Session Topics Agenda
Heartland AI Symposium 2026

November 10 – 12, 2026

Tuesday, November 10, 2026

7:30am to 6:30pm – Conference Registration and Badge Pick-up

8am coffee break sponsored by ID3A

8:30am – Welcome and Opening Remarks

9:00am – 10:15am – Opening Keynote “Large language models are not designed to serve their diverse user population” with Vered Shwartz

10:30am – 11:30am – Concurrent Sessions 1

In-Person

- Generative AI and Learning Under Constraint (GALUC): How Time Pressure and Assignment Value Shape Student AI Decision-Making, K-State Camilla Roberts and Roger Taylor, AI Education Consulting
- Beyond the Prompt: AI, Immersive Experiences, and the Future of Collaborative Innovation, K-State Salina, Dr. Michael Oetkin, Director of K-AIRES and Joshua Wexler, Founder of Pure Imagination Studios
- Job Searching in the Age of AI, Kaidy Smith, Career Center
- AI Isn’t Neutral: How Society Shapes Technology—and What We Can Do About It, K-State Pascal Hitzler
- Ctrl + Alt + Comply: Practical Steps Towards AI Governance, K-State Danielle Hall and Ryan Leimkuehler

Virtual

- Leveraging AI for rich, interactive assignments and assessments: "I want to see their thinking", Wichita State University, Director of Instructional Resources, Carolyn Speer
- The AI Sense-Making Leader: Rebuilding Judgment in an AI-Shaped Information Environment, Dean of the School of Leadership, University of the Cumberlands, Nathan Hamblin

10:30am – 11:00am – Mini Session 1

- Hyper Super Resolution Convolutional Neural Network (HyperSRCNN): Hypernetworks for Varying Scaling Factors in Image Super Resolution, David Kurtenbach, Ph.D. Student K-State

11:00am – 11:30am – Mini Session 2

- How AI-Driven Portfolio Rationalization Closes Security Gaps, Kabaleeswaran Sabapathi, Enterprise Architect at Capgemini, Overland Park, KS and Shivendiran Kabaleeswaran, Cybersecurity Engineering and Data Science student, Director at the KU Blockchain Institute

11:30am – 1:00pm – Lunch on Your Own

1:00pm – 6:00pm – Exhibition Hall Open

1:00pm – 3:00pm – Workshops A

In-person only. Requires separate registration.

- Beginner Workshop 1: Upskilling Using AI, ACM SIGAI, Daniel Robertson and Members, K-State ACM SIGAI Daniel Robertson, Chris Kerns, and Timothy Tucker
- Advanced Workshop 1: Beyond the Prompt: Build your Own Co-Worker, K-State Libraries, Sawyer Borror
- Responsible AI Infrastructure for Rural Communities: A Great Plains Working Session, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Mark Stone

1:00pm – 3:00pm – Special Session 1

In-Person

- Embodied Artificial Intelligence (Robots+AI), Michael Pritchard, Associate Profesor of Machine Learning and Autonomous Systems, K-State Salina

1:00pm – 2:00pm – Concurrent Sessions 2

In-Person

- Beyond the Black Box: Understanding the Human-Algorithm Interaction in Professional Communication, Waibhav Diwanji KU, Mugur Geana KU, Angie Hendershot KU, Michelle Keller KU
- Mapping Worldwide Military AI Narratives: A Fight for Human Elements, Sunha Yeo, KState and Kate Williamson, Event Coordinator and Communication Specialist, IGP Institute, KSU

- Ethical, Legal, and Technical Perspectives, Alejandro Tamez KU Research Professor, Najarian Peters, KU Law School, Jeni Lohoefener, KU Institute for Information Sciences
- Designing with AI: Preparing Design Students for Ethical Professional Practice in an AI-Enabled Workplace, K-State Katrina M. Lewis and Alisha D. Rall

Virtual Track

- Using AI to Get Rid of Textbooks: Thanks Claude! - Wichita State University, Director of Instructional Resources, Carolyn Speer
- AI in the Community: Opportunities, Risks, and Responsible Use, Carmen Skipworth

2:15pm – 3:15pm – Concurrent Sessions 3

In-Person

- What can the evolution of AI development tell us about the foundations of cognitive architecture? Wichita State Susan Castro
- Leveraging Latent Data Structure to Improve Model Performance and Interpretability, University of Kansas Medical Center, Jeff Thompson and Rishav Mukerjee, PhD.
- Discover Everyday AI: Simple Ways to Save Time and Make Life Easier, Santina Brown Ottawa University, Kristen Moore Ottawa, Stephen Weiss Ottawa
- Using oral examinations for course assessment in the age of AI, K-State Bizhen Hu
- Digital Accessibility and AI - A Case for Human Authoring, K-State Christina Van Ittersum and KUMC Aziah McNamara

Virtual Track

- Beyond AI Policies: Building AI Stewardship Capacity in Higher Education, Dean of the School of Leadership, University of the Cumberlands, Nathan Hamblin
- Squeezing the Token: A Lean Architectural Framework for LLM Cost and Prompt Optimization, Jyostna Seelam, Founder and Chapter Chair of the ACM Richmond Chapter, Senior Engineer and Enterprise Platform Architect

3:00pm snack break

4:00pm – 5:30pm – Afternoon Keynote “Grieving with Machines: The Ethics of AI Simulations of the Dead” with Jon Herington

5:30pm – 9:30pm – AI Hackathon Day 1 – In-person only. Requires separate registration.

5:30pm – 7:00pm – K-State Career Center Hosts AI Career Meet Up: A Student and Industry Recruitment Event

Companies in Attendance:

- Handshake AI
- Civic Plus
- Canopy
- SurePoint Ag Systems
- Enterprise KC
- Piestar
- Torch.AI

6:30pm – 8pm – Community Conversation at the Manhattan Public Library

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

7:30am to 7:30pm – Conference Registration and Badge Pick-up

8am coffee sponsored by Irsik Farms

8:00am – 7:00pm – Exhibition Hall Open

9:00am – 10:15am – Morning Keynote “Artificial Intelligence and Genuine Learning: Like Oil and Water” with Jared Horvath

10:30am – 11:30am – Concurrent Sessions 4

In-Person

- Humans Still Required: Why Human Skills Are Becoming the Most Valuable Skills in the AI Age, Bryanne Wassenberg
- The Only AI Talk You Need: AI's Past, Present, Future, and You, Jonathan Huer, Principal Solution Architecture and AI Literacy Lead, AT&T Chief Data Office
- WISE AI Literacy: A Durable Framework for K-12 Education, Thomas Vontz and Lotta Larson, K-State

- The Complexities of AI Ethics and the Need for a Systematic Approach, Colby Clark, Wichita State (Bluemont Room)
- Manufacturing Merit: Tiered AI Access in Education, Ph.D. Student, Adult Learning and Leadership, K-State, Derron Borders
- Who Pays When the Chariot Crashes? Roman Tort Law for the Driverless Age, Idowu Alade, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Virtual

- Understanding Human–AI Communication: An Applied Linguistics Perspective on Language Teaching and Learning, Roberta Traverso

10:30am – 12:00pm – Virtual Workshop 1

- Writing Back with Erasure: AI Output in Creative-Practice and Pedagogy, University of the People, Edward Wells

11:30am – 1:00pm – Lunch on Your Own

12:00noon – 1:00pm – Virtual Workshop 2

- K-State's Teaching and Learning Center hosts – The Machine in the Loop: Testing the Bounds of Teaching & Edtech in the Age of AI, K-State Cydney Alexis and Theresa Merrick Cassidy

1:00pm – 3:00pm Graduate and Undergraduate Student Research Poster Session

- Grad Student Chair: Sanaz Saki Norouzi
- Grad Student Co-Chairs: Sahar Ghorbani and Soheil Abadifard

1:00pm – 3:00pm - Workshops B

In-person only. Requires separate registration.

- Beginner Workshop 3: From AI Concept to Physical Artefact – AI T-Shirt Design and Contest, K-State Libraries, Jeff Sheldon
- Intermediate Workshop 1: The Wait for Pi is Over. How a Minimalistic Agent Can Adapt to your Workflows with Ice Cream on Top, K-State Libraries, Sawyer Borror and Raymond Deiser
- Advanced Workshop 2: Build a RAG Retrieval Agent, Grady Burns, Cambrian Systems, CEO and Co-Founder and KSU Student, Hayden Thatcher

1:00pm – 2:30pm – Special Session 2

- Kansas Water Institute hosts Roundtable - Technology Leading the Way to Water Solutions, K-State Presenters: Gaurav Jha, Agronomy, Assistant Professor; Hande McGinty, Assistant Professor, Computer Science, Head of

KONCORDANT Lab; Robert M. Sholl, Graduate Research Fellow, Kansas Water Institute. KU Presenters: Jude H. Kastens. Mizzou presenters: Qian Liu, Assistant Professor of Atmospheric Science, School of Natural Resources

1:00pm – 2:00pm Concurrent Sessions 5

In-Person

- Harnessing Artificial Intelligence in Serious Game Development, Robert Gibson, Dean of Instructional Technology and Academic Support at WSU Technical College
- From Insight to Action: Leveraging AI to Advance Student Success - Thomas Lane VP of DASSA, Amy Goodburn, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Undergraduate Education, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Brett Bruner, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success and Persistence, Wichita State, Bill Watts, Associate Vice President of Academic and Career Engagement, K-State
- Supporting Staff with AI Policy, Robin Hastings, Library Services Consultant for the Northeast Kansas Library System (NEKLS)
- Intentional Revival of Analog Practices in the Classroom, Rebecca Bender, K-State

Virtual

- AI and Writing Track and Students' Responses to AI Track - Creating and Revising an Undergraduate "AI and Writing" Course, Erin Jensen is an Associate Professor of English at MSU Texas
- Lifecycle Attestation, Perry Alexander and Adam Petz (KU)

2:15pm – 3:15pm Concurrent Sessions 6

In-Person

- AI at Work: Workflows and Support for Academic Work and Staff, Rachel Porcaro, Wichita State University
- The Future of AI in the University Classroom: A Discussion Between Skeptics and Evangelists, Dean of K-State Libraries James Wiser, Nate Birkhead, PoliSci Dept Head, Theresa Merrick Cassidy, Writing Center Assistant Director, Brandon Savage, Instructor College of Business, Melanie Derby, Professor, College of Engineering
- AI Beyond the Hype: Lessons from Real Engineering Projects, Jacob Picolet, Senior Engineer at Kansas State University's Technology Development Institute (TDI)

- The State of AI Policy Across the United States, Safia Malallah and Lior Shamir, K-State
- Preparing Business Graduates for an AI-Augmented Workforce: Education's Response to Changing Employer Expectations, Kristen Moore Ottawa University, Stephen Weiss Ottawa, Santina Brown Ottawa

Virtual

- Leading Beyond the Tool: Building Human-Centered AI Leadership in the Age of AI, Dean of the School of Leadership, University of the Cumberlands, Nathan Hamblin
- Agentic AI in Practice: Persistent Memory and Responsible Deployment, Zeyu Wang, Research Engineer at Zoox, Amazon

3:30pm – 4:30pm – Concurrent Sessions 7

In-Person

- In Our Own Image: Visions of AI in Science Fiction, John Jones, Wichita State University
- AI in Medicine, Amit Noheria, Founding Director of Program for AI Research in Cardiovascular Medicine, KUMC, with panel Diego Mazzotti KUMC, Jacob Cushing KUMC, Mohammad Haeri KUMC, Ayo Olagoke KUMC, Prerna Dua UMKC, and Sumaiya Shomaji KU
- When AI Removes the Friction, What's Left to Teach? Restoring the struggle at course scale, K-State, Software Design and Architecture, Computer Science, Jorge Valenzuela
- Using Artificial Intelligence to Study Animal Social Behavior, Praveen Rao, Dr. Allison Roth, Assistant Professor of Biological Science, University of Missouri (Bluemont Room, Hybrid Presenters, Streaming for Virtual Presenters)
- Digital Gender-Based Violence in the AI Era: A Comparative Study Between Bangladesh and the United States, Parvin Mst.Ireen, Ph.D. Student, University of Northern Iowa
- Bronze Guardians and Golden Handmaidens: What Ancient Greek Automata Reveal About Modern AI, Idowu Alade, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Virtual

- Vibe Coding for Educators: Building Classroom Simulations Without Writing Code, Berklee College, Florencia Gabriele

3:30pm – 4:00pm – Mini Session 3

- From Tool Use to Relational Non-disposability: How AI Becomes a Fate-bearing Object, Jiayi Zhang, Art History Student at Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts

4:00pm snack break

5:00pm – 6:30pm – Highlighted Multi-Institutional Panel

- Panelists: Representatives from University of Nebraska, University of Missouri, University of Kansas and University of Kansas Medical Center, Wichita State University and Kansas State University

6:30pm – 9:30pm - AI Hackathon Day 2 – In-person only. Requires separate registration.

7pm – 8pm – Philosophy Games: What do we want from AI?

- Wichita State and K-State Collaboration, Susan Castro, Bruce Glymour, Colby Clark, Will Stanton, TJ Broy, and Students Sam Hoppe, Ava Wilkie, Brannon Purnell, Isla Running (K & S Ballroom)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

7:30am to 3:00pm – Conference Registration and Badge Pick-up

8am coffee sponsored by CivicPlus

8:00am – 5:00pm – Exhibition Hall Open

9:00am – 10:15am – Surprise Morning Keynote "Data Centers: From AI to Zettabytes, with Energy in between" with Tom Beresnyak (Forum Hall, Streaming for Virtual Participants)

All day: Quiet Work Rooms for participants

10:30am – 11:30am – Concurrent Sessions 8

In-Person

- Ask a Program Officer: Preparing Grants and Awards, Chair: Melanie Derby. Panelists: Jemin George, National Science Foundation (NSF), Steve Thomson, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Joshua Sternfeld, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Christy Kano, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Steven J. Thomson, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).
- From Data to Decisions: AI for Addressing Environmental Challenges, K-State Dr. Vaishali Sharda, University of Nebraska Lincoln, Tirthankar Roy and Chitresh Anand, Ph.D. student

- AI in the Academic Library Heartland: How Regional Library Leaders Are Putting Artificial Intelligence to Work, Dean of K-State Libraries James Wiser, K-State Libraries Jason Coleman, Associate Dean of Research Engagement at KU Scott Hanrath, Librarian at OSU Chris Rosser, and Dean of Library Services at Fort Hays State University Ginger Williams
- Implications of AI Advances for Social Science Research, University of Missouri Kate Nelson, Kristin Gibson, Kelly Wilson, and David Smilnak
- Keeping Humans in the Loop: Humanized AI, Governance, and the Future of Patient-First Care, Phillip Rowell, Chief Analytics Officer at Health Catalyst
- Teaching Students and Adults to Think Before They Reach for AI: A Growth-Over-Time Model for Human-Centered AI Literacy, Michael J. "Mick" Ryan is founder of Empower Just For Today, Inc. and MickFix in Abilene, Kansas

Virtual

- From Text to Conversational Avatar: Using Generative AI to Enhance Teaching Resources, Priscilla Angelique-Page *(PFHEA, CITP, FBCS, FILM, FLCM, FSET) is an educator, creative technologist and musician*
- Language as a Transfer Function: What LLM Prompting May Reveal About Grammar, Vocabulary, and Tokenization, Rob Simpson, Senior System Engineer at Prysmian, Italy

11:30am – 1:00pm – Lunch on Your Own

1:00pm – 3:00pm Workshops C

In-person only. Requires separate registration.

- Beginner Workshop 4: Building AI Literacy with LEGO, Miranda Windholz, Butler Community College, Research & Instruction Librarian
- Beginner Workshop 5: Learning by Teaching AI: An Embodied Approach to AI Literacy with Robot ReachyMini, Jeongki Lim, Dean of the School of Design Strategies and Associate Dean of the Parsons School of Design, The New School
- Beginner Workshop 6: AI hallucinations: What they are and how to spot them, K-State Libraries, Jason Coleman
- Intermediate Workshop 2: From AI Concept to Physical Artefact – AI T-Shirt Design and Contest, K-State Libraries, Jeff Sheldon

1:00pm – 2:30pm – Special Session 3

- AI for the Community: Kansas Legislative AI Taskforce, Chair: Pascal Hitzler

1:00pm – 2:00pm Concurrent Sessions 9

In-Person

- Parenting with AI, K-State Safia Malallah and Lior Shamir
- The Future of AI in Natural Resources Communication: Workforce Development Needs, University of Missouri Kristin Gibson, Christine Brodsky, Joanna (Jodi) Whittier, Sonja Wilhelm Stanis
- Using Rubrics to Discourage the use of AI in Language Classrooms, K-State Kathleen Antonioli and Camille Meritan
- Preparing AI-Literate Teachers: A Research-Based Approach to Responsible AI Integration, Nooshin Darvishinia, K-State Ph.D. Student in Curriculum and Instruction

Virtual

- AI and the Future of Effort: Designing for Student Agency, DuPage Montessori School, Adam W. Darlage, Ph.D.
- From Fear to Fluency: Helping Everyday People Embrace AI, CoCo Noir Labs, Alicia Kidd, MPA
- Scaling AI Beyond the Enterprise Boundary: Lessons from Building Interoperable Multi-Agent Systems, Bhuvana Dharani, Technical Product Manager in Applied Research within Dell Technologies

2:15pm – 3:15pm Concurrent Session 10

In-Person

- Museum of Art and Light hosts: Conversing with Kindred Technologies: Art as Interface for AI Literacy, Sasha Stiles Kalmyk-American poet and artist and Dr. Nathan Stern, Director of Academic Engagement & Creative Impact, Lubar Entrepreneurship Center, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- AI-Driven Mobile Vision System for Real-Time Monitoring of Stored-Product Beetles Using Live Detection and Wireless Streaming, Ronnie Serfa Juan USDA-ARS and Alison Gerken USDA-ARS
- Keeping Humans and Communities at the Center via the University of Nebraska's AI Institute, University of Nebraska, Adrian S. Wisnikci, Co-Director of the AI Institute, Santosh Pitla, Co-Director of the Nebraska AI Institute, and Jude Fogarty, Assistant Director of the University of Nebraska AI Institute
- Teaching Without the Vendor: Building Zero-Cost, AI-Resilient Math Lectures on Open Web Standards, Vinay Kanth Rao Kodipelly, University of Missouri Saint Louis

- The Liberal Arts and GenAI, Daniel McClure, Fort Hays University

Virtual

- From AI Adoption to AI Integration: Preventing Organizational Drift, Dean of the School of Leadership, University of the Cumberlands, Nathan Hamblin
- AI and Techno-Maternal Governance in Midnight Robber, Keisha Allan, Assistant Professor in the Dept. Of Black and Latinx Studies at Baruch College

3:00pm snack break

3:30pm - 5:00pm – Highlighted Multi-Institutional Student Pane

5:00pm – 5:30pm – Award Ceremony and Closing Remarks

Friday, November 13, 2026

Post-Symposium Excursion

10:00am - Museum of Art and Light (Offsite, Museum of Art and Light)

- Special discounted rate with symposium registration. Register separately on the symposium's registration page to receive the discounted price!

Post-Symposium Evening Partner Event

Continue the Conversation! Special Evening Event at the Museum of Art and Light

5:30pm – 8:30pm – Museum of Art and Light Artist Talk: *Generation to Generation*

Saturday, November 14, 2026

Special post-event workshops and events at the Museum of Art and Light

10:00am – 11:00 am - Public Youth-Friendly Workshop

11:00am – 3:00pm - Family Day: Algorithms and Assemblage: Shape, Scribe, and Sculpt