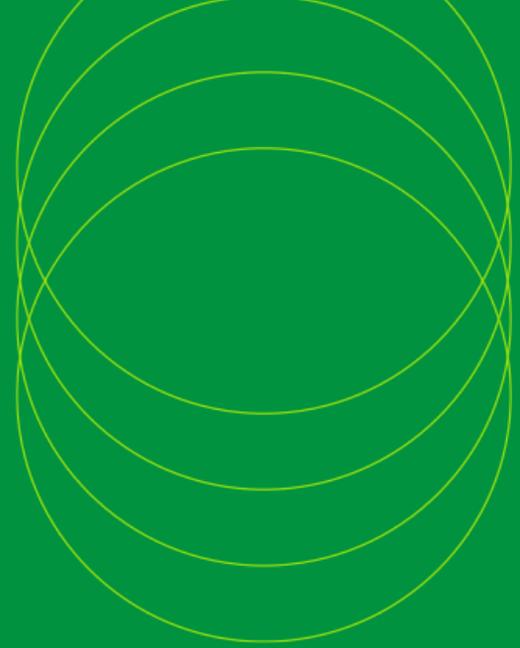


PRIMACY_



AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Survey of higher education professionals reveals opportunities for great experimentation and investment in AI to support institutional growth.

ABOUT PRIMACY

Primacy is the national's top agency for maximizing customer lifetime value through amazing, effective digital experiences. To provide value that goes the distance, we're proud to serve the industries where making the right choice matters most: education, health, financial services, and manufacturing. By focusing on these core four industries, we can create those thoughtful, strategic digital experiences that help brands succeed and continue to make an impact on the lives of their customers.

Overview

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) aren't new technologies, the rapid growth of Generative AI in 2022 and 2023 has led to a surge in interest on this topic. With so many universities facing enrollment challenges, the need for innovation and operational efficiencies has never been greater. We surveyed higher education marketers from across the country to gauge perceptions, usage, investment, and overall outlook of AI within higher education marketing.

A Few Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The ability of a computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): This is what the doomsayers fear. It's when AI becomes self-aware and capable of operating on its own.

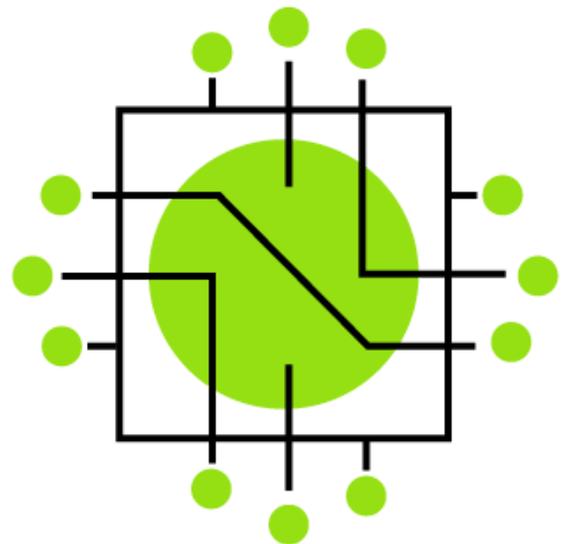
Machine Learning (ML): A subfield of AI that gives computers the ability to learn without explicitly being programmed. ML processes enormous of data to learn over time but requires human input and feedback.

Deep Learning (DL): DL is the application of ML to complex problems; however, the machine is also equipped with the ability to learn from its mistakes and assess its own probability of reaching a correct result.

Natural Language Processing (NLP): NLP gives computers the ability to understand text and spoken words in much the same way human beings can.

Large Language Models (LLMs): An LLM is a specialized type of AI that has been trained on vast amounts of text to understand existing content and generate original content.

Small Language Models (SLMs): A small language model (SLM) is a lightweight generative AI model. The label "small" in this context refers to the size of the model's neural network, the number of parameters the model uses to make a decision, and the volume of data the model is trained on.



AI Usage in Higher Education

At the time this survey was conducted (October 2023), 73.6% of respondents advised they had experimented with AI tools personally, but only 52.9% advised that their institutions were leveraging AI in their day-to-day operations.

One month later, at the UPCEA MEMS conference in Portland, Oregon, we asked a similar question of our audience during a panel. Anecdotally, while both personal and professional use of AI tools are increasing, it was apparent that the large majority of higher education professionals are now using AI in their day-to-day work.

Drafting thought starter copy or content (80.6%) and creative concepting (54.8%) were the two most commonly noted use cases for leveraging AI tools. In regards to use of specific AI tools, ChatGPT, Dall-E, Bard, and Canva were the most frequently cited tools.

42.5%

of survey respondents felt confident their institution would be investing in AI over the next 12 months

Investing in AI

Although there is growing usage of AI tools within institutions, only 42.5% of our survey respondents felt confident their institution would be investing in AI over the next 12 months. When asked about investment within their respective departments, only 33.3% of respondents anticipated investing in AI over the next year.

For those who do anticipate investing in AI over the next 12 months, improving customer engagement through personalization and automation (69%) and enhancing data analytics and market insights (65.5%) were noted as top priorities.

In conversations with higher education marketing professionals, many are still in the exploratory phase with AI. Many are testing and leveraging free tools to support improved efficiencies in their day-to-day but have not determined what tools and processes are the best fit for scalable impact.

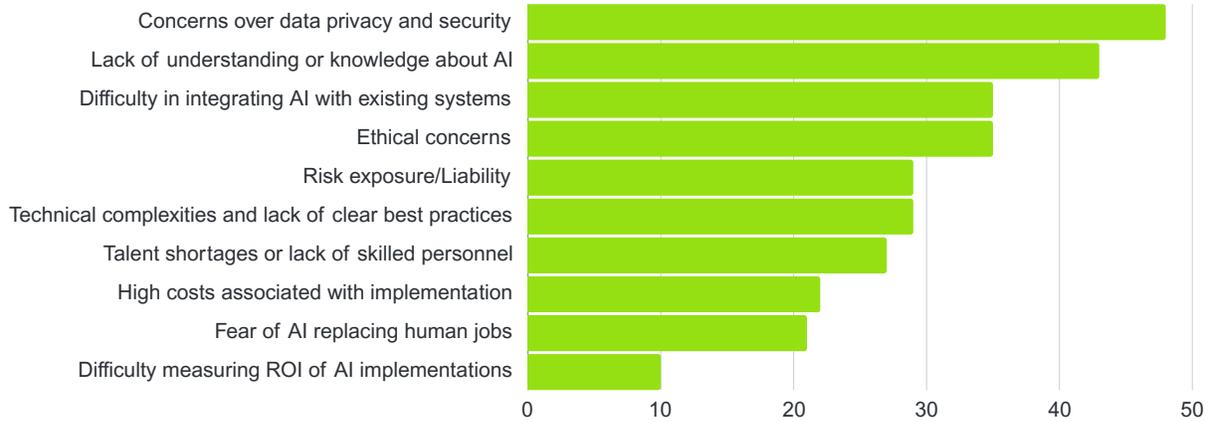
Is your institution currently using any AI technologies?

- Yes, primarily in the IT area (20.7%)
- Yes, in multiple areas the institution (32.2%)
- Not that I'm aware of (47.1%)



Current Challenges

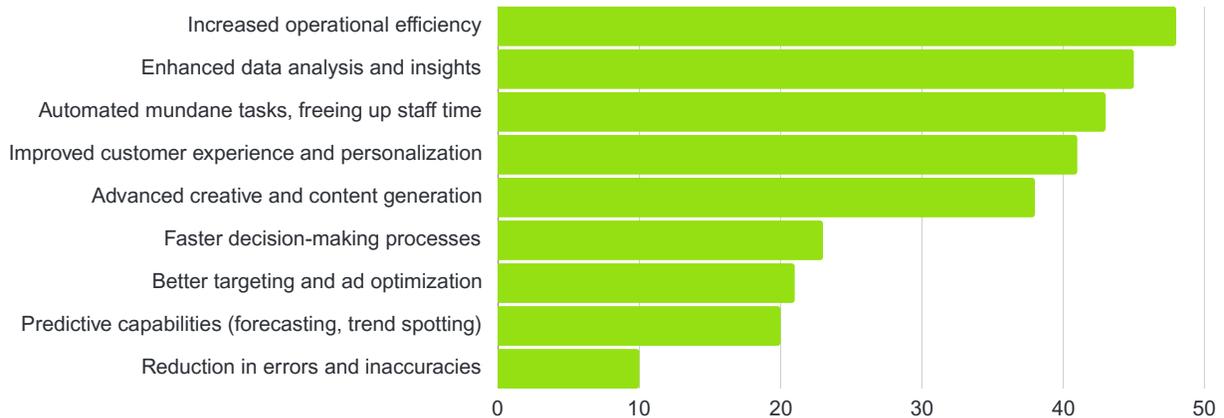
When asked what challenges or barriers they've faced or anticipate facing when incorporating AI into institutional operations, the top responses were concerns over data and privacy (55.2%) and lack of understanding or knowledge about AI (49.4%).



What challenges or barriers have you faced (or anticipate) in incorporating AI at your institution?

The Benefits of AI

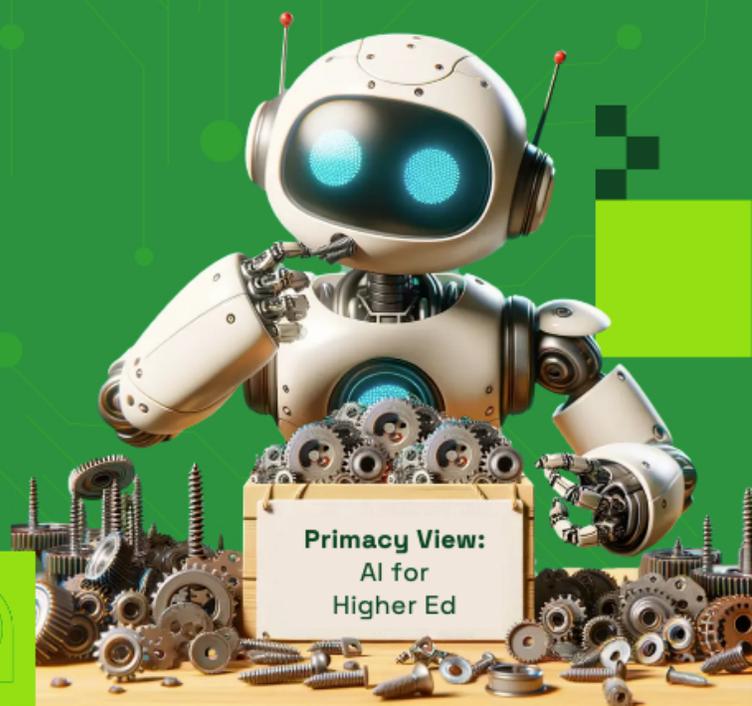
As more higher education professionals become comfortable with AI through consumption of news and experimenting with tools, there is excitement about all the potential ways AI can support their institution. When asked about the main benefits they have seen or expect to see from implementing AI at their institutions, the top responses were increased operational efficiency (55.2%) and enhanced data analytics (51.7%).



What are the main benefits you've seen or expect from implementing AI in your institution?

Primacy View: Top 5 Current AI Opportunities for Higher Ed

-  **A Strategic Jumpstart.** There are a variety of AI tools can help you more quickly analyze data for insights to make informed decisions. Coupled with a generative AI tool, you can ensure your strategy is sound and includes necessary components.
-  **A Creative Jumpstart.** Cited the most frequently amongst our survey respondents, many are using Generative AI to get their creative juices flowing. Whether it's initial idea generation for ad copy, or to generate imagery, there are so many tools to support marketers in this area.
-  **The Efficiency Creator.** It seems we're all needing to do less with more. Leverage AI for efficient analysis, insights, and idea generation. Streamline mundane tasks, saving time to focus on impactful priorities for your institution.
-  **Personalized Experiences.** True 1-to-1 personalization at scale can't be solved by any specific AI tool overnight (yet!), but many CRMs are introducing generative AI functionality to streamline personalized workflows and content.
-  **Predictive Data and Forecasting.** Typically, you still need comprehensive and consistent historical data to maximize ROI from marketing investments. However, new predictive analytics tools continued to be introduced that support utilizing disparate data sets.



Primacy View: Three Things You Can Do Today



Experiment with the Tools. A simple search query: “AI tools for _____” can take you on a path to explore tools that are specific to your needs. Increasing tool usage boosts understanding of AI, instilling confidence to effectively leverage it for institutional support.



Start Working on Policies and Procedures. The use of AI is evolving rapidly. If your institution isn't already discussing how to address from a policy and procedure perspective, it's important to get started now.



Develop an AI Action Plan. Acknowledging the power and potential of AI is step one. Other common steps include integrating AI into internal training curriculum and forming a core group passionate about AI and it being used effectively at your institution.

Primacy's AI Solutions

We have been supporting our higher education clients with AI in a variety of ways, including:

- AI 101 Workshops
- AI Training
- AI Strategy and Planning
- Digital Ecosystem Review
- Tool and Technology Evaluations

Have questions or a specific need? Our solutions are evolving as quickly as AI itself. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.



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