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COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Equitable AI: Transforming Higher Education for Inclusive Student Success



Federal Policy Priorities

Complete College America (CCA) is a bold national advocate for dramatically increasing college completion rates and closing institutional performance gaps. CCA works with states, systems, institutions, and partners to scale highly effective structural reforms and promote policies that improve student success. Meeting this mission involves scaled change through technology.

Colleges and universities across the country must all have the digital infrastructure required to meet the learning and labor market needs of the moment and the future. Smart investment in and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) has the transformative potential to dramatically increase credential attainment and economic mobility for students at community colleges, broad-access four-year colleges and universities, and the many Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) included in both categories.

The CCA Council on Equitable AI

Complete College America formed the CCA Council on Equitable AI. Comprised of leaders from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), state leaders, college presidents, advocacy organizations, student success leaders, professors, and students themselves, the Council pushes the notion of equitable AI beyond risks and concerns on privacy, plagiarism, and prejudice.



The CCA Council on Equitable AI focuses on the systematic integration of historically underrepresented and underserved students in shaping technology and fostering inclusivity in postsecondary adoption nationwide. Our policy recommendations center on how AI is made available, to whom, and how affordable and adoptable it is.



Complete College America (CCA) builds movements for scaled change and transforms institutions. Specifically, CCA drives systemic change that leads to better college completion rates; more equitable outcomes; and greater economic and social mobility, especially for historically excluded students. CCA operates at the federal, state, and institutional levels and works with its national network of forward-thinking state and higher education leaders. Since its founding in 2009, CCA and its network have introduced bold initiatives that help states and institutions implement data-driven policies, student-centered perspectives, and equity-driven practices.

Investing in Equitable AI

Federal policymakers should support MSIs and other colleges and universities that have historically been underfunded with the digital learning infrastructure required to effectively integrate and leverage AI technologies for equitable student success.

Digital learning infrastructure encompasses the hardware, software, and connectivity required of all colleges to fully participate in the technologies required today, and we must preclude or close any digital divide from inequitable resourcing. Doing so involves:

- **Assessing the need.** MSIs need funding for an in-person and virtual assessment of the current infrastructural upgrade needs to comprehend the gap between on-site hardware and cloud-based solutions against what is required to meet the new normal.
- **Leveraging the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).** FIPSE can provide specific resources for AI for teaching and learning, curriculum development, and student services. AI represents a key challenge that potential FIPSE projects are poised to address through reforms, innovations, and improvements in postsecondary education that respond to local, regional, and national needs.
- **An “AI for Learning” Act.** New legislation similar to policies like the CHIPS and Science Act, but focused on AI and attendant infrastructure, can foster partnerships dedicated to the smart deployment of AI, upgrading technological systems broadly and holistically, and implementing technology that has long-term sustainability.



Transformative AI Support

Based on discussions with leaders in the field, strategic recommendations and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education are essential to ensure all colleges and universities can harness AI's full potential.

- **Publish recommendations and toolkits for cutting-edge AI technology.** In partnership with existing leaders such as Complete College America and its Council on Equitable AI, the Department can create resources and migration paths for historically under-resourced colleges to rapidly leverage new capacities required for success in the workplace of the future.
- **Use Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) funds to increase capacity for teaching, learning, and research in AI.** Academic departments and programmatic areas on campuses would award graduate fellowships to support research and development in AI.
- **Create National Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning with a focus on technology.** Funded through the National Science Foundation, these centers would spur collaborations between academia and industry that ensure, through iterative rapid research response, the right tools are developed, integrated, and implemented for the workforce of tomorrow.

The Path Forward

The integration of AI into the digital learning infrastructure of higher education institutions is a necessity for ensuring equitable student success. AI has the potential to improve college completion rates for all students, but only if it is well-managed and deployed equitably to avoid the trap of unintentionally widening disparities in educational attainment.

Complete College America's Council for Equitable AI is committed to closing institutional performance gaps and increasing college completion rates, which hinges on the strategic, inclusive deployment of these technologies, but the Council requires widespread partnership and support. Through targeted investments, comprehensive assessments, and collaborative efforts between federal and state entities, we can create a sustainable, transformative digital learning environment that enhances academic value and prepares our nation's colleges to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving labor market.

Complete College America calls upon federal policymakers to prioritize investments in equitable AI deployment and support the development of comprehensive guidance and resources. **By working together, we can develop a more inclusive, equitable future for higher education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or the college or university they attend, have access to the transformative potential of AI.** Taking such action will ensure that America retains its global leadership in technological innovation and economic strength.

