



Is it Time for Students to Wake Up from the **American Dream?**

The Importance
of Soft Skills
in a Digital World

Leading Beyond the Textbook: The Hidden Curriculum of the AI Era

From Blackboard to Byte -
Teacher Training
Is Essential

Contents

COVER STORY

Is it Time for Students to Wake Up from the American Dream? 02
By Sruthi John



Life At CMU So Far 03
By Aditya Patil

A Summer Filled With Small Brave Moments 04
By Priyangana Mohanty



The Importance of Soft Skills in a Digital World 05
By Vedant Podar

Leadership in the AI Era 06
By Devesh Lathi



Preparing Young Minds for a World Shaped by Artificial Intelligence 07
By Tarun Anand



From Blackboard to Byte - Teacher Training Is Essential 08
By Dr Jasmeet Kaur



Your Education Digest: 09
Snapshots of events that matter



Check your Orange Quotient (OQ): 10
Welcome to the AI Escape Room: "Break the AI Code"

New year, New beginnings!



As the new year unfolds with fresh promise and exciting possibilities, we at UCONNECT are thrilled to launch our very first **Photo Contest**. We invite our trusted readers to capture and share meaningful moments around their campus or surroundings, anything that feels like a story about education, mentoring, and/or university or school life. Winning entries will be acknowledged and entered into a pool that may be featured on the Cover page.
Submissions must be in portrait format.

Contributors

Aditya Patil
Ashish Ilwadia (Illustrator)
Charushilla Narula (Curator)
Devesh Lathi
Dr Jasmeet Kaur
Namrata Sharma (Editor)
Priyangana
Sruthi John
Tarun Anand
Vedant Podar

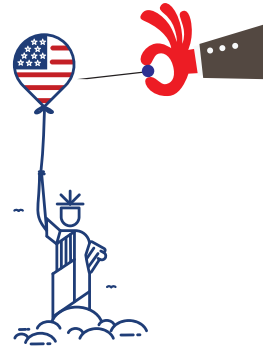


COVER STORY

Is it Time for Students to Wake Up from the American Dream?

By Sruthi John, UC Research Counsellor

To truly understand whether the dream itself is fading or merely shifting, it becomes necessary to reflect on what the American Dream ever meant to represent...



For years, students from countries like India, China, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia have been following their dreams to the USA, in the hopes of converting those dreams into high-paying jobs, long-term employment, and better lifestyle opportunities. The American Dream, for many, was not merely an abstract ideal but a concrete destination, a country believed to convert ambition into achievement. But now, the current political winds from the USA seemingly suggest that it may be better to look elsewhere to pursue higher education.

In fact, just a few months back, the only advice we were sharing with students and families was to simply wait and watch. After all, unconstitutional and discriminatory bans are in direct opposition to the values that most U.S. universities stand for. They are known for diversity and inclusion, and this reputation has been built over years and centuries; perhaps, to imagine that they are going to succumb to political agendas and diktats, and ruin this branding built over a lifetime would be premature. However, visa revocations, social media scrutiny, and the rising costs associated with work visas have caused many to wonder if the USA is indeed the right choice for their academic pursuits. Worrying headlines aside, they do not necessarily translate to the fading of the American Dream; rather, they signal that converting the dream into reality has become more difficult.

The enduring appeal of an American education continues to attract international students, primarily from middle-class Indian families. According to the Open Doors 2024 Report, in 2024, Indian students surpassed the number of Chinese students in the USA for the first time since 2009. **Beyond academics, the presence of world-class universities, tech giants, Indian-origin CEOs, a strong research ecosystem, and the lifestyle offered by the country has contributed to this attraction.**

To truly understand whether the dream itself is fading or merely shifting, it becomes necessary to reflect on what the American Dream ever meant to represent.

The term American Dream was first coined by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* (1931). Described as a national ethos, it referred to the belief that anyone could achieve success through hard work, determination, and initiative, regardless of their background. If the essence of the American Dream is upward mobility through effort, then it

was never meant to be confined to one nation. According to Adams, ownership of a home, access to education, and entrepreneurship were fundamental to attaining this dream. If the USA now limits student intake or tightens regulations, it does not restrict the dream itself; it only forces students to seek environments where individual growth remains possible. The American Dream, therefore, must now be understood as a global concept rather than one that exists exclusively within US borders.

With this realisation, students are increasingly setting their sights on countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong; Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Switzerland have also emerged as appealing destinations. In addition, countries like the UAE and Qatar now host satellite campuses of American, British, and Australian universities, offering quality education outside traditional Western strongholds. The idea behind the American Dream, clearly, is no longer tied to a single geography.

Ironically, the nation that gave life to the American Dream now sees its own younger generation questioning whether education is the right path forward. With job insecurity on the rise and skill-based hiring becoming more prevalent, a university degree is no longer seen as the guaranteed gateway to success. Compounding this issue are exorbitant tuition fees that continue to climb year after year. While universities remain important for national progress and social mobility, the fear of financial instability has driven many young Americans toward alternative pathways, such as vocational education or early workforce entry.

Between 2006 and 2016, college costs in the United States rose by 63 percent (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), outpacing even inflation. Federal aid programmes such as the Pell Grant, which once offered meaningful support, are now struggling to keep up with rising fees. As a result, university education, once central to the dream, is becoming inaccessible even to citizens of the country that created it.

Thus, it is not only international students who struggle to secure the American Dream in the USA; young Americans are facing similar constraints. Although the United States continues to represent the gold standard in education and opportunity, mounting debt, funding challenges, visa anxieties, and economic instability now stand between many students and their ambitions. Seeking opportunity outside the USA is not an abandonment of the American Dream; rather, it is a continuation of it under new conditions. The dream is not dying; its geography is simply changing.



Not big on geography?

Here's an AI Research Exercise to help you get started:

A prompt to explore: *What are some highly stable economies across the world that offer an excellent education in <write program name> and also have significant job opportunities that link to professional growth. Share with real examples from university websites.*

Chances are, you will end up with a long list with a lot of information. Now, contact someone who can put this in context: a College and Careers Counsellor, of course!



Life At CMU So Far

By Aditya Patil, MS in Mechanical Engineering student at Carnegie Mellon University, CAAS 2025 student



STUDENT'S Corner

Three months ago, I landed in the United States to begin a new chapter that I had long anticipated. As I write this now, with the fall semester at Carnegie Mellon University entering its final weeks, I am reminded of how far I have come. The transition into graduate school, something I had built up in my mind for months, turned out to be far smoother than I ever expected. I find myself pausing not out of exhaustion, but out of reflection.

Learning to Stand on My Own

Living on my own while managing a demanding academic schedule never felt overwhelming. In many ways, that confidence was built long before I arrived here. During my final year of undergrad at Manipal Institute of Technology, I moved out of living in the dorms, and that experience taught me how to be independent. Moving away from home for undergrad changed me in lasting ways, influencing both the person I have become and how I face challenges.

Living in a completely new place and navigating little things from travel, academics, and having a social life, all at once, gives you a sense



of invincibility; you begin to believe that no problem is too big to handle. Having that experience, homesickness has never really been something I have struggled with, and I doubt it will be an issue during my time here at Carnegie Mellon University.

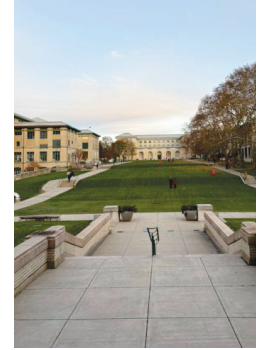
The CMU Way of Learning

Carnegie Mellon has its own rhythm. There's a distinct way of doing things here. The lectures, assignments, and office hours are thoughtfully designed to complement one another, creating an environment that genuinely supports learning. The intentional

One of the most surprising parts of my experience so far has been realizing how closely engineering is intertwined with public policy.

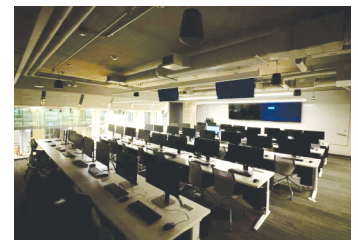
structure is something that I've grown to appreciate more with each passing week. Beyond coursework, the research ecosystem here is vast. People, here, are working on an incredible range of problems, and just being surrounded by that kind of curiosity is inspiring.

Before coming here, I often wondered if the rigor would live up to CMU's reputation. In many ways, it does. I am taking five courses this semester, **all of which are well structured** and well taught, and they do demand consistent effort. There are plenty of resources for support, including office hours with TAs and professors, as well as an online system for posting questions, making help accessible even when in-person help isn't possible. That accessibility has made a significant difference. Still, the workload can become challenging when deadlines overlap, making strong **time-management and discipline essential.**



Redefining Impact Beyond Technology

One of the most surprising parts of my experience so far has been realizing how closely engineering is intertwined with public policy. Until now, my academic journey had been almost entirely technical. I rarely thought about how much the success of any idea depends not just on innovation, but on the policies that shape its implementation. Seeing engineering through this broader lens has been both humbling and refreshing; it has changed the way I think about impact.



More Than Just Academic Growth

As the semester draws to a close, what stands out most is not just how much I have learned but how much I have enjoyed the process. If you enjoy studying and are curious to dive deeper into a specific field, Carnegie Mellon is an exceptional place to be, whether through coursework or research, there is a lot to learn and a lot to enjoy.

Counselor's Perspective

Aditya is a driven student currently pursuing M.S. at Carnegie Mellon University, an institution with a highly selective acceptance rate of 1-7%. His journey reflects both academic excellence and personal rigour. After completing his undergraduate studies at Manipal Institute of Technology, he developed a strong technical foundation and a clear sense of direction, which ultimately shaped his graduate aspirations.

He was supported by University Connection through key aspects of his application, particularly in engineering research positioning and college essays. It was his discipline and commitment to the process that truly defined his success. His story is a reminder that while guidance can provide structure and clarity, it is a student's own rigour that drives outcomes.

If you're seeking similar support, University Connection offers personalized services in profile building, research mentorship, and application strategy, with our skilled mentors who help students identify their strengths while confidently navigating their academic journey.



A Summer Filled With Small Brave Moments

By Priyangana Mohanty,
IB DP Year 2 student at KIIT International School,
CAAS Student 2026

One Summer, Many Lessons: Inside My Warwick Experience



In the summer of 2025, I had the opportunity to attend the Warwick University Summer School, and it turned out to be one of the most memorable experiences of my life. I still remember arriving and feeling that mix of excitement and nervousness, wondering silently, "What will this experience shape me into?" I had joined the course **A Taste of Arts and Humanities**, which allowed me to explore a range of modules like film-making, theatre, liberal arts, film studies, and marketing. **Each subject challenged me differently.** Film-making and theatre pushed me to be creative and confident, liberal arts and film studies helped me see culture and society through new lenses, and marketing showed me how ideas can be turned into something practical and impactful. With every class, I felt myself opening up a little more, discovering a new rhythm in the unfamiliar.



What really brought these classes to life was the environment itself. The classrooms were incredibly global, filled with students from all around the world. Every perspective was welcomed, and what struck me was how everyone's voice was genuinely considered rather than being ridiculed or brushed aside. Discussions felt like **an exchange of cultures**, and it made me realise just how powerful diversity can be in shaping ideas. It felt like watching different colours blend into new shades, something you could never imagine until you see it happen right in front of you.



Teamwork played a significant role in the course, and this is where the real journey began. Group projects weren't always easy; everyone had their own way of working, and sometimes opinions clashed. At times, it felt messy and even a little chaotic! But that was exactly what made it meaningful. **I learned how to adapt, when to compromise, and when to step up and take the lead.** And the funny thing is, those tricky moments often brought us closer together. By the end, the very challenges that initially frustrated us



had become the experiences that taught me the most about collaboration. Isn't it beautiful how something that seems difficult at first becomes the memory you cherish the most?

Outside the classroom, there were even more lessons waiting to be learned. Travelling alone to London and Oxford was both **exciting and intimidating**. As someone who had never been to the UK before, figuring out trains, buses, and unfamiliar streets was overwhelming at first. But each time I managed it, **I grew more confident.** Those trips taught me resilience and gave me a sense of independence I had never felt before. I found myself smiling during those journeys, realising how amazing it feels when you start trusting yourself.

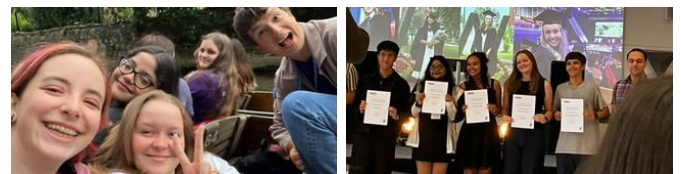
With every class, I felt myself opening up a little more, discovering a new rhythm in the unfamiliar.

Life in a shared flat added another layer to the adventure. I was lucky to live with some amazing people who made the experience fun, though not everyone was equally competent when it came to cleaning or organising! Still, those moments, frustrating at first, eventually became funny stories and reminders of how different personalities can come together under one roof. It was chaotic, lively, and unexpectedly comforting - like finding harmony in chaos.

A Journey That Lasts Beyond Summer

All experiences along the way, classes, teamwork, travel, and even flatmate struggles, finally paid off when among 171 students, I received the Most Collaborative Student Award along with four others. That recognition made all the challenges worthwhile and showed me how much I had grown in just a few weeks.

Looking back, Warwick wasn't just a summer school; it was a journey of independence, connection, and discovery, an experience that gave me knowledge, confidence, and memories that will stay with me for a lifetime. And perhaps it was just a way of me realising: "Isn't stepping out of your comfort zone the first step towards becoming the best version of yourself?"



Counselor's Perspective

A summer school experience can indeed enrich the lives of attendees beyond academic learning. As clearly shown by Priyangana's experience, it enables students to build their social skills by challenging themselves to step out of their comfort zones. Rather than spending time wondering what to do during the summer break, attending a summer school also reflects intellectual curiosity and helps students assess whether the culture and environment of the institution align with them. It is important to note that attending one does not guarantee admission; however, it certainly opens doors to interpersonal growth and holistic development.



PARTNER Spotlight

The Importance of Soft Skills in a Digital World

By Vedant Podar, CEO and Co-founder, Podar Eduspace



In today's digital age, technical expertise often takes center stage. While coding, programming, data analysis, and digital literacy are undeniably crucial, **they alone are insufficient for long-term success in an AI-driven world.** Soft skills are equally important, not as secondary traits but as foundational human capacities that determine how effectively technical knowledge is applied in real-life contexts. These human-centered abilities, such as communication,

collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence, complement technical knowledge and amplify its impact. **The central challenge, therefore, is not whether soft skills matter, but how deliberately and effectively we cultivate them through education to prepare students for the complex realities of modern life.**

Soft skills are non-technical abilities that shape how individuals interact, make decisions, and respond to challenges. Communication enables clear expression, active listening, and meaningful collaboration. Collaboration itself requires teamwork, respect for diverse perspectives, and constructive conflict resolution. **Critical thinking and problem-solving** help individuals analyze information objectively and find practical solutions to complex challenges. **Adaptability** allows people to remain flexible in fast-changing environments, while **emotional intelligence** fosters self-awareness, empathy, and strong relationships. Together, these skills represent the human element that technology alone cannot replicate.

The value of soft skills extends far beyond employability. Employers consistently rank them alongside technical expertise,

recognizing their importance for teamwork, leadership, and organizational success. On a personal level, soft skills nurture healthier relationships and resilience, helping individuals navigate change and maintain emotional well-being.

As automation and artificial intelligence continue to reshape industries, the demand for soft skills will only intensify. **Machines can process data and execute commands, but can they replace human judgment, creativity, or empathy? No.** In innovation-driven and increasingly remote work environments, the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate across cultures, and sustain team cohesion has become indispensable.

Despite their importance, soft skills remain difficult to integrate into traditional education systems. Standardized examinations rarely measure them effectively, making alternative approaches such as project-based learning, reflective portfolios, and peer evaluations more appropriate. These skills must be embedded into daily learning experiences rather than treated as optional add-ons. Equally crucial is teacher training, as educators play a central role in modeling these skills. Educational institutions must evolve by creating interdisciplinary, experiential, and student-centered environments that foster both technical and interpersonal growth.

In a rapidly evolving digital world, soft skills are no longer optional; they are essential. While technology advances at breakneck speed, **the uniquely human abilities to communicate, collaborate, adapt, and empathize remain at the heart of success.** Therefore, by prioritizing soft skills in education, we can equip future generations not just to excel in their careers but also to lead resilient and fulfilling lives that are grounded in purpose, connection, and the confidence to grow alongside technology rather than be replaced by it.

Podar EduSpace is a global educational and skilling initiative by Podar Enterprise that bridges the gap between traditional academics and industry requirements. It specialises in upskilling and enhancing student employability through virtual internships, industry-aligned training (including partnerships with Harvard Business School Online), and career advisory services. By offering experiential learning and 'Learn, Work, and Earn' programmes, it empowers students and professionals with the practical skills and global opportunities needed to thrive in the modern workforce.



Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.



Leadership in the AI Era

By Devesh Lathi, Founder of Futurowise.com

AI changes jobs, but leadership changes outcomes.....



In a world that is dynamically impacted by AI, the real curriculum for leaders goes far beyond classrooms and textbooks. Traditional learning builds your foundation, but it is not yet designed to prepare you to lead the future. **In a fast-changing world, leadership requires conscious effort, continuous learning, and adaptability.**

For centuries, new technologies have disrupted the way we work. When Henry Ford introduced the assembly line in 1913, many believed it would end manual labor jobs. Instead, it created a new market of skilled workers. Later, in the 1990s, with computers and the dot-com boom, vocational roles did not disappear; rather, they evolved into a highly skilled coder and software developer economy. **Every wave of technology brings challenges and opportunities, and true leaders are the ones who recognize and seize these opportunities early.**

Today, with AI transforming industries and changing the landscape of every industry, new careers are rapidly emerging on the horizon. Robotics maintenance engineers, prompt engineers, data analysts, and technologists who blend coding with humanities and business are already in demand. Technology will continue to change, but some leadership qualities remain constant.

To lead in the AI Era, you need six core capabilities; think of the following as your power tools, not just for the future, but for your life as well:

- **Develop microskills:**

New-age skills matter more than ever. The most relevant skills of 2026 include cybersecurity, health and fitness, mental health support, AI prompt engineering, robotics engineering, drone operations, logistics, and design. What is relevant today may shift in a few years, but that should not stop you from gaining skills. **Building microskills keeps you future-ready.** In the AI era, this skill intersection creates leaders who can translate complexity into action and remain adaptable as roles evolve.



- **Improve your communication skills:**

Communication is timeless, and you can always get better at it. It is not only about articulating your ideas to people, but also about communicating clearly with technology. Read quality books, practise speaking often, listen intently, and write regularly without using AI. Overdependency on AI to communicate can erode your brain's ability to convey information.



- **Master multiple skills at a professional level:**

Do not limit yourself by saying you are only STEM or only non-STEM. Aim to be a jack of many trades and master a few. Successful people excel in at least two major skills. Being in the top five percent of even two domains can dramatically **increase** your chances of success.



- **Develop critical thinking and logic:**

There is no single curriculum for critical thinking, yet it is essential. Question what you read. Challenge assumptions. Do not accept information blindly. Read between the lines. In a world filled with AI-generated content and information overload, asking questions and thinking logically is a superpower.

- **Build emotional intelligence:**

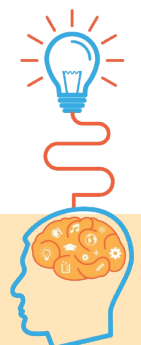
Strong leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence. Understanding your emotions and those of others helps you collaborate better, lead effectively, and respond wisely in fast-changing situations. In an AI-driven world where automation handles tasks, emotional intelligence becomes the distinctly human skill that builds trust, resolves conflict, and inspires teams.

- **Gain professional experience early:**

Volunteer, intern, and try entry-level roles. The stakes are lowest in your early years, which means mistakes cost little but teach a lot. Early exposure builds adaptability, resilience, and decision-making skills that no textbook can offer. The best way to lead in an AI-driven world is to gain real experience navigating it.

Jobs are evolving faster than ever. **If you do not adapt, you risk being displaced.** But change does not happen overnight. Just like the rising sun, transitions take time. Be patient, keep learning, and stay ready to always be relevant for what is next.

Futurowise is an ed-tech platform that prepares students (ages 14–21) for the future of work by teaching high-demand skills not found in traditional curricula. They offer intensive masterclasses and project-based programs in cutting-edge fields like AI, Sustainability, and Robotics, helping students build professional portfolios and gain a competitive edge for college and career success.



Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.



UNIVERSITY Spotlight



Preparing Young Minds for a World Shaped by Artificial Intelligence

By Tarun Anand, Chancellor, Universal Ai University



Every generation faces a defining paradigm shift. For today's students and parents, that shift is Artificial Intelligence.

AI is already shaping every aspect of our lives, from how we communicate to how decisions are made across industries. The question, now, is no longer whether AI will change the world but whether our education systems are preparing young minds to engage with it responsibly and meaningfully. At Universal Ai University, this question guides our every decision.

• Why We Chose to Build Differently

When we envisioned Universal Ai University, we did not want to create just another institution that teaches about technology. We wanted to build a university that prepares students to *live and lead* in a technology-driven world. That is why **AI** at UAi is not treated as a single subject or specialization. It is the **foundation across disciplines**. Whether a student studies engineering, management, design, psychology, music, or liberal arts, they learn to understand AI as a tool, one that enhances thinking, creativity, and problem-solving rather than replacing them. Frankly, learning theory alone is no longer enough.

• Learning That Goes Beyond the Classroom

Universal Ai University is firmly grounded on the belief that education must be lived and practiced, not crammed. Our academic philosophy rests on three principles we call the **3E Model: Ethics, Experiential Learning, and Environment**. Ethics matters because technology must be guided by strong values and Experiential learning is crucial because confidence is built through doing, not just listening. Students engage in **CMAPS (Collaborative Multi-disciplinary Approach towards Problem Solving)**, along with **SMART (Societal Management Aptitude & Responsibility Temperament)** and consulting-oriented work such as **CAP (Consulting Aptitude Project)**. They also get applied simulation exposure, including trading practice in *Asia's first Thomson Reuters 24x7 Trading Room*. This approach ensures that students don't just graduate with knowledge. They graduate with judgment.

• Industry, Exposure, and Real-World Thinking

Over the years, I have seen one truth prevail consistently: students succeed when education is a pure reflection of reality. At UAi, they interact with global leaders and are encouraged to think like entrepreneurs, even if they choose corporate careers. We are the only university led by a Global CEO and endorsed by 60 Global CEOs (including leaders from organizations such as GE, JP Morgan, and others), which is reflected in our Board of Governance, also referred to as "The 60 CEOs & Senate." Our global standpoint is further strengthened by our Founding Vice Chancellor, **Dr. Simon Mak (MIT, USA)**, who is the 1st American and Foreign National Vice Chancellor in India.

• A Campus Designed for Focus and Growth

Our campus, located near Mumbai and surrounded by nature, was chosen intentionally. We wanted a space where students could slow down enough to think clearly, yet remain close to the energy and professional exposure of one of India's most dynamic cities. Laid out as a residential environment, the campus allows students to go beyond academia, form meaningful connections, and be independent. Moreover, there is 24x7 security coverage with CCTV, on-campus medical and wellness support. Students also have world-class food service by Sodexo, with a separate Jain kitchen. Students also get to indulge in cultural fests like Rush4Rush and sports, ranging from indoor sports to grounds/courts, trekking and mountain biking, a fully equipped gymnasium, and American football. Students also carry a symbol of our culture: HawkAI, our university mascot, which was unveiled by Padma Bhushan Shri Gulzar Sahab. Inspired by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, it represents heightened awareness and the values we want students to live by: freedom, courage, self-reliance, and nobility.

• Preparing for Careers That Will Evolve

One of the most common concerns parents share is employability. At UAi, career readiness is not an afterthought; rather, it is built into the academic journey from day one. This ecosystem is endorsed by over **60 global CEOs**, with learning shaped by leaders from organizations such as **JP Morgan, GE, DHL, KPMG, and leading global enterprises**.

• Learning With Real-World Context

An important strength of Universal Ai University is its connection with live AI consulting and applied research. Through our technology ecosystem and industry collaborations, students gain exposure to how AI is used across sectors. This is further strengthened through consulting programs supported by Univitt Technologies, which works with organizations on real-world AI projects with global organizations such as **Spotify, Forbes, Turner, and KPMG**. This exposure brings clarity. It helps students connect education with impact.

• A Thought for Students and Parents

Choosing a university is not just about choosing a degree. It is a decision that shapes a young person in all aspects: mindset, learning culture, and a long-term vision.

Parents often ask us whether their children will be "ready" for the future. Our response is simple: the future cannot be predicted, but we can be prepared for it. Through an education that balances intelligence with experience, ambition with empathy, and technology with values, we help students build the confidence to adapt, no matter how the world evolves.

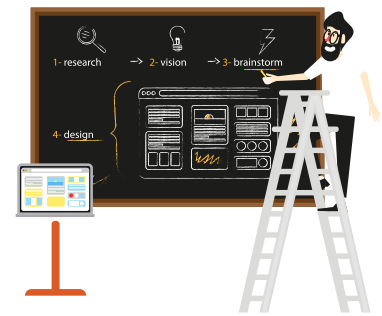
Universal Ai University follows a rolling admissions process. Accordingly, the earlier students submit their applications, the sooner they can secure their seat, subject to receiving a provisional offer of admission. Please note that only **300 seats** are available for the **2026-27 academic year**.



From Blackboard to Byte - Teacher Training Is Essential

By Dr Jasmeet Kaur, Faculty, Department of Education, Mata Sundri College, University of Delhi, India

Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions: doctors, engineers, pilots, and politicians; each of them has been taught by none other than a teacher



In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the role of a teacher extends far beyond simply delivering a curriculum. A modern educator must be a facilitator, a mentor, and a lifelong learner. This is why teacher training is not just a one-time event but a continuous process that is fundamental to improving educational quality and student outcomes. It equips teachers with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of a 21st-century classroom, addressing diverse learning needs, integrating technology, and fostering an inclusive environment.

Various teacher training courses are offered at different levels in schools, and each training system varies significantly across the globe, each with its own strengths and challenges.

Many developed countries, such as Finland and Estonia, emphasise rigorous, master's-level training for teachers, viewing them as highly skilled professionals. The Finnish model, for instance, focuses on research-based teaching practices and provides educators with significant autonomy. Estonia, a leader in digital education, places a strong emphasis on training teachers to use technology effectively. These models often prioritise continuous professional development, with teachers regularly engaging in workshops and collaborative projects to stay updated.

India's education system, with its vast and diverse population, faces unique challenges. The traditional teacher training model in India, often a one or two-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program, has long been criticised for being too theoretical and disconnected from practical classroom realities. However, recent initiatives, particularly under the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, highlight that "Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of school teachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions, including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy" (Para 15.1, NEP 2020).

The policy advocates for a move towards a holistic, multidisciplinary four-year integrated program known as the Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP), which combines subject-specific knowledge with pedagogical skills and practical training. It offers

stage-specific specialisation and envisions the creation of passionate, motivated, qualified, professionally trained, and well-equipped teachers capable of designing and implementing developmentally appropriate learning experiences for students at different stages of school education.

"Recognising that the teachers will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, teacher education will gradually be moved by 2013 into multi-disciplinary colleges and Universities" (Para 5.22, NEP 2020).

In the era of AI, pre-service teachers are made digitally competent; their training has moved beyond simply teaching them how to use specific software or tools—the focus is on developing a deep understanding of how to integrate technology effectively into teaching practices. This involves adopting a holistic approach that includes a blend of theoretical knowledge, practical application, and continuous professional development.

Keeping in mind the ever-changing pedagogies, there is a growing recognition for teacher in-service training as well. Teaching methods that were effective a decade ago may no longer resonate with today's students, who are digital natives with different learning styles. Ongoing training ensures that educators are aware of and can implement modern pedagogical strategies. This upskilling of teachers, especially in areas like digital literacy, competency-based education, and cultural sensitivity, helps them to be more confident, motivated, and to be at par with the times.

The modern classroom has transitioned from blackboards to smartboards, from textbooks to tablets. This shift, "From Blackboard to Byte," necessitates a fundamental change in how we train our educators. It's no longer sufficient for teachers to be subject-matter experts; they must also be digitally competent. **They need to master not only the tools but also the pedagogy of technology** — understanding how digital platforms can foster critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. By equipping future teachers with these skills, we ensure they can leverage technology to create **engaging, effective, and relevant** learning experiences for a new generation of students.

If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors



Your Education Digest: Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events
within this section of UCONNECT

Oxford India Forum hosted by the Synergia Foundation

Sidharth Sethi, Founder of the Oxford India Forum, recently shared his experience following his participation in a high-level roundtable hosted by the Synergia Foundation in collaboration with the Harvard Club of India. Sethi described the event as a "rare, closed-door exchange," highlighting the exclusive nature of the gathering. The session dove deep into "geopolitics and India's strategic playbook," providing a platform for critical discourse. A central feature of the event was the opportunity to engage in conversation with an "exceptional group of practitioners and statesmen." The discussion brought together a diverse range of expertise spanning the military, diplomatic corps, and intelligence services to "unpack" complex global dynamics.

The key takeaway from the event was a reinforced perspective on India's strategic positioning, facilitated by the attendees' knowledge and experience.

Sethi concluded by acknowledging the leadership of Toby Simon and Sambir Shetty in organizing such a pivotal strategic dialogue.



Bocconi University Event in Delhi

Komal Singh from University Connection recently shared an informative experience following their attendance at a conference hosted by Bocconi University in Delhi. The representative described the session as providing "valuable insights" into the university's undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programs. They also highlighted that Grade 12 board results are not considered for undergraduate admissions; instead, students are evaluated based on their performance in Grades 10 and 11, which "play a crucial role in showcasing their academic readiness." Additionally, the session demystified testing requirements, noting that only one qualifying test, either the SAT, ACT, or the Bocconi Test, is required, while "AP scores are not considered in the evaluation process." She emphasized that the conference offered a "comprehensive understanding" of the institution's academic philosophy.

The key takeaway was a clearer perspective on the "straightforward and transparent" application process, making it a highly engaging experience for those guiding students toward international education. This was achieved through essays and applications.



Winter Boot Camp at Universal AI University, Mumbai

Students from Sancta Maria International School, Faridabad, recently shared a highly positive experience after attending the Winter Boot Camp hosted by Universal AI University in Mumbai. They described the programme as a meaningful experience, highlighting the transformative learning, guidance, and consistent support provided throughout the camp. A core feature of the event was the exceptional quality of instruction and mentorship offered to participants. Students praised the faculty, noting that teachers were clear, engaging, and inspiring, while volunteers were described as incredibly supportive and approachable throughout the programme. Their collective teamwork, patience, and dedication were cited as the primary factors that truly made a difference in the students' overall learning journey.

The curriculum focused on practical integration of technology, enabling students to understand the basics of artificial intelligence and its real world applications across healthcare, finance, education, and smart devices. The key takeaway was the mentors' ability to explain complex concepts.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oxford MUN India 2026

Harvard PAIR Sustainability
Impact Summit (HSIS) 2026

Futrowise Masterclasses

Norwich University of Arts,
Business and Marketing
Pitch 60 Event





Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

Welcome to the AI Escape Room: "Break the AI Code"

You're inside the AI Lab, where every tool is powerful, but every choice has consequences. Your mission is to escape by solving this AI challenge.

Ready? Let's hack the future.

Level 1: Find the one out: Which one of these is not a career in AI?

1. AI Product Manager, Data Scientist, Clinical Psychologist
2. Hardware Electrician, Data Mining & Analysis, NLP Engineer

Level 2: Are you AI-thically smart?

3. An AI tool writes reports faster than you ever could. Your workplace has no clear policy on disclosure.

What's the ethical move?

- A. Use it for grammar and structure, and disclose its use
- B. Avoid it completely
- C. Use it secretly to stay competitive

4. Your organisation collects user data to improve AI performance.

What's the ethical approach?

- A. Anonymise data but avoid informing users
- B. Buy third-party datasets instead
- C. Collect minimal data with clear consent

5. Your students rely heavily on AI for assignments, but learning outcomes are dropping.

What do you do?

- A. Ban AI tools entirely
- B. Design assessments where AI can assist but not replace thinking
- C. Lower expectations or ignore it, thinking this is the future

Level 3: Are you ready to grow with AI?

6. What's the most future-proof mindset?

- A. AI will replace us
- B. AI will solve everything
- C. AI is a tool, and I decide how to use it

7. AI can mimic empathy but not truly feel it. What skill makes you irreplaceable in any field?

- A. Better AI prompts
- B. Emotional intelligence and human connection
- C. Ethics and accountability





Share your story via UCONNECT

We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

To be featured in UCONNECT - The Education Newsletter, you can write to us at

write@uconnectworld.com

Join our intentional community of readers and contributors

SUBSCRIBE HERE

Follow us on



to stay connected!

