EdTech and the Evolving Role of Faculty

Faculty split on how tech will impact the future of higher education

2024 CIN Faculty EdTech Survey

wgu**labs** | College Innovation Network

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Executive Summary

Higher education has witnessed rapid change in recent years with the rise of education technology (EdTech) tools and the shift to more flexible, remote, and asynchronous learning environments. As a result, the role of faculty has also undergone rapid evolution. Faculty must adjust to an increasingly tech-enabled learning environment while maintaining a productive, accessible, and engaging learning experience.

In November 2023, WGU Labs launched its third Annual Faculty EdTech Survey to examine the faculty experience in the face of their rapidly evolving role. Our survey gathered data from 359 faculty across a diverse group of higher education institutions, including community colleges; primarily online, not-for-profit colleges; and one public four-year institution. As with our previous reports ([2022](#), [2023](#)), we were interested in faculty's experience with EdTech and online learning, including the recent boom in artificial intelligence (AI).

Similar to previous reports, we found that faculty members largely agreed that technology in the classroom is here to stay, but showed signs of tech fatigue. This survey also revealed that faculty do not think that tech will add value to higher education. In fact, in this latest survey, only 33% of faculty thought that higher education was heading in the right direction. Notably, sentiment was divided by teaching modality, with faculty who primarily taught in online asynchronous formats reporting a more positive take on EdTech and the future of higher education than their peers.

Regarding one of the most debated concerns with technology on campus — the use of AI and large language learning models like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude, to name a few — we found little consensus. Faculty were nearly evenly split on whether they found these tools useful in their work and whether they encouraged students to use them in their work.

Divergent attitudes among faculty, who serve as curators of the learning experience, will likely mean students have different access and exposure to these tools in their learning experience.

This survey offered four key insights into faculty's view of technology in higher education:

TAKEAWAY 1

92% of faculty expect to use more EdTech tools in the classroom. But less than 33% believe that higher education is heading in the right direction.

Faculty members acknowledged that EdTech is here to stay, with 92% expecting to use more education technology tools in class. Consistent with the previous year's findings, faculty see the value of EdTech, with 79% of them feeling positive about offering more modality and credential options to students. Sixty-seven percent of faculty expected that these changes would result in courses becoming more standardized, and 58% believed that they would have less autonomy over their course design. Although faculty feel positive about certain features of tech-enabled learning, less than 33% of faculty believe higher education to be heading in the right direction.

TAKEAWAY 2

Teaching modality impacts perceptions of higher education: 42% of faculty teaching online believe that higher education is headed in the right direction compared to 20% of faculty teaching face-to-face.

The split on whether higher education is heading in the right direction is tied to faculty's primary teaching modality. Only 20% of faculty teaching face-to-face agreed that higher education was headed in the right direction, compared to over 42% of faculty teaching

online asynchronously. Further, over 45% of faculty teaching face-to-face believed the value of higher education will decrease and that students will have lower quality education experiences in the future, compared to less than 31% of faculty teaching online asynchronously.

TAKEAWAY 3

Only 42% of faculty believe AI tools will positively impact faculty, and 49% do not use them in the classroom.

Based on our sample, faculty are not enthusiastic about using AI in teaching and learning. Only 42% believe that AI tools will have a positive impact on faculty experiences and 49% report they do not use AI tools in the classroom. Forty-three percent believe that it's unethical for students to use ChatGPT in their coursework — highlighting strong oppositional views on the role of AI in education. STEM faculty (e.g., science, engineering) and faculty teaching online asynchronously reported more positive attitudes toward AI compared to their peers.

TAKEAWAY 4

41% of faculty report burnout, which is correlated with high levels of technology fatigue.

Seventy-nine percent of faculty felt they were constantly "on the job" because of technology, and 41% reported burnout. We found a strong correlation between the nature of tech-enabled work and burnout — the more faculty agreed that technology made it difficult for them to take a break from work, the more they felt both burned out (r=.51)[1] and emotionally exhausted from their work (r=.49). We also found a significant gender gap, with women faculty (r=.59) showing a significantly stronger correlation between not being able to take a break from work and feeling burned out compared to their male peers (r=.39).

Four years after institutions were forced to undergo rapid technological transformation, faculty now see technology as not only a permanent but also a growing influence on learning — a reality that seems to be creating a divide about the future of higher education. Such growing chasms among faculty may pose challenges, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies in teaching

and instruction, which administrators must navigate. In this report, we share insights for practical change that higher education institutions can bring to better support their faculty transition into a tech-enabled and increasingly accessible learning environment.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE FACULTY EXPERIENCE

Develop better systems for faculty to engage with, gain comfort using, and provide feedback on EdTech tools. We've reported previously and continue to find that fewer than 20% of surveyed faculty reported that their institutions sought their feedback on EdTech once a year or more frequently (37% of faculty reported that they did not know how often their institutions sought their feedback). To help faculty feel some level of structure and guidance in the context of the rapidly evolving learning environment, faculty need to feel that their voices are being heard and have a safe way to explore EdTech tools to find what works for them. Therefore, we recommend establishing appropriate workspaces for engaging with EdTech tools and channels for feedback on faculty members' EdTech and AI experiences.

Use these feedback channels for a more community-wide conversation and strategy about AI use and presence in learning. Given faculty-level differences in the use of AI, we recommend that institutions use the feedback channels they establish to better understand the faculty perspective on the use of AI tools in the classroom. With this information, institutions can then develop faculty-recommended guidance on how to use AI in ways that enhance teaching and learning experiences, as well as guidelines on how to implement AI in the classroom to promote students' AI literacy.

Provide faculty with structure and guidance around EdTech tool mastery and healthy work/ life balance. As things currently stand, faculty are the frontline face of the tech-enabled developments in higher education, grappling with the need to change their teaching techniques to include EdTech tools while

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1 Generally, correlation coefficients are interpreted such that a correlation below .3 is weak, between .3 to .5 is moderate, and .5 and above is a strong correlation.

also maintaining a creative and accessible learning environment for all students. This may be why we are seeing technology fatigue and burnout among faculty, which in turn can affect faculty members' interest in being part of the transformational change in higher education. It can also impact job satisfaction among faculty and make it harder for institutions to retain talented individuals. Therefore, it might behoove administrators to think about hiring or upskilling staff to create a source of EdTech support for faculty so that they do not have to adjust to an increasingly tech-enabled learning environment on their own. It is also important for administrators and institutions to help faculty place boundaries around their personal and professional lives by understanding when and for whom the intrusive nature of tech can cause the most harm. ◼

ABOUT THE COLLEGE INNOVATION NETWORK

The College Innovation Network (CIN) at WGU Labs is a network of higher education institutions committed to addressing the core challenge of promoting belonging and engagement in the modern higher education environment. We're leveraging technology to build highly engaged learning communities from enrollment through graduation - and beyond. CIN supports educational institutions by identifying areas of need, implementing effective education technology for students, and demonstrating impact through research.

ABOUT THE CIN EDTECH SURVEY SERIES

CIN is in a unique position to learn about the student and faculty experience with EdTech by leveraging the diversity of institutions within the Network. The **CIN EdTech Survey Series** is a biannual survey administered across the Network with the goal of generating valuable insights to help institutions understand how faculty and students experience EdTech. These insights can be applied to improve faculty and student experiences, and ultimately bolster the impact of EdTech across the sector.

Queries about CIN can be addressed to info@wgulabs.org

Introduction: EdTech and the Evolving Role of Faculty

Higher education has witnessed rapid change in recent years. Even after the pandemic, there is a growing demand for more remote, hybrid, and asynchronous learning spaces, as well as more accessible and engaging course materials. Layered on top of the push toward more tech-enabled learning caused by the pandemic, the educational landscape has also seen another dramatic technological disruption driven by the advent of AI. These sudden changes have surfaced many — and yet unanswered — questions about the future of higher education. All of this is playing out on the backdrop of declining enrollment and funding and increasing skepticism and political conflict surrounding higher education.

As the frontline face of higher education institutions for students, faculty often experience the brunt of both student and administrator expectations to do more with less. The massive changes in higher education over the past few years are causing faculty members' roles to undergo a rapid evolution. Long gone are the days when a faculty's role was to simply "stand and deliver" a lecture. Now, faculty are expected to make their teaching more personalized, student-centered, engaging, and tech-enabled. Faculty are learning new ways to support students and incorporate EdTech and AI into their curricula while also grappling with program and faculty position cuts due to financial constraints.

Since 2022, WGU Labs has been tracking the faculty experience as higher education continues to transform with our EdTech Survey Series (2022, 2023). To expand on the insights gained from previous surveys, we launched the third iteration of our Faculty EdTech Survey in November of 2023. The survey included 359 faculty members from six institutions and explored how faculty are experiencing their evolving roles. Specifically, the survey aimed to answer the following questions:

- How are faculty perceiving and interacting with EdTech?
- Who is more likely to perceive value in EdTech?
- How do faculty feel about AI, and are they using AI in their classrooms?
- What are the negative effects of EdTech on faculty?

In this report, we present the main findings of the survey, organized into four key takeaways:

Takeaway 1

92% of faculty expect to use more EdTech tools in the classroom. But less than 33% believe that higher education is heading in the right direction.

Takeaway 2

Teaching modality impacts perceptions of higher education: 42% of faculty teaching online believe that higher education is headed in the right direction compared to 20% of faculty teaching face-to-face.
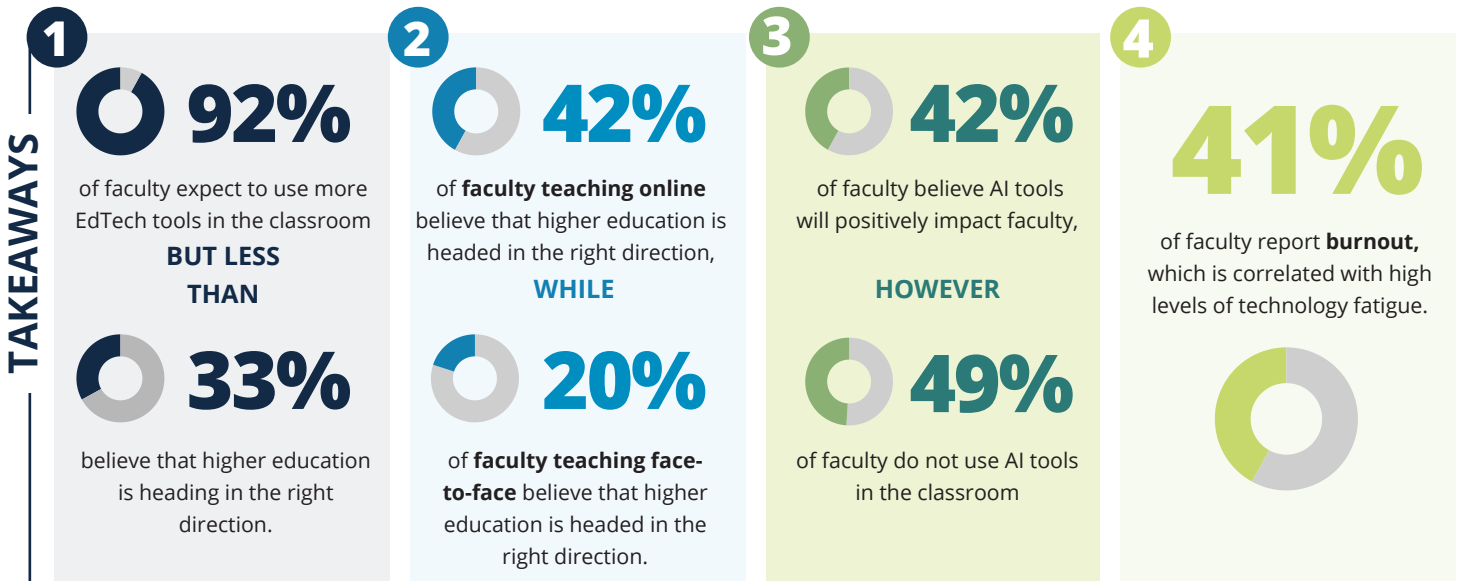
Takeaway 3

Only 42% of faculty believe AI tools will positively impact faculty, and 49% do not use them in the classroom.

Takeaway 4

41% of faculty report burnout, which is correlated with high levels of technology fatigue.

To more fully engage faculty in the tech-enabled future of higher education, we recommend:

- Developing better systems for faculty to engage with, gain comfort using, and provide feedback on EdTech tools
- Using such feedback channels to create community-wide conversation and strategy about AI use and its presence in learning
- Providing faculty with structure and guidance around EdTech tool mastery and healthy work/life balance

TAKEAWAYS

1

92% of faculty expect to use more EdTech tools in the classroom **BUT LESS THAN**

33% believe that higher education is heading in the right direction.

2

42% of **faculty teaching online** believe that higher education is headed in the right direction, **WHILE**

20% of **faculty teaching face-to-face** believe that higher education is headed in the right direction.

3

42% of faculty believe AI tools will positively impact faculty, **HOWEVER**

49% of faculty do not use AI tools in the classroom

4

41% of faculty report **burnout,** which is correlated with high levels of technology fatigue.

Survey Approach / Methodology

UNCOVERING THE FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

In November 2023, the research team at WGU Labs emailed surveys to more than 5,000 faculty across six teaching-focused member institutions of the College Innovation Network (CIN) at WGU Labs. These post-secondary institutions included community colleges; primarily online, not-for-profit colleges; and one public four-year institution. The survey contained 48 questions to better understand the faculty experience with EdTech, AI, belonging, and the psychological impact of these changes on faculty. The final sample included 359 faculty respondents. Sixty percent of respondents teach at community colleges, 38% at a primarily online college, and 3% at a 4-year university.

Of the sample that completed the survey, 58% were women (40% were men, and 2% preferred to self-identify or were non-binary), and 73% were white (9% were Multiracial, 6% were Asian, 6% were Black and/or African American, and 5% were Hispanic and/or Latinx). In terms of the primary modality of teaching, 41% of surveyed faculty taught online asynchronously, 30% taught face-to-face, 15% taught hybrid classes, and 13% taught online synchronously. See the appendix for a more detailed description of the sample and methodology. ■

Takeaway 1: 92% of faculty expect to use more EdTech tools in the classroom, but less than 33% believe that higher education is heading in the right direction

The use of technology in the classroom is no longer a question. Faculty acknowledged that EdTech is here to stay, with 92% expecting to use more education technology tools in class, and 86% expecting to spend more time delivering course content online (Figure 1).

Consistent with the previous year's findings, faculty see the value of tech-enabled learning, with 79% of them feeling positive about offering more modality and credential options to students, and 76% of them feeling positive about offering more hybrid courses for students

(Figure 2). The finding about more modality and credential options is particularly interesting, as it suggests that faculty may be adjusting their views on what a valuable education should look like in the current day. There has been much discussion on whether employers and colleges should adjust their understanding of education's role and ultimate purpose. Many now believe micro-credentials and certifications should count as clear signs of education and expertise, instead of discounting them in favor of college degrees.

SURVEY ITEM | **BELOW ARE SOME POSSIBLE FUTURES THAT HIGHER EDUCATION MAY SOON EXPERIENCE. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT EACH WILL OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?**
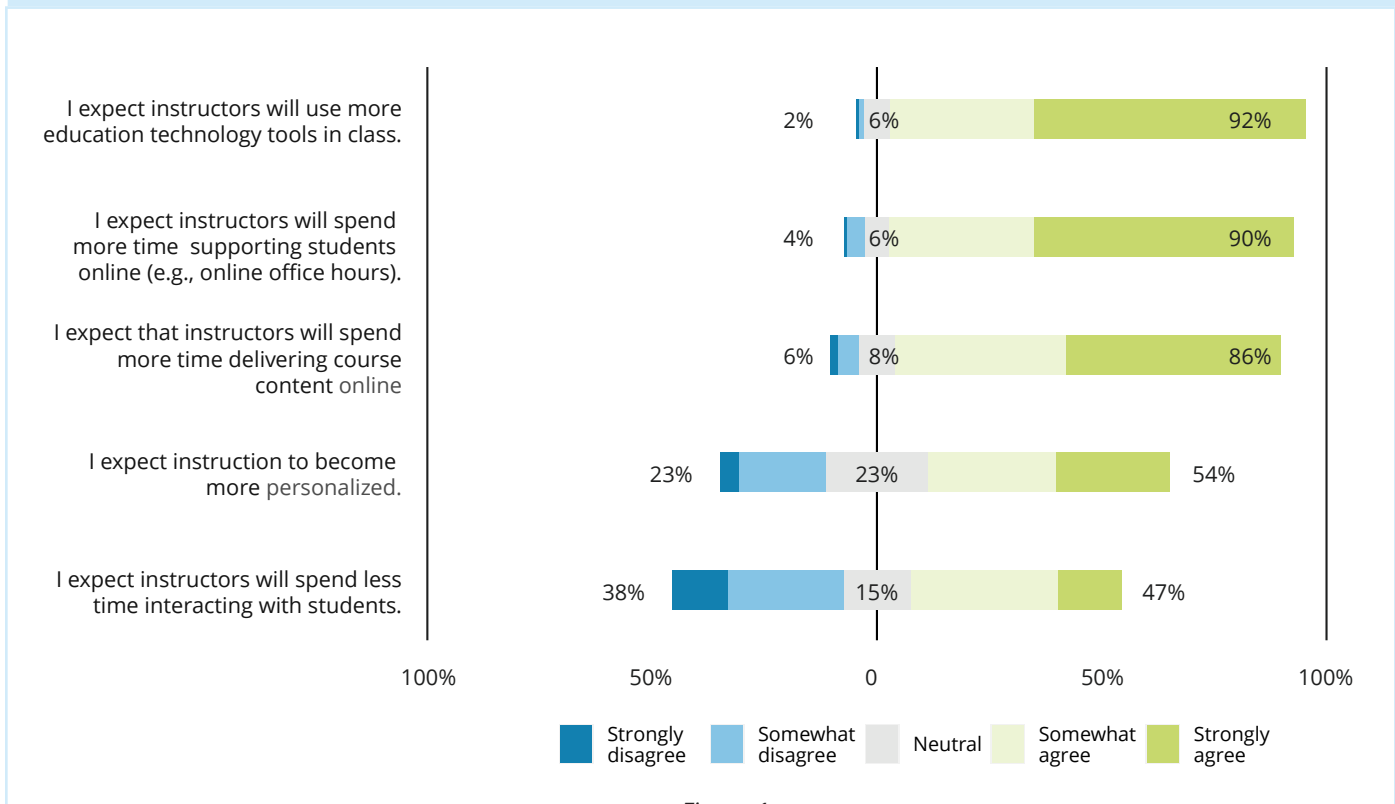
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I expect instructors will use more education technology tools in class.		2%		6%	92%
I expect instructors will spend more time supporting students online (e.g., online office hours).		4%		6%	90%
I expect that instructors will spend more time delivering course content online		6%		8%	86%
I expect instruction to become more personalized.		23%	23%		54%
I expect instructors will spend less time interacting with students.	38%		15%		47%

Figure 1

Institutions offering increasing number of micro−credential and certificate programs. — 5% | 16% | 79%

Institutions offering increasing number of hybrid courses. — 7% | 17% | 76%

Institutions offering increasing number of fully online courses. — 19% | 11% | 70%

Institutions offering increasing number of fully online programs. — 23% | 9% | 68%

Legend: Extremely negatively | Somewhat negatively | Neutral | Somewhat positively | Extremely positively
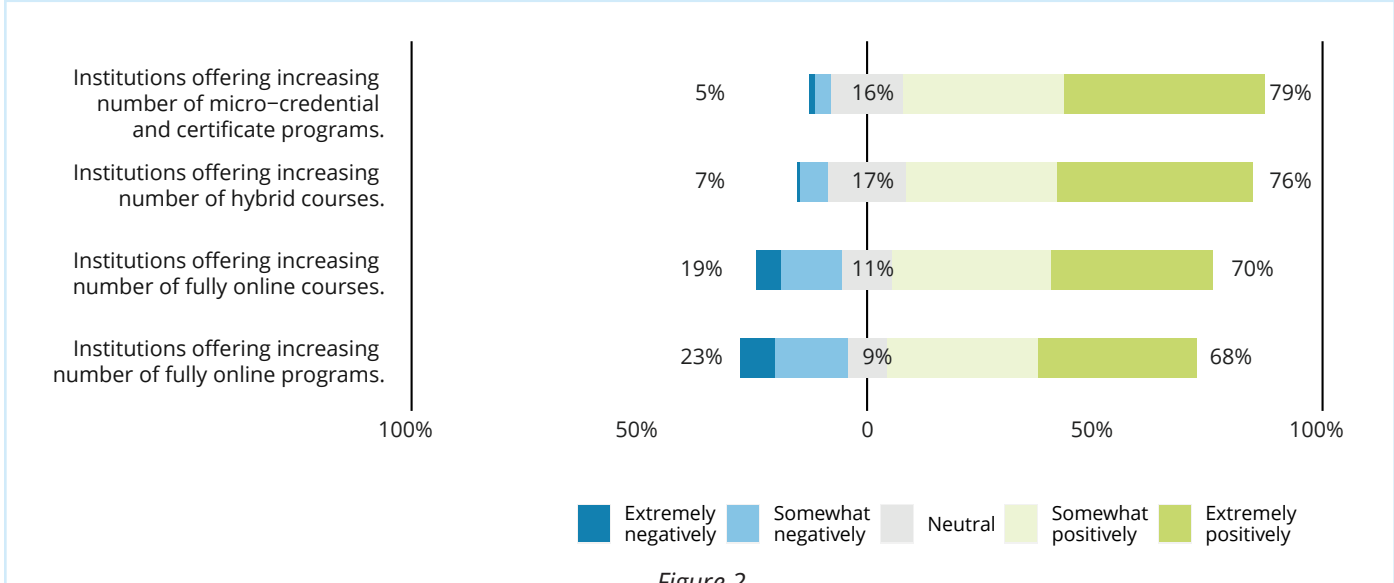
Figure 2

When asked how instruction would change in the future 67% of faculty expected that courses would become more standardized, and 58% believed that they would have less autonomy over their course design (Figure 3).

A sizable proportion of the surveyed faculty had negative attitudes toward the future of higher education. Thirty-seven percent reported believing that students will have lower quality learning experiences in the future, and 36% believed that the value of higher education would decrease.

Moreover, less than 33% of faculty thought that higher education was heading in the right direction (Figure 4). Interestingly, most faculty members (47%) were neutral on whether higher education was heading in the right or wrong direction.

SURVEY ITEM | **BELOW ARE SOME POSSIBLE FUTURES THAT HIGHER EDUCATION MAY SOON EXPERIENCE.** TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH **EACH OF THESE POTENTIAL SCENARIOS FOR STUDENT LEARNING?**
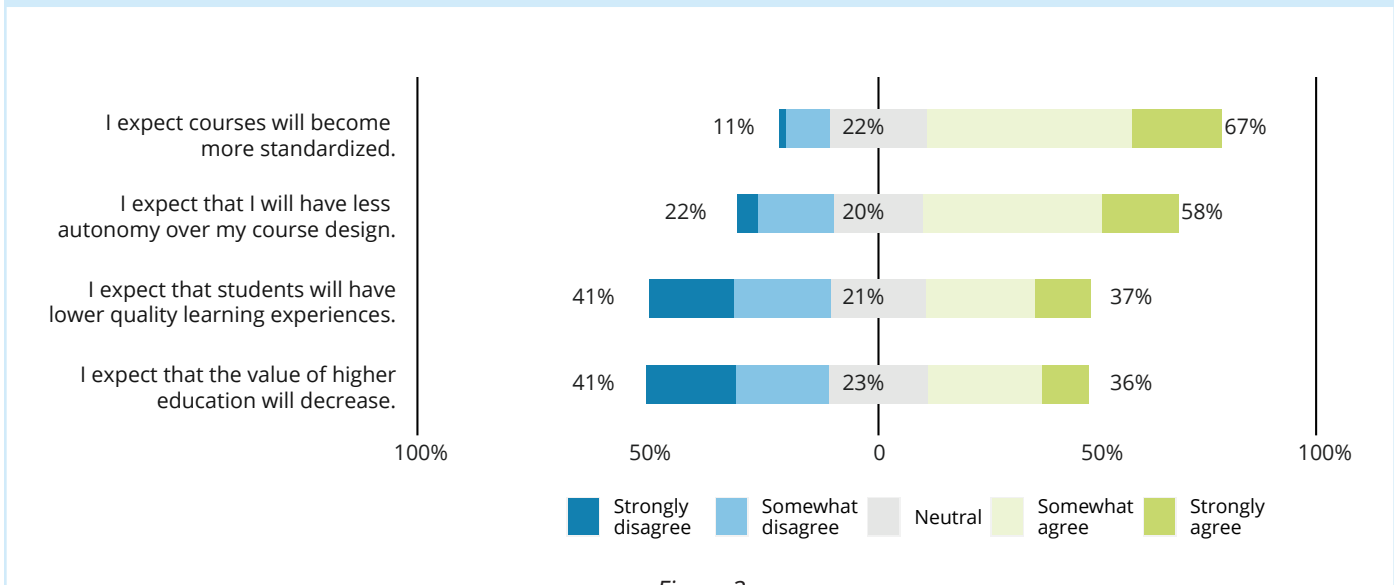
I expect courses will become more standardized. — 11% | 22% | 67%

I expect that I will have less autonomy over my course design. — 22% | 20% | 58%

I expect that students will have lower quality learning experiences. — 41% | 21% | 37%

I expect that the value of higher education will decrease. — 41% | 23% | 36%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

Figure 3

SURVEY ITEM | DO YOU FEEL THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS CURRENTLY HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR THE WRONG DIRECTION?

Neutral
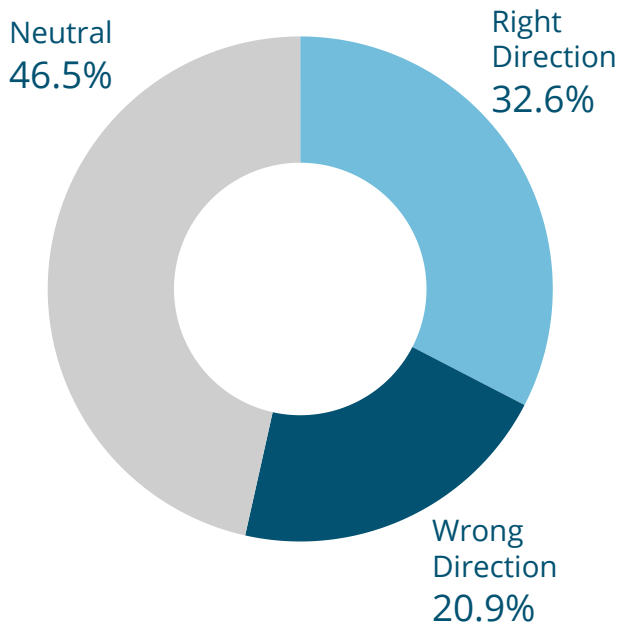46.5%

Right Direction
32.6%

Wrong Direction
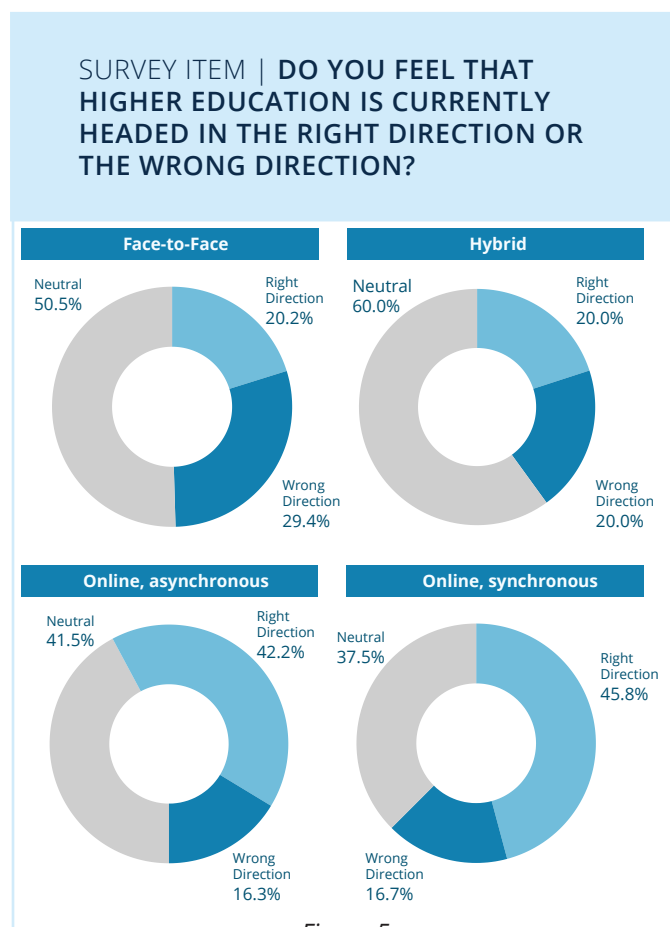20.9%

Figure 4

WHY THIS MATTERS

Our findings echoed what we found in previous reports: Faculty have mixed attitudes toward the future of higher education. Perhaps the most shocking of these findings was that only 33% of surveyed faculty believed higher education to be heading in the right direction. We don't know everything that is driving faculty's pessimism, but we do know that they have raised important concerns about the long-term impact of technology on the student and teaching experience in higher education.

Takeaway 2: Teaching modality impacts perceptions of higher education: 42% of faculty teaching online believe that higher education is headed in the right direction compared to 20% of faculty teaching face-to-face.

Overall, we found that faculty view EdTech positively and see it as an avenue that could lead to better learning environments for students. These findings show promise for faculty to adjust to their changing role in the educational space.

However, the split in faculty members' attitudes toward the future of higher education corresponds with faculty's primary modality of teaching. Faculty who primarily taught in an online asynchronous format (42%) were 22 percentage points more likely to say that higher education was headed in the right direction compared to faculty who primarily taught face-to-face (20%; Figure 5).

This difference was echoed in faculty members' perceptions of how the value of higher education will change in the future. Faculty who primarily taught face-to-face (50%) were 21 percentage points more likely to think that students will have lower quality education experiences in the future compared to faculty who primarily taught in an online asynchronous format (29%; Figure 6). Faculty who primarily taught face-to-face were also 20 percentage points more likely to think that the value of higher education will decrease compared to faculty who primarily taught in an online asynchronous format (47% of Faculty who primarily taught face-to-face compared to 27% of faculty who primarily taught in an online asynchronous format).

SURVEY ITEM | **DO YOU FEEL THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS CURRENTLY HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR THE WRONG DIRECTION?**

Face-to-Face

Neutral 50.5%
Right Direction 20.2%
Wrong Direction 29.4%

Hybrid

Neutral 60.0%
Right Direction 20.0%
Wrong Direction 20.0%

Online, asynchronous

Neutral 41.5%
Right Direction 42.2%
Wrong Direction 16.3%

Online, synchronous

Neutral 37.5%
Right Direction 45.8%
Wrong Direction 16.7%

Figure 5

I expect that I will have less autonomy over my course design.

	Strongly/Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat/Strongly disagree
Online, sync	25%	19%	56%
Online, async	22%	18%	60%
Hybrid	24%	22%	55%
Face to face	19%	23%	57%

I expect that students will have lower quality learning experiences.

	Strongly/Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat/Strongly disagree
Online, sync	40%	31%	29%
Online, async	53%	18%	29%
Hybrid	38%	22%	40%
Face to face	28%	22%	50%

I expect that the value of higher education will decrease.

	Strongly/Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat/Strongly disagree
Online, sync	38%	31%	31%
Online, async	53%	20%	27%
Hybrid	36%	20%	44%
Face to face	29%	24%	47%

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Figure 6

WHY THIS MATTERS

Our data show that faculty who primarily teach in an online asynchronous format have a more positive outlook toward the future of higher education. These findings might indicate differences in the extent to which faculty incorporate EdTech into their courses and how they provide support to students who are working in an increasingly tech-focused learning environment. It is possible that faculty working in online asynchronous formats have more experience in a tech-enabled learning environment, which allows them to see the benefits of this direction of higher education compared to faculty teaching in more traditional face-to-face formats. It is also possible that working in fully online educational systems built to support tech-enabled learning allowed these faculty to easily learn and become comfortable with teaching in a more tech-enabled format. ■

Takeaway 3: Only 42% of faculty believe AI tools will positively impact faculty, and 49% do not use them in the classroom

With the rise of AI tools such as ChatGPT in higher education, it is vital to understand how faculty feel about AI and whether they are embracing this technology in their classrooms. Overall, we find that some faculty have already embraced these tools, incorporating them into their own practice and preparation, encouraging or even instructing students on how to use AI technologies to enhance their learning, and expounding the benefit of these tools in their profession while others strike a more cautious engagement of the technologies.

Respondents were split on the anticipated impact of AI on the faculty experience, with 42% of surveyed faculty believing that AI will have a positive impact on the faculty experience, and the rest feeling either neutral (31%) or negative (28%) about the impact of AI on faculty (Figure 7).

Over half of surveyed faculty (56%) disagreed that AI will be used to replace faculty jobs, but a sizable proportion of faculty agreed (26%) or were neutral (23%). Faculty were even more split on whether AI tools would reduce workload and stress for faculty. Thirty-six percent of faculty agreed that AI tools would be useful for this purpose, 38% were neutral, and 26% disagreed.

More than half of the surveyed faculty (53%) also said they believe AI will enhance the student learning experience, but 28% were neutral, and 19% disagreed with this statement (Figure 8).

Almost 49% of faculty said that they were not incorporating AI tools into the classroom (Figure 9).

Almost half of faculty expressed reservations about students' use of AI in their coursework. Yet 23% of faculty respondents indicated that they are encouraging students to use AI to assist with their coursework, and 13% are providing instruction on how to do that. Forty-

SURVEY ITEM | OVERALL, HOW POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY DO YOU THINK AI TOOLS WILL IMPACT FACULTY MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES?
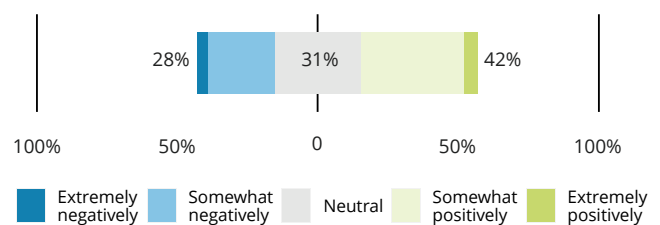
28%   31%   42%

100%   50%   0   50%   100%

Extremely negatively Somewhat negatively Neutral Somewhat positively Extremely positively

Figure 7

AI tools will enhance the learning experience for students.

19% 28% 53%

AI tools will reduce workload and stress for faculty members.

26% 38% 36%

AI tools will be used to replace jobs for faculty members.

51% 23% 26%

100% 50% 0 50% 100%

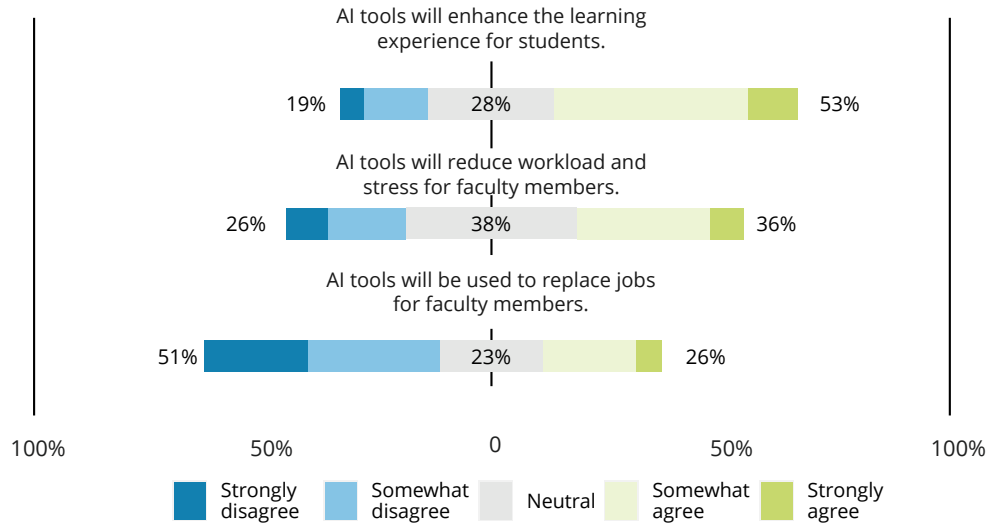Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Strongly agree

Figure 8

three percent of the surveyed faculty believe using ChatGPT to help with coursework is unethical. This finding strongly aligns with how students think about ChatGPT as well. In a previous survey, 53% of students agreed that using ChatGPT to help with coursework is unethical. In fact, this earlier survey highlighted that the majority of students use ChatGPT in ways that enhance

their learning rather than to "cheat" on their coursework (Figure 10). The top three uses were to simplify complex topics, to brainstorm creative ideas, and to conduct research — all ways AI could be enlisted to enhance (not undermine) their learning experience.

There were also very strong correlations between faculty members' beliefs about how AI tools will impact student

SURVEY ITEM | **WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU ARE CURRENTLY INCORPORATING AI TOOLS INTO YOUR TEACHING?**

I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience and explicitly instructing them on how to use these tools more effectively.

12.8%

I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience (i.e. conducting research, brainstorming creative ideas, debugging computer code).

23.4%

I am not incorporating AI tools into my teaching.

48.7%

I'm discouraging or prohibiting students from using AI tools in my courses.
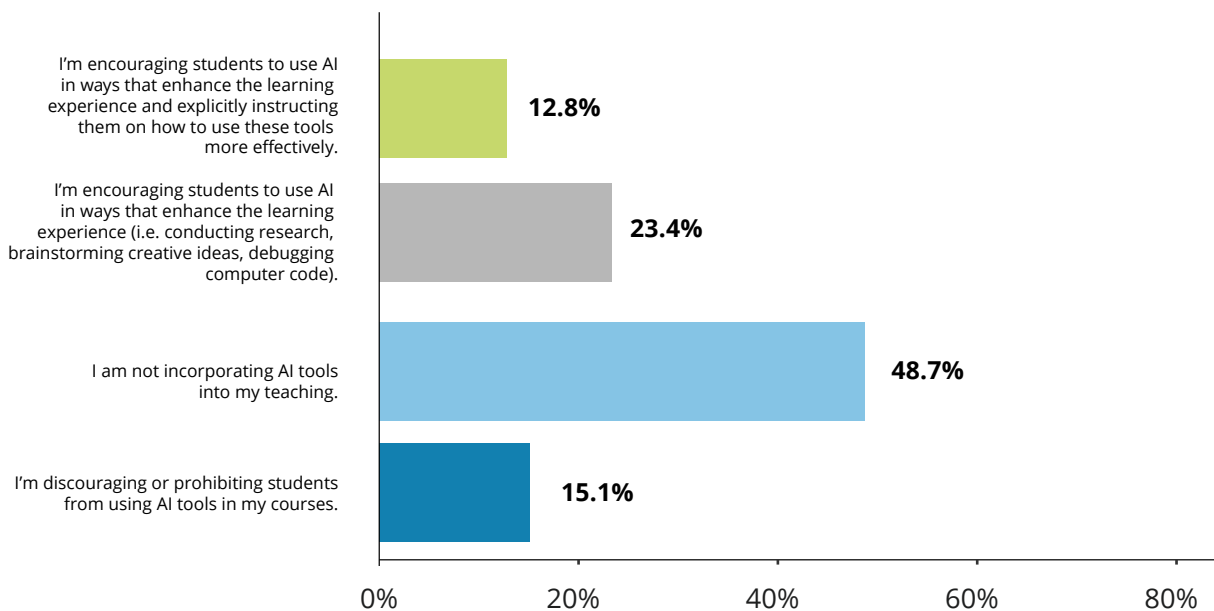
15.1%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Figure 9

learning experiences and how AI tools will impact faculty. The more that surveyed faculty believed AI tools would enhance the learning experience for students, the more they believed that AI tools would have a positive impact on faculty members' experiences (.56) and reduce workload and stress for faculty members (.48).

STEM FACULTY AND FACULTY WHO PRIMARILY TEACH IN ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS FORMATS HAVE MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD USING AI TOOLS IN THE CLASSROOM

We also found interesting group differences in the use of AI. Faculty who indicated teaching STEM-focused courses (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and math) showed more positive attitudes toward AI than their counterparts who indicated teaching non-STEM courses (e.g., humanities). STEM faculty (49%) were 14 percentage points more likely to believe AI tools would positively impact the faculty experience compared to non-STEM faculty (35%; Figure 11).

AI ETHICAL PERCEPTIONS

It is unethical for students to use ChatGPT to help with their coursework.

24%
Strongly or somewhat disagree

32%
Neutral

43%
Strongly or somewhat agree

Figure 10

STEM faculty (21%) were also ten percentage points less likely to think that AI tools will be used to replace jobs for faculty members compared to non-STEM faculty (31%; Figure 12). Additionally, STEM faculty (59%) were 11 percentage points more likely to believe that AI tools will enhance the learning experience for students compared to non-STEM faculty (48%).

Finally, STEM faculty (38%) were 13 percentage points less likely to think that it was unethical for students to use ChatGPT for their coursework compared to non-STEM faculty (51%; Figure 13).

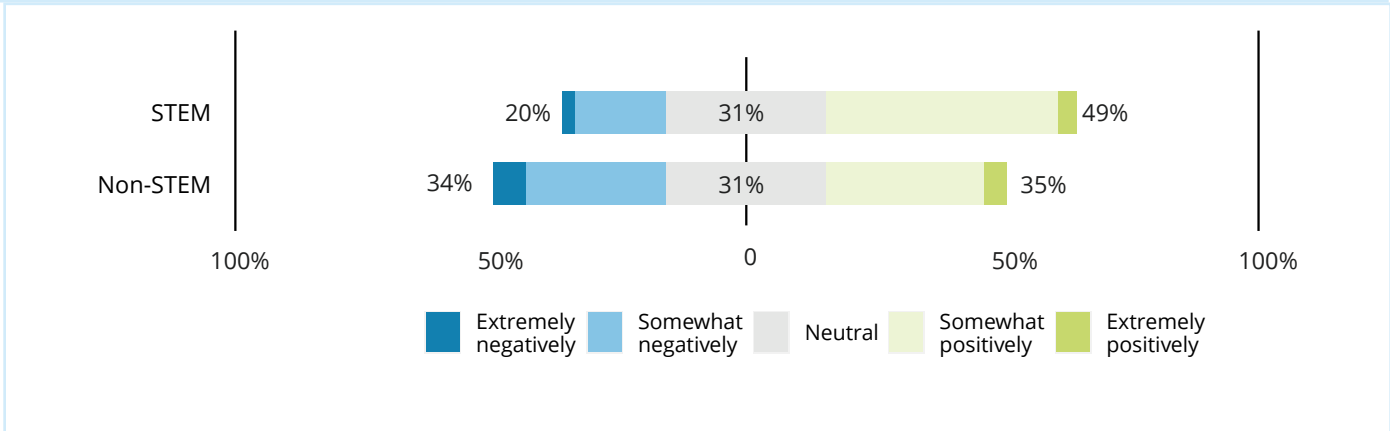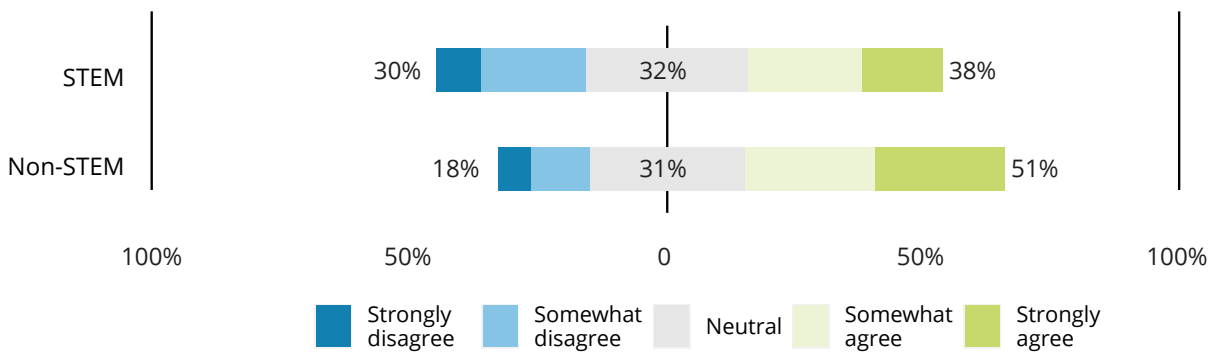### SURVEY ITEM | OVERALL, HOW POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY DO YOU THINK AI TOOLS WILL IMPACT FACULTY MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES?
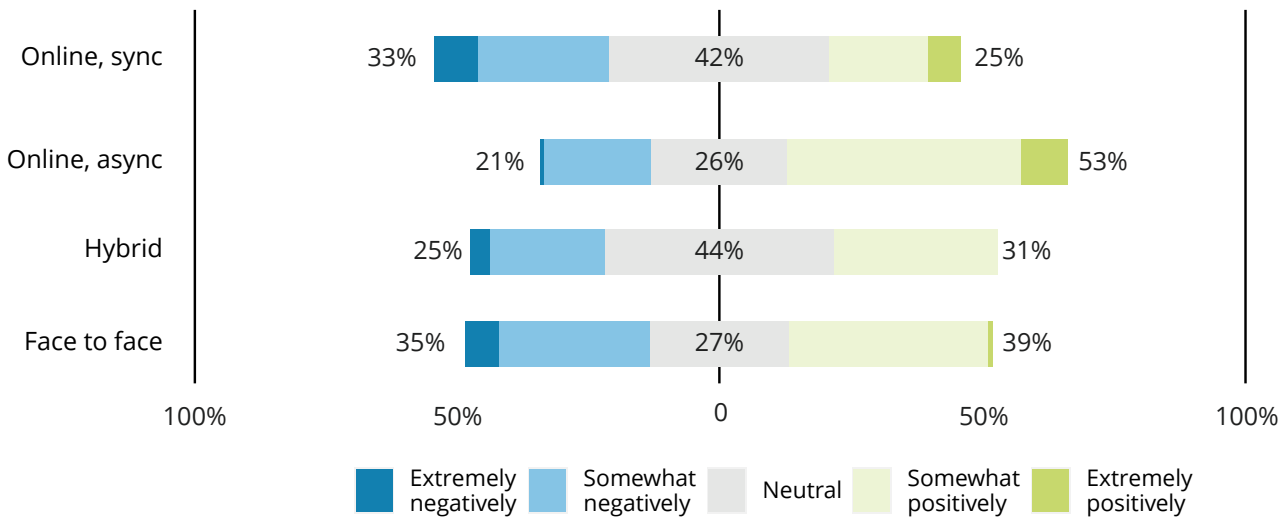
STEM: 20% | 31% | 49%
Non-STEM: 34% | 31% | 35%

100% — 50% — 0 — 50% — 100%

Legend: Extremely negatively | Somewhat negatively | Neutral | Somewhat positively | Extremely positively

Figure 11

AI tools will be used to replace jobs for faculty members.

STEM — 56% | 23% | 21%
Non-STEM — 47% | 22% | 31%

AI tools will enhance the learning experience for students.

STEM — 14% | 28% | 59%
Non-STEM — 26% | 25% | 48%

AI tools will reduce workload and stress for faculty members.

STEM — 24% | 40% | 36%
Non-STEM — 29% | 34% | 37%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

Figure 12

STEM — 30% | 32% | 38%
Non-STEM — 18% | 31% | 51%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

Figure 13

Online, sync — 33% | 42% | 25%
Online, async — 21% | 26% | 53%
Hybrid — 25% | 44% | 31%
Face to face — 35% | 27% | 39%

100%   50%   0   50%   100%

Extremely negatively | Somewhat negatively | Neutral | Somewhat positively | Extremely positively

Figure 14

Faculty members' attitudes toward AI in the classroom also differed by modality of teaching, with faculty who primarily taught in online asynchronous formats showing more positive attitudes toward AI compared to their peers. Faculty teaching online asynchronously (53%) were 14 percentage points more likely to believe that AI tools would have a positive impact on faculty members' experiences compared to faculty teaching face-to-face (39%; Figure 14).

Faculty teaching online asynchronously (61%) were ten percentage points more likely to feel that AI tools would enhance the learning experience for students compared to faculty teaching face-to-face (51%; Figure 15).

Faculty who primarily taught online asynchronously (58%) were also over 14 percentage points more likely to indicate using AI tools in their teaching than faculty who primarily taught face-to-face (44%; Figure 16).

SURVEY ITEM | **HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT AI TOOLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION?**
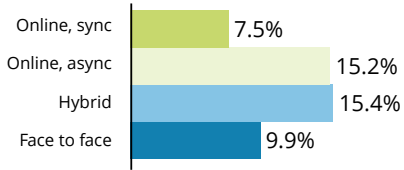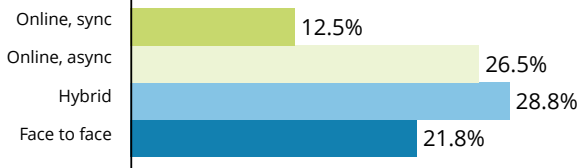
AI tools will be used to replace jobs for faculty members.

Online, sync — 42% | 28% | 30%
Online, async — 53% | 23% | 23%
Hybrid — 57% | 17% | 26%
Face to face — 50% | 23% | 27%

AI tools will enhance the learning experience for students.

Online, sync — 25% | 38% | 38%
Online, async — 12% | 27% | 61%
Hybrid — 25% | 23% | 53%
Face to face — 25% | 24% | 51%

AI tools will reduce workload and stress for faculty members.

Online, sync — 28% | 40% | 32%
Online, async — 20% | 38% | 42%
Hybrid — 34% | 42% | 25%
Face to face — 31% | 33% | 37%

100%   50%   0   50%   100%

Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree
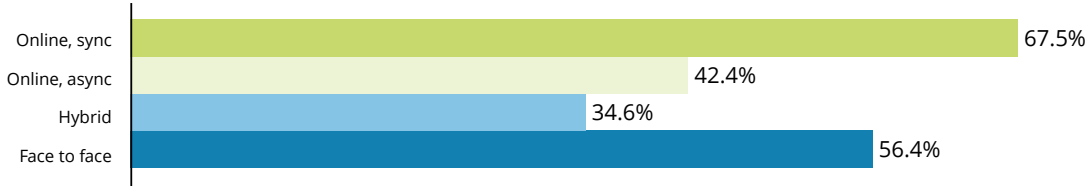
Figure 15

I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience and explicitly instructing them on how to use these tools more effectively.

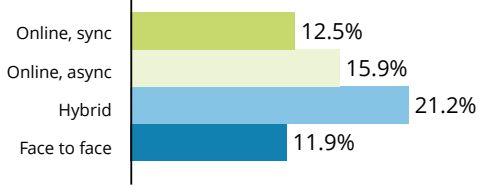| Modality	%
Online, sync	7.5%
Online, async	15.2%
Hybrid	15.4%
Face to face	9.9%

I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience (i.e. conducting research, brainstorming creative ideas, debugging computer code).

Modality	%
Online, sync	12.5%
Online, async	26.5%
Hybrid	28.8%
Face to face	21.8%

I am not incorporating AI tools into my teaching.

Modality	%
Online, sync	67.5%
Online, async	42.4%
Hybrid	34.6%
Face to face	56.4%

I'm discouraging or prohibiting students from using AI tools in my courses.

Modality	%
Online, sync	12.5%
Online, async	15.9%
Hybrid	21.2%
Face to face	11.9%

Figure 16

WHY THIS MATTERS

AI is quickly becoming a fixture in our lives. Individuals are using tools such as ChatGPT to help write code, emails, and resumes, apply for jobs, and even plan vacations. Students are attending higher education in these changing times when help with school work can easily be accessed online and for free using AI. AI is also becoming a highly sought-after tool for companies, with employers willing to pay higher wages for employees who are skilled with AI. It is vital that students receive some form of AI literacy in their education so they can achieve their full earning potential when they graduate. To accomplish this, it is imperative that institutions provide the support, training, and guidance necessary for all faculty to effectively incorporate AI into their teaching. Our findings seem to suggest those faculty offering online instruction and teaching in STEM fields show a greater willingness and likelihood of incorporating AI into their instruction, suggesting that students in such learning modalities may be at an advantage in gaining greater AI literacy.

Takeaway 4: 41% of faculty report burnout, which is correlated with high levels of technology fatigue

Our survey for the academic year of 2023-2024 revealed many positive findings about faculty attitudes toward EdTech, the future of EdTech, and AI. As faculty members' roles evolve, however, we need to be mindful of how faculty are juggling additional burdens and whether they are experiencing technology fatigue or burnout. Our results indicate that the rapid evolution of the faculty role may have a negative impact on faculty.

Almost 80% of surveyed faculty reported feeling like they were constantly on the job due to technology, and over 60% of faculty said it was hard for them to take a break from their work and/or their students (Figure 17). Roughly 40% of faculty also reported being burned out and emotionally exhausted from their work (Figure 18). These findings are concerning, since workplace burnout can lead to dips in happiness and productivity as well as increased sick days and employee turnover. These findings were largely consistent with what we found in the 2023 Faculty EdTech Survey.

The sense that technology means you are "always on the job" seems to be playing a role in burnout. We found that the more faculty members said that technology made it difficult for them to take a break from work, the more they reported feeling both burned out (r = .51) and emotionally exhausted from their work (r = .49). This was particularly true among women who showed a much stronger correlation between not being able to take a break from work and feeling burnout compared to men— r = .59 for women but r = .39 for men.

80%
of surveyed faculty reported feeling like they were **constantly on the job** due to technology

60%
of faculty said it was **hard for them to take a break** from their work and/or their students

40%
of faculty reported being **burned out & emotionally exhausted** from their work

I feel as if I am always "on" the job because of technology. — 13% | 8% | 79%

Technology makes it difficult for me to take a break from work and/or my students. — 25% | 12% | 64%

There are days when I do not want to use technology because I need a break from it. — 25% | 12% | 63%

I have stopped using one or more tools in the last year (e.g., social media, listservs, gadgets etc.) because I am tired of technology. — 47% | 19% | 34%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

Figure 17

I feel burned out because of my work. — 40% | 19% | 41%

I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work — 41% | 20% | 39%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree
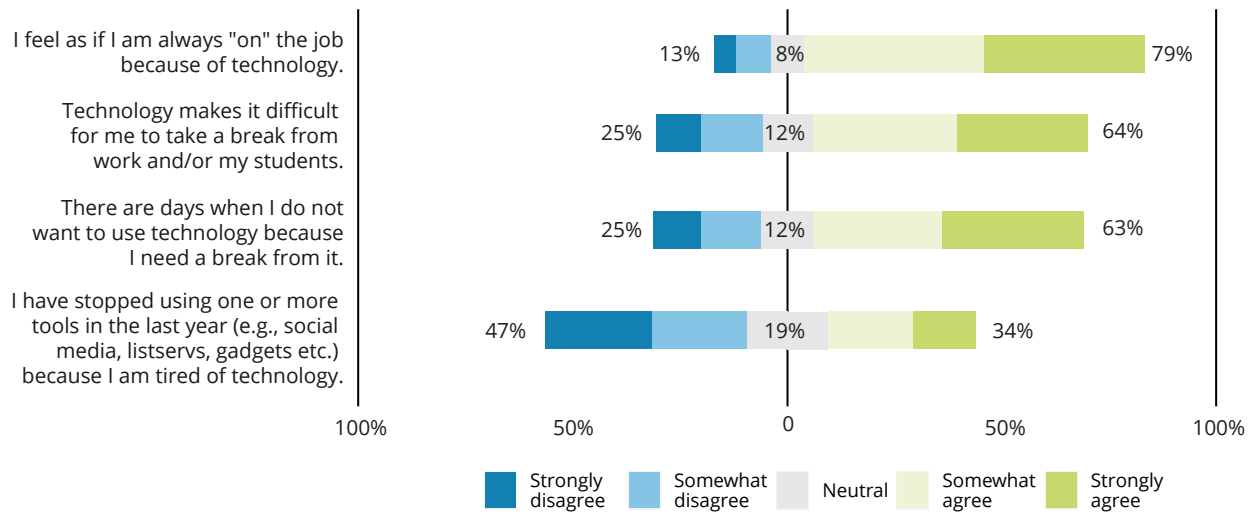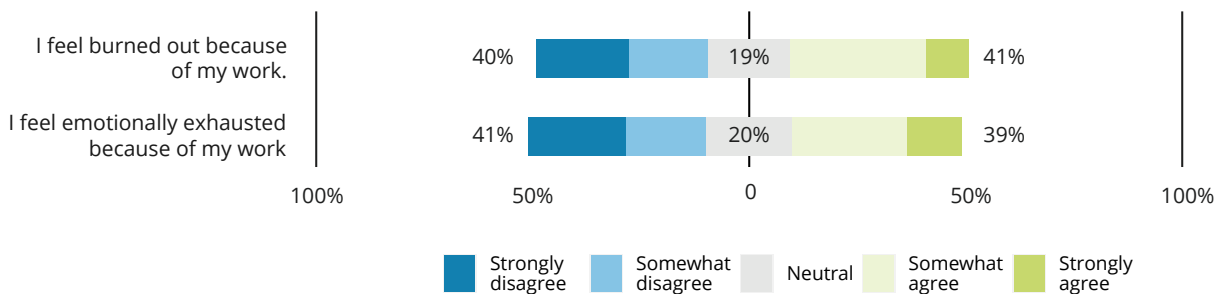
Figure 18

WHY THIS MATTERS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a flurry of technological advancement to higher education as institutions had to rapidly adjust to an online learning environment. Faculty were inundated with different EdTech tools that they had to adjust to, perhaps contributing to their increased tech fatigue and burnout. There also may be sub-groups of faculty, such as women, who are particularly feeling the brunt of the rapid advances in tech-enabled learning, which is something institutions must be careful to manage and avoid.

The need to engage with, learn about, and adopt new technologies has only continued to ramp up. The relentless pressure already appears to be impacting faculty with few signs of letup. Administrators may have to take a step back from rapid EdTech advancement and develop more deliberate digital strategies to understand what EdTech tools are working and what tools need to be removed in order to facilitate a better learning experience for students and a more supportive teaching experience for faculty. ■

Strategies to Improve the Faculty Experience

The 2024 WGU Labs Faculty EdTech Survey provided key insights into how faculty are adjusting to their rapidly evolving role in a technology-enabled learning environment. We found several positives in how faculty are adjusting to these new circumstances and how they perceive the role of AI in the classroom. However, we also found that faculty are negatively experiencing these changes and are feeling burnout as a result. These insights highlight the need for institutional policies that could help faculty better adjust to their changing roles. Our recommendations for improving the faculty experience based on our research include:

DEVELOP BETTER SYSTEMS FOR FACULTY TO ENGAGE WITH, GAIN COMFORT USING, AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON EDTECH TOOLS

We've reported previously and continue to find that fewer than 20% of surveyed faculty reported that their institutions sought their feedback on EdTech once a year or more frequently (37% of faculty reported that they did not know how often their institutions sought their feedback). Feeling like one does not have a voice can lead to negative mental implications, including burnout, tech fatigue, and a lack of buy-in. Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to ensure that their faculty members feel like they have a voice and can express their struggles or wins with EdTech. A previously published Op-Ed suggests that including faculty in technology decision-making can lead to developing greater trust between faculty and the institution, improving students' transition into tech-enabled learning, and making better strategic decisions when it comes to tech-enabled learning in the institution.

Suggestions for improving faculty involvement included establishing faculty EdTech committees, using focus groups and surveys to gain information about the faculty experience, and conducting faculty-led pilots of EdTech products.

Even if higher education institutions already have systems in place to gather feedback on EdTech and AI experiences, it is important to assess whether these systems are reaching all groups of faculty. Expanding awareness of existing ways to provide feedback may yield higher participation, giving faculty a better sense of agency and control over EdTech decisions. Institutions may also experiment with different forms of feedback so that giving feedback would better fit into faculty members' schedules and cater to different reporting preferences.

USE THESE FEEDBACK CHANNELS TO HAVE A MORE COMMUNITY-WIDE CONVERSATION AND STRATEGY ABOUT AI USE AND PRESENCE IN LEARNING.

Given the rapid acceleration of AI tools and their inclusion into many aspects of higher education, it is vital that higher education institutions provide faculty with guidelines and policies for using AI in classrooms.

However, these policies must originate from the bottom up, with faculty being welcome to provide input in the creation of the policies and guidelines. We recommend that institutions use the previously recommended feedback channels to understand the faculty perspective on the use of AI tools in the classroom. Faculty need to feel like they have a say in these changing circumstances so that the guidelines implemented will enhance their

teaching experiences instead of creating an additional burden. This may also lead to lower burnout and emotional exhaustion for faculty.

It is also essential for higher education institutions to provide training on AI for faculty and additional EdTech supports such as instructional designers, training on tools, etc. to fully enable faculty to promote students' AI literacy.

PROVIDE FACULTY WITH STRUCTURE AND GUIDANCE AROUND EDTECH TOOL MASTERY AND HEALTHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE

As things currently stand, faculty are the frontline face of the tech-enabled developments in higher education, grappling with the need to change their teaching techniques to include EdTech tools while also maintaining a creative and accessible learning environment for all students.

Most higher education institutions have a large tech stack that faculty are required to navigate that may not be comprehensively developed or integrated, and when these tools fail to meet course or student needs, faculty must find new tech tools on their own. Additionally, 64% of faculty reported that technology makes it difficult for them to take a break from their work and/or their students. These reasons may be why we are seeing technology fatigue and burnout among faculty, which in turn can impact job satisfaction among faculty and make it harder for institutions to retain talented individuals. Studies also show that resiliency of colleges and universities (in the face of enrollment fallout, drops in funding, and rising costs) depends on faculty feeling trust and transparent collaboration between them and administrators.

Therefore, it might behoove administrators to think about hiring or upskilling staff to create a source of EdTech support for faculty so that they do not have to adjust to an increasingly tech-enabled learning environment on their own. It is also important for administrators and institutions to help faculty place boundaries around their personal and professional lives by understanding when, and for whom, the intrusive nature of tech can cause the most harm. ■

Conclusion

As higher education continues to rapidly evolve, it is clear that faculty understand that EdTech is here to stay and are excited about both EdTech and AI. But faculty are also concerned about technology's implementation and may be suffering more burnout and emotional exhaustion in their efforts to apply it to the classroom. Our results show that faculty are grappling with myriad new responsibilities in their rapidly evolving roles. Faculty appear to be experiencing a lack of support, direction, or communication from higher education institutions. Many do not know how to share feedback on their EdTech experiences with their institutions.

All in all, our results show that, as faculty adjust to their rapidly evolving role, the new practices, experiences, and responsibilities are creating notable stress and fatigue. Faculty need more support and guidance from their higher education institutions. Staying attuned to their changing experiences will be critical to ensure that institutions can retain educators and offer high-quality learning experiences for students.

About the Network

The College Innovation Network (CIN) at WGU Labs is a network of higher education institutions committed to addressing the core challenge of promoting belonging and engagement in the modern higher education environment. We're leveraging technology to build highly engaged learning communities from enrollment through graduation - and beyond. CIN supports educational institutions by identifying areas of need, implementing effective education technology for students, and demonstrating impact through research.

CIN members are institutions that educate diverse student populations–including a significant proportion of traditionally underrepresented and underserved students. By joining CIN, institutions connected with a community of like-minded education leaders committed to the common goal of leveraging technology and designing innovations to better support belonging, engagement, and equity.

Building learning communities where all students belong.

ABOUT THE CIN EDTECH SURVEY SERIES

CIN is in a unique position to learn about the student and faculty experience with EdTech by leveraging the diversity of institutions within the Network. The **CIN EdTech Survey Series** aims to generate valuable insights that help institutions understand how administrators, faculty, and students experience EdTech. These insights can be applied to improve faculty and student experiences, and ultimately bolster the impact of EdTech across the sector.

Queries about CIN can be addressed to info@wgulabs.org

wgu labs | College Innovation Network

Appendix

Survey Approach

In November 2023, the CIN at WGU Labs research team emailed surveys to more than 5,000 faculty across six CIN member institutions. These post-secondary institutions included community colleges, public four-year institutions, and primarily online, not-for-profit colleges.

The survey contained 23 questions to better understand the faculty experience with EdTech and teaching. Specific topics included perceptions of the benefits of EdTech, knowledge of opportunities to give feedback about EdTech experiences, perspectives on possible futures of higher education, perspectives on improving belonging in college, burnout, and AI (see Survey Questions for full list of questions).

The survey also included a set of demographic questions, which are shown in Figures 19-23. Faculty were compensated $35 for participating in the survey. The final sample included 359 faculty respondents. Sixty percent of respondents teach at community colleges, 38% at a primarily online college, and 3% at 4-year universities. Fifty-eight percent of the sample were women (40% were men, and 2% preferred to self-identify or were non-binary), and 73% were white (9% were Multiracial, 6% were Asian, 6% were Black and/or African American, and 5% were Hispanic and/or Latinx). In terms of primary modality of teaching, 41% of surveyed faculty taught online asynchronously, 30% taught face-to-face, 15% taught hybrid classes, and 13% taught online synchronously.
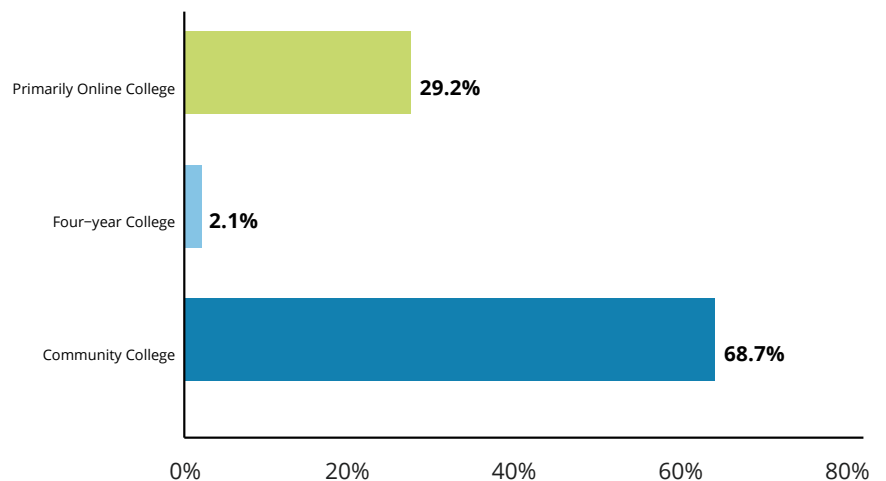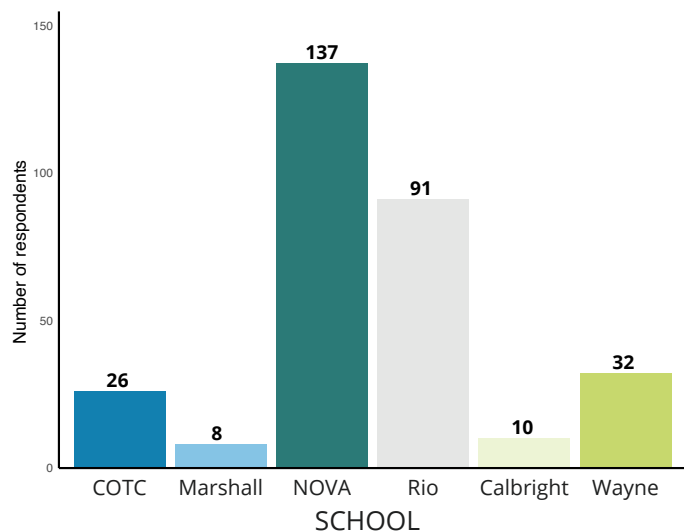
Figure 19. *Number of responses by school type*

Figure 20. *Number of responses by school*

Teaching experience

Faculty respondents varied widely based on years of teaching experience. Similar to last year, equivalent numbers of faculty indicated having anywhere between less than five to over 20 years of teaching experience (Figure 21).

Most of the faculty respondents were in part-time or adjunct positions, and over half of the sample indicated a Master's degree as their highest level of educational attainment.
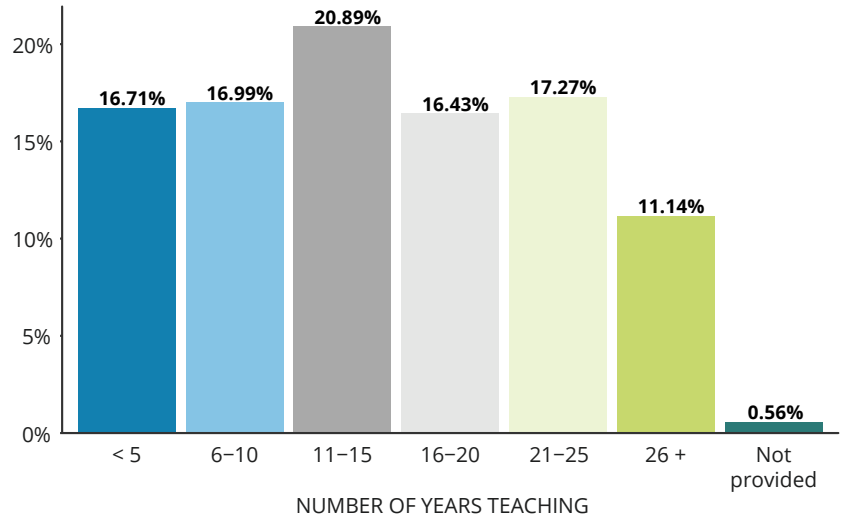
Figure 21. *Number of years teaching*

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING

Figure 22. *Teaching status*
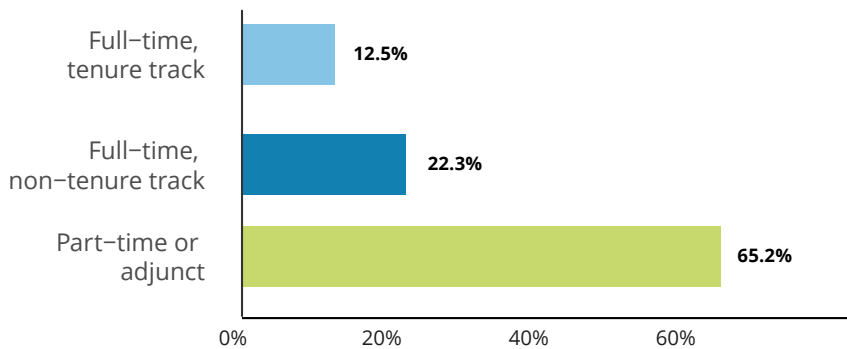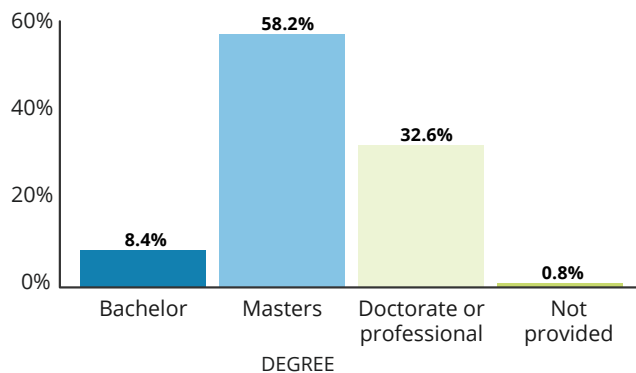

Figure 23. *Degree*

DEGREE

Survey questions

CURRENT SEMESTER FORMAT

1. This semester, I have taught most classes:

    - Face to face
    - Online, synchronously
    - Online, asynchronously
    - Hybrid (some aspects online, some aspects face to face)

2. Please rank your preferred teaching modalities:

    - Face to face
    - Online, synchronous
    - Online, asynchronous
    - Hybrid (some aspects online, some aspects face to face

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT EDTECH

3. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about EdTech:
    [1= strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree; don't know]

    - EdTech is essential to student engagement and success.
    - EdTech enhances teaching and learning experiences.
    - EdTech helps create more equitable learning experiences for students.
    - I feel confident in my ability to effectively use EdTech in my courses.
    - EdTech makes courses more engaging for students.
    - EdTech helps students learn more effectively.

EDTECH INFLUENCE AND FEEDBACK

4. How often does your institution seek feedback from faculty members, like you, about their experiences with EdTech at your institution?
    1 = Never
    2 = Once every 2-3 years
    3 = Once a year
    4 = 2-3 times a year
    5 = Several times a year
    6 = Don't know]

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

5. Below are some possible futures that higher education may soon experience. How positively or negatively do you view each of these potential scenarios for student learning?
    [1= extremely negative – 5= extremely positive]

    - Institutions offering an increasing number of fully online courses
    - Institutions offering an increasing number of fully online programs
    - Institutions offering an increasing number of hybrid courses (i.e., some online aspects and some in person aspects of the same course)
    - Institutions offering an increasing number of micro-credential and certificate programs

6. Below are some possible futures that higher education instructors may soon experience. To what extent do you agree that each will occur within the next five years?
   [1= strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree]

   - I expect that instructors will spend more time delivering course content online.
   - I expect instructors will spend more time supporting students online (e.g., online office hours).
   - I expect instructors will use more education technology tools in class.
   - I expect instruction to become more personalized.
   - I expect instructors will spend less time interacting with students.
   - I expect courses will become more standardized.
   - I expect that I will have less autonomy over my course design.
   - I expect that students will have lower quality learning experiences.
   - I expect that the value of higher education will decrease.

7. Do you feel that higher education is currently headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?

   - Headed in the wrong direction
   - Neutral
   - Headed in the right direction
   - Belonging and inclusion

BELONGING AND INCLUSION

8. How important do you think each of the following are for being an effective instructor?
   [1 = Not at all important – 5 = Extremely important]

   - Ensuring students feel included in the learning environment.
   - Ensuring that all students feel like they belong at their institution.
   - Tailoring instructional approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners.
   - Regularly seeking feedback from students on ways to improve their learning experiences.

9. How much do you agree with the following statements about your teaching practice?

   - I take steps to ensure that students feel included in the learning environment.
   - I take steps to increase students' sense of belonging at their institution.
   - I tailor my instructional approach to meet the needs of diverse learners.
   - I regularly seek feedback from students on ways to improve their learning experiences.

10. Have you ever received training on inclusive teaching practices?

    - Yes
    - No

11. Which of the practices do you incorporate into your teaching practice to ensure that all students feel included in the learning environment?

    - Holding regular office hours
    - Making course content accessible to students with disabilities
    - Using digital collaboration tools like google jamboard
    - Including opportunities for students to interact with one another (i.e. group discussions or projects, study groups, etc.)
    - Ensuring that diverse voices, perspectives, and scholarship are represented in your learning content
    - Incorporating identity-inclusive messages and cues (i.e. encouraging usage of correct pronouns, using inclusive language, using students' preferred names and proper pronunciations)
    - Providing personalized support to students (e.g., offering 1:1 meetings, and asking students to email you if they have any questions they'd like to discuss privately)
    - Ensuring that students are aware of student support services such as advising, tutoring, writing center support, or counseling/ mental health support.

- Practicing a growth mindset in the classroom (e.g., providing multiple for students to practice work, acknowledging students' effort, providing constructive feedback that students can use to improve their work)
- Other [please specify]

PROBLEMS SOLVED BY EDTECH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

12. What are the three main problems that you would like to see solved by EdTech? Please choose the top three problems that you would like EdTech to solve from the list below:

- Make courses more engaging
- Provide a more personalized learning experience for students
- Increase social connection for students
- Improve the quality or quantity of feedback to students
- Improve course organization and structure
- Reduce workload for instructors
- Provide greater access to student support services and resources (e.g., tutoring, advising, financial aid)
- Allow students to better integrate education with work, family, and other personal demands.
- Increase access to course materials, lectures, and other educational resources
- Increase accessibility for students with disabilities
- Improve communication and information sharing on campus
- Improve the quality of online education
- Other [please specify]

TECHNOLOGY FATIGUE

13. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about EdTech:
[1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree; don't know]

- I feel as if I am always "on" the job because of technology.
- Technology makes it difficult for me to take a break

from work and/or my students.
- There are days when I do not want to use technology because I need a break from it.
- I have stopped using one or more tools in the last year (e.g., social media, listservs, gadgets etc.) because I am tired of technology.

BURNOUT

14. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:
[1= strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree; don't know]

- I feel burned out because of my work
- I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work

SATISFACTION/ QUITTING INTENTIONS

15. Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about your job as a whole?
1 = not at all satisfied
5 = very satisfied

16. How likely are you to leave your current job in the next three years?
1 = not at all likely
5 = very likely

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

17. To what extent has your institution sought faculty input on the usage of AI tools in teaching and learning?
1 = Not at all
5 = A great deal

18. Which of the following best describes how you are currently incorporating AI tools into your teaching.

- I'm discouraging or prohibiting students from using AI tools in my courses.
- I am not incorporating AI tools into my teaching
- I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience (i.e. conducting

research, brainstorming creative ideas, debugging computer code)

- I'm encouraging students to use AI in ways that enhance the learning experience and explicitly instructing them on how to use these tools more effectively.

19. It is unethical for students to use ChatGPT to write responses to homework assignments, course papers/ essays, or exams.
   [5 point agree-disagree]

20. In which of the following areas do you think AI will bring the most value to the teaching and learning experience?

- Improve testing and assessment
- Improve the quality or quantity of feedback to students
- Provide a more personalized learning experience for students
- Assist with the creation of instructional materials such as rubrics, curriculum, or lectures
- Streamline the process of grading student work
- Reduce workload for faculty
- Use data to identify students in need of academic support
- Connect students with student support and resources (e.g. tutoring, financial aid, mental health and wellness)
- Improve communication to students
- Other [please specify]

21. Overall, how positively or negatively do you think AI tools will impact faculty members' experiences?
   (1 = Extremely negative impact – 5 = Extremely positive impact)

22. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about AI tools in higher education:

- AI tools will be used to replace jobs for faculty members
- AI tools will enhance the learning experience for students
- AI tools will reduce workload and stress for faculty members