AI Playbook for Higher Education Leadership

A Strategic Guide for AI Adoption at Colleges and Universities

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93%

of higher education staff expect to expand their AI use for work

Higher education is entering an AI-powered era. Adoption of AI has surged – a 2024 survey found 84% of higher education staff now use AI in their personal or professional lives, and 93% expect to expand their AI use for work in the next two years. [1] This momentum creates an opportunity for colleges to harness AI to boost productivity and student success.

Early research shows that AI tools can significantly improve employee output, increasing knowledge-worker productivity by 14% on average. [8] In certain tasks, generative AI has delivered performance gains approaching 40% when used effectively. [2] This playbook outlines how AI can empower key staff roles – Academic Advisors, Recruiters, Faculty, and IT teams – and provides strategic recommendations for successful implementation. The following pages offer concise, actionable insights to help higher ed leaders drive innovation with AI while maintaining compliance, academic excellence and data integrity.



Academic Advising

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Scalable Personalized Support

Advisors often manage large caseloads, making it challenging to give each student personalized attention. Improving outreach is crucial – at one university, students who met with an advisor had a 93.6% retention rate vs. 73.9% without an advising meeting. [4] Leverage AI to proactively identify and reach out to students who need help ensures no one falls through the cracks.

Data-Driven Guidance

Advisors should utilize data analytics and AI insights to pinpoint academic risks and opportunities. By consolidating student information (grades, attendance, etc.), advisors can get a holistic view of each student and make more informed recommendations. Investing in AI tools that surface early alerts and suggestions helps advisors intervene at the right time.

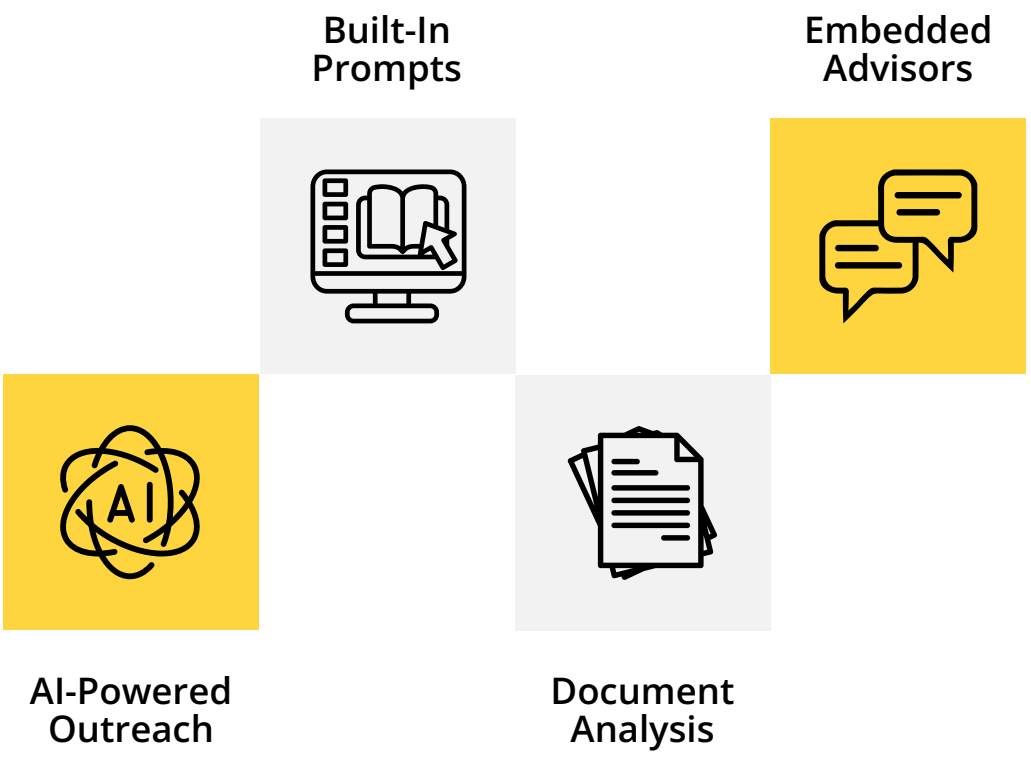
How Advising App Can Help

EMPOWER EVERY ADVISOR AND ENRICH EVERY STUDENT JOURNEY

The AI platform keeps knowledge, tools, and context at advisors' fingertips to guide each student.

Staff know the path—the AI advisor turns that insight into plans, outreach drafts, and timely reminders in seconds.

Advisors share intent via chat or a quick click and receive ready-to-refine plans, emails, texts, and summaries. Less busywork means more time to champion persistence and graduation.





Admissions & Recruiting

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Efficient Lead Management

Today's recruiters deal with thousands of inquiries and applications. AI can help prioritize and personalize outreach. More than 50% of admissions offices now use AI in application reviews, and 80% said they planned to incorporate it by 2024. [5] To stay competitive, institutions should invest in AI-driven recruitment tools that streamline prospect tracking and follow-ups.

Personalized Communication

Prospective students expect timely, customized engagement. Recruiters should use AI to draft and tailor emails, text messages, and social media outreach at scale. This ensures each prospect feels attended to, without overburdening staff. We recommend institutions develop templates and AI-generated content that remains on-brand and resonates with Gen Z audiences.

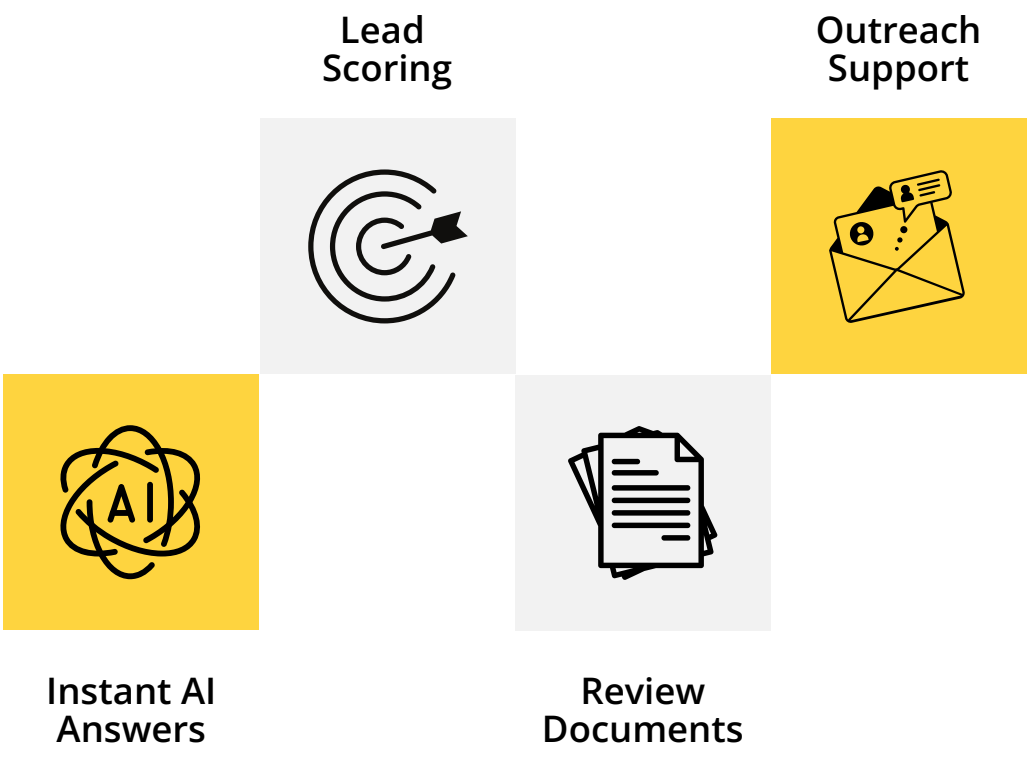
How Advising App Can Help

ATTRACT PROSPECTS AND NURTURE FUTURE SCHOLARS WITH AI-POWERED RECRUITING

The AI platform keeps program facts, lead scores, and outreach tools at recruiters' fingertips, enabling personalized communication.

Recruiters provide the vision; AI technology organizes tasks, drafts messages, and surfaces high-priority prospects.

With a quick prompt or click recruiters receive ready-to-refine emails, texts, and follow-up plans. Less busywork, more meaningful engagement with prospects that converts interest into enrollment.





Teaching & Learning

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Research and Content Creation

Professors often need to digest large volumes of literature and data. AI can rapidly summarize research articles or analyze datasets, helping faculty identify insights faster. By embracing AI for preliminary research tasks or proposal drafting, faculty can increase their research productivity and output.

Administrative Relief

Faculty also handle administrative duties like assisting with classroom responsibilities, writing recommendation letters, or preparing accreditation documents. AI assistants can help draft standard documents or compile reports based on data, saving hours of tedious work. Institutions should encourage faculty to use AI for such tasks to reduce burnout and improve job satisfaction.

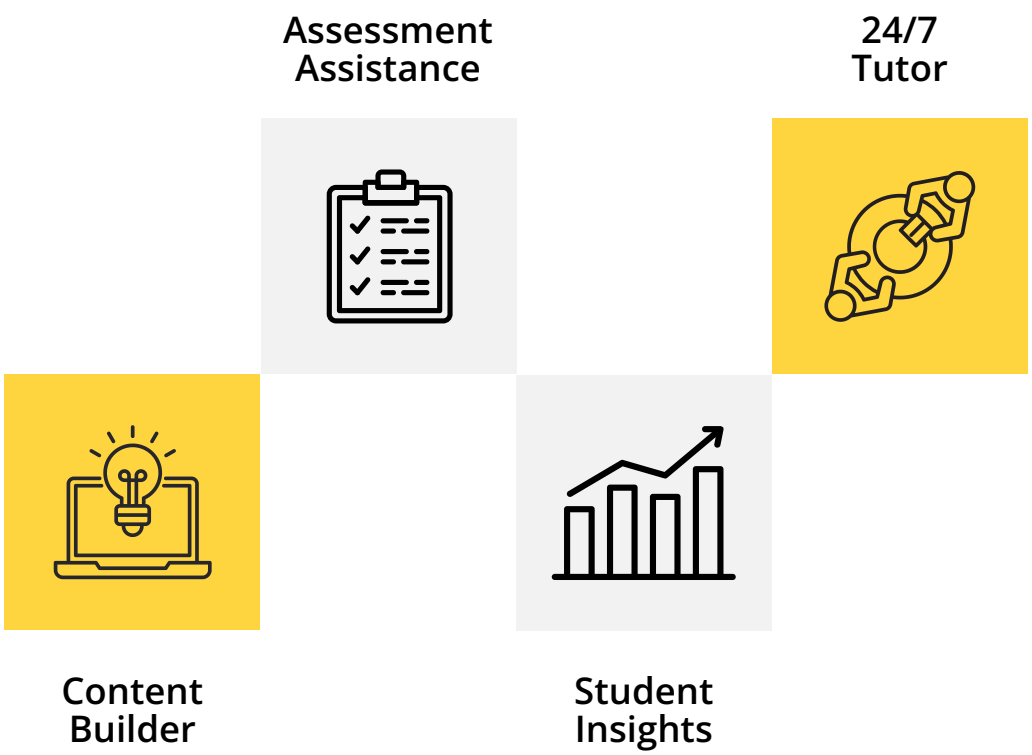
How Advising App Can Help

IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWER EDUCATORS WITH AI-ENABLED TEACHING TOOLS

The AI platform keeps resources, analytics, and creative prompts at instructors' fingertips, turning prep time into inspired learning moments.

Faculty set the strategy—the AI advisor shapes materials, drafts feedback, and highlights learner needs in seconds.

A quick prompt or click returns outlines, quiz banks, and student summaries. Less administrative load, more energy for dynamic teaching that drives mastery and completion.





Technical Support

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Secure AI Solutions

IT departments have the critical task of securely integrating AI tools into existing campus systems (e.g., SIS, LMS, and CRM). The opportunity is to enhance functionality while maintaining strict data privacy. Every new AI deployment should comply with FERPA and GDPR, and adhere to campus cybersecurity standards. Robust data governance is key – IT should implement role-based permissions and data encryption for any AI accessing student records.

Efficiency in IT Operations

Technology teams themselves can use AI to improve their day-to-day business. Opportunities include assisting with support tickets, using AI for log analysis, and accelerating development tasks (like scripting or code reviews through AI suggestions). By leveraging AI for internal IT processes, the department can handle more with the same resources, which is especially valuable given limited higher education IT staffing.

How Advising App Can Help

SUPERCHARGE CAMPUS IT AND STUDENT SUCCESS WITH AI ASSISTANCE

The AI platform puts context, fixes, and scripts at IT teams' fingertips, turning every challenge into an opportunity to impress.

IT teams set the course; the AI advisor shapes ideas into clear steps, scripts, and self-help resources in seconds.

Share your needs via chat or a click to receive targeted troubleshooting, code reviews, and documented solutions. Less queue time, higher satisfaction and students stay focused on learning.



Change Management and Training

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Invest in regular training sessions and resources for faculty and staff. This includes initial workshops on how to use tools as AI features evolve.

SET EXPECTATIONS

Transparent communication is critical to alleviate anxiety around AI. Clearly articulate how AI will make work easier and reduce administration overhead.

PROMOTE EXPERIMENTATION

Encourage staff to explore AI and share their experiences. One idea is to set up an internal community of practice or regular AI meet-ups.

DESIGNATE LEADERSHIP

Ensure top-level support from provosts and deans for the AI initiative – leadership should lead by example (e.g., a dean reporting on AI use).



Implementing AI is as much about people as technology.

Adoption is hindered by gaps in awareness and training. Only 12% of U.S. employees report using AI daily in their jobs, while 58% report never having used it. [8] The majority of those who do use AI at work learned it informally (65% are self-taught indicating a lack of formal training programs). [8] To bridge this gap, institutions should invest in change management.

AI Governance and Data Strategy

CLEAR USAGE POLICIES

Develop and disseminate an AI usage policy for your institution. This policy should outline acceptable and prohibited uses at your institution.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

AI systems can inadvertently introduce bias or errors. Form a committee of staff, students, and legal teams to review AI outcomes periodically.

SECURE DATA PRIVACY

Treat AI systems with the same rigor as other enterprise systems holding sensitive data. Ensure any AI vendor or tool complies with data protection laws (e.g., FERPA, GLBA, etc.).

REMAIN COMPLIANT

Align AI initiatives with institutional compliance requirements and accreditation standards. Keep records on how AI is being used.



As AI tools are implemented, higher education leaders must ensure they are used responsibly.

Governance and security protocols provide the foundation for sustainable AI integration. A recent survey found 59% of higher education professionals are concerned about data privacy and security with AI – underlining the need for robust safeguards. [1]

Here's How to **Get Started:**

Leaders should start small, demonstrate value, and then scale up, all while engaging stakeholders and safeguarding standards.

STEP 01	Develop an AI governance framework to oversee AI tools and usage as they roll out. Establish regular check-ins to review adoption, opportunities and issues.
STEP 02	Begin with a pilot in one or two areas that have clear needs and measurable outcomes. Early wins will build momentum and buy-in.
STEP 03	After the pilot, evaluate results, document lessons learned and refine the approach. Gradually expand the AI deployment to additional departments or use cases.

SUCCESSFULLY DEPLOYING AI CAMPUS-WIDE REQUIRES A PHASED, THOUGHTFUL STRATEGY

AI has moved from a buzzword to a practical tool that can drive meaningful improvements in college administration and student support.

By empowering staff across advising, recruitment, teaching, and IT, colleges and universities can enhance productivity, personalize student engagement, and make data-informed decisions like never before.

Those who move proactively will position their institutions at the forefront of innovation.

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