

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of September 16, 2026

WHAT FUTURE IS UC PREPARING STUDENTS FOR?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The knowledge, skills, and experiences students need to succeed in college, work, and civic life are evolving as technology changes how students learn, access information, and apply knowledge in the world.

This item will help the Regents consider what college and career readiness should mean for students entering UC over the next decade. The discussion will examine how artificial intelligence is affecting learning before college, how work is changing, and which academic foundations and broader capabilities students will need at UC and continue learning and thriving throughout their lives.

BACKGROUND

Students now in middle and high school are learning in an environment transformed by generative artificial intelligence and new ways of creating, communicating, and solving problems. Students entering UC five and ten years from now may therefore arrive with learning experiences that differ substantially from those of previous generations.

At the same time, technology is changing how work is performed across many occupations. These changes are increasing the importance of strong academic foundations as well as judgment, adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and the capacity to continue learning as knowledge and technology evolve.

This discussion will consider student preparation from two complementary perspectives: how the learning environment before college is changing and how the application of knowledge is changing in work and society. It will help the Regents consider the knowledge, capabilities, habits of mind, and experiences students will need before they arrive at UC and how the University can work with California schools and educational partners to strengthen preparation for university-level learning and long-term success.

DISCUSSION

The presentations will connect changes in the learning environment with longer-term changes in the economy. Together they provide an outline for a broader definition of readiness, one that builds on strong academic foundations while also preparing students to exercise judgment, adapt, apply knowledge in new contexts, and continue learning over time.

The discussion will examine how artificial intelligence (AI) may affect learning, teaching, and assessment before college; which capabilities may become more important as the application of knowledge changes across work and society; and how experiences such as research, internships, dual enrollment, entrepreneurship, and work-based learning can help students connect academic learning to real-world contexts. It will also consider UC's role in helping California's K–12 system prepare for these shifts and opportunities to strengthen partnerships with schools, educators, and other public and private education stakeholders.

Preparing Students to Learn in an AI-Enabled World

Rebecca Winthrop is a senior fellow and director of the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution. Her research focuses on education and the knowledge and capabilities young people need to thrive in work, life, and civil society. She leads the Brookings Global Task Force on Artificial Intelligence in Education, is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, and co-authored with Jenny Anderson *The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better*.

She will discuss how artificial intelligence is changing teaching and learning *before* students reach college and what those changes may mean for student preparation. Her remarks will touch on emerging AI and digital literacy and on enduring capabilities such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, judgment, problem-solving, adaptability, and the ability to learn continuously. She will address how assignments and assessments may need to evolve; the risks that overreliance on AI may weaken the development of foundational skills in areas such as reading, writing, quantitative reasoning, analysis, and critical thinking; and the potential for thoughtful uses of AI to deepen learning, support individual students, stimulate curiosity, and expand educational opportunity.

Preparing Students for a Changing Economy

Matt Sigelman is president of the Burning Glass Institute, a nonprofit research center focused on the future of work and mobility. He helped pioneer real-time labor market data using job posting and career history information to analyze changing demand for skills. He previously led the company now known as Lightcast.

He will draw on labor market evidence to examine how technology is changing the nature of work, including the tasks performed within occupations and the capabilities that remain valuable across changing careers. His remarks will consider what these shifts may mean for students preparing for college and for a lifetime of learning and work. He will address why strong

academic foundations and the ability to continue learning remain central to long-term success; how capabilities such as judgment, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability interact with disciplinary and technical knowledge; and how experiences such as research, internships, dual enrollment, entrepreneurship, career exploration, and work-based learning can help students apply what they learn in different settings.