operational processes.

One early example is transfer credit services, where generative AI now supports both the back-end and front-end processes, including an alternative credit recommendation tool

used to support student advisement. AI is also being considered for the backbone of services supporting the transfer evaluation process, which will also lead to creating student self-articulation options. This effort demonstrates how AI can improve institutional responsiveness while remaining grounded in student needs and practical outcomes.

At University of Phoenix, this pillar reflects an important position: ethical AI use requires institutions to move beyond policy and into practice. The University began by establishing a publicly accessible philosophy on generative AI in 2023 through a cross-functional effort spanning academic colleges, curricular design, faculty engagement, educational technology and compliance. That philosophy then informed later policy development, faculty guidance and the creation of broader AI literacy resources designed to support responsible use across the institution.

The University of Phoenix [Center for AI Resources](#) is central to this effort. It serves everyone at the University, students, faculty and staff at every level with access to essential information, tools, and University-aligned guidance on how to engage with AI responsibly, safely, and effectively. These resources focus on AI literacy to ensure alignment not only on what AI is, but how to use it. This is especially important to faculty, who receive training and support on how to implement generative AI in their classrooms in accordance with University guidance. All faculty at the University have completed required training on the use of generative AI in the classroom, and many have completed additional training on broader AI use and capabilities.

The University has also worked to ensure that these resources are visible and usable in practice. Through LMS-connected launch and adoption tools, the Center for AI Resources and updated AI philosophy were introduced to 90,000+ users, while 60,000+ unique users actively visited the Center following launch. During that period, informal AI coaching referrals increased from 127 to 918, demonstrating that greater visibility of AI guidance and tools increased engagement with responsible-use support.

Implementing AI into processes, policies and workflows is also informed by ongoing thought leadership and research into how AI is reshaping education, workforce expectations and student experience. The [AI Research Group](#), housed in our College of Doctoral Studies and research centers, builds on the University's academic and professional research models to further our understanding of AI and explore both the broad and practical implications of AI for learners, faculty and employers. That work helps ensure the University's approach remains informed, forward-looking and responsive as AI continues to evolve.

Putting technology to work in the classroom while maintaining focus on how it benefits our students has also been a guide in our policies—preparation that enabled University of Phoenix to be one of the first universities in the country to publicly adopt a philosophy statement on generative AI, as well as a student-facing policy on the appropriate and ethical use of AI.

Spotlight on the Road Ahead

Generative AI is reshaping not only the tools learners use, but the expectations institutions must meet. For working adult learners in particular, that means higher education must move beyond abstract conversations about AI and toward experiences that are practical, guided and relevant to real life and real work.

At University of Phoenix, that future-facing approach is already in place and continuing to expand through AI-enabled student support, and institution-wide guidance designed to help learners apply AI responsibly and effectively. Thoughtfully and responsibly embedding generative AI into the fabric of the University helps us prepare our learners for the future of the workplace.

Conclusion

The rapid emergence of generative AI is not a temporary disruption—it represents a fundamental shift in how work is performed and how skills are developed. University of Phoenix’s approach models how higher education can respond with intention, embedding AI into learning at scale in ways that are practical, responsible and aligned to workforce needs.

As higher education continues to adapt, scalable, skills-focused approaches like University of Phoenix’s will be essential to ensuring learners are not only exposed to AI but actively developing skills to apply it effectively and responsibly in their careers.

AI will not be the last technical innovation that requires institutions to adapt. But by building structures, tools and practices around responsible use now, University of Phoenix has strengthened its ability to respond to what comes next while continuing to support working adult learners in a changing world. In that sense, the University’s AI work reflects a broader principle for higher education: the future will depend on how effectively institutions integrate AI into learning and enable learners to apply AI skills in real-world contexts.

Author Bios

Dr. Marc Booker is Vice Provost for Strategy at the University of Phoenix, where he oversees critical path academic initiatives to improve the student experience such as learning platform implementations, curricular enhancements, developing innovative academic program designs and creating empathetic solutions to drive improved student outcomes.

Dr. Christina Neider, the Vice Provost of Colleges, brings a wealth of experience from her career that spans over 30 years with military service, leadership roles, and deep understanding of human behavior. Dr. Neider holds a Doctor of Education in Higher Education Leadership from Northcentral University and holds graduate degrees in education (MAEd) and psychology (MSP) from University of Phoenix.