

ASU teams demonstrate ways emerging tech can support learners of all ages

More than 800 ASU faculty, staff and learning professionals gathered for annual FOLC Fest

By Samantha Becker, ASU News
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What does it take for a university to keep pace with how people learn, work and return to learning across a lifetime?

That question anchored this year's [Future of Learning Community \(FOLC\) Fest](#), an annual ASU-wide gathering that brings together faculty, staff and learning professionals to share research, practice and experimentation shaping the future of learning.

Organized by ASU Academic Enterprise's [Office of the University Provost](#), with more than 800 attendees from schools, colleges and units across the university, the event reflected ASU's [Changing Futures campaign](#) and its focus on expanding access, improving outcomes and scaling impact responsibly.

"Changing Futures comes to life when we design learning around how people actually live and learn," said Gemma Garcia, executive director of learning technology in the Academic Enterprise and FOLC Fest co-chair. "FOLC Fest highlights the expertise across ASU that helps build more flexible, accessible and responsive learning experiences."

Across two days, sessions explored how learning design, data and emerging technologies — including artificial intelligence — can support learners from early college through career transitions and lifelong learning.

Keynotes connect AI, learning and human responsibility

This year's keynote speakers framed the future of learning as both a technological and human endeavor.

Opening day featured Isabelle Hau, executive director of the Stanford Accelerator for Learning, whose keynote, "The Next Intelligence," argued that in an AI-driven world, the most important frontier is relational intelligence — the human capacity to connect, collaborate and care. Drawing on neuroscience, learning sciences and anthropology, Hau emphasized designing systems and technologies that strengthen human relationships rather than diminish them.

On day two, keynote speaker and ASU University Professor of Technology and Innovation [Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan](#), former director of the U.S. National Science Foundation, joined ASU Executive Vice President and University Provost [Nancy Gonzales](#) for a fireside chat. Their conversation examined how AI is reshaping learning and work, and the responsibility universities have to build systems that deliver opportunity at scale, connecting national efforts to ASU's Changing Futures priorities.

"My conversation with Panch reinforced what makes universities so critical to the future of innovation," Gonzales said. "FOLC Fest brings together the people who turn ideas into learning experiences and talent into impact, ensuring universities remain at the core of economic and social progress."

Faculty expertise extended through collaboration

Accepted sessions throughout FOLC Fest offered a snapshot of how academic innovation is already unfolding across ASU's schools and colleges, often supported by internal teams that help extend faculty expertise into learning opportunities beyond traditional degree pathways.

Several poster presentations from [ASU Learning Enterprise](#) focused on the intersection of instructional design, learner engagement and AI.

[Bobbi Doherty](#), senior online course manager, presented research on how instructor modeling videos can strengthen teaching presence and support learner persistence in open-access online courses. [Marissa Huth](#) shared lessons learned from integrating the generative AI tool Claude into Canvas workflows, offering practical guidance for instructional designers navigating AI-supported course production.

A collaborative poster by online course manager [Nicholas Rogers](#) and senior instructional designer [Alejandra Dashe](#), working with faculty member [Teri Taylor](#) from the [College of Health Solutions](#), examined the redesign of an online health and wellness course using evidence-based frameworks such as Backward Design and Universal Design for Learning. The project demonstrated how aligning learning objectives, assessments and AI-supported tools can improve accessibility, engagement and learner success.

Data and AI support better decisions and access

Interactive demos highlighted how data-informed decision-making and applied uses of AI can support learners and educators across programs.

[Pallavi Sharma](#), manager of analytics, presented "ABCD: AnyBody Can Dashboard" through a live demonstration of Google Looker Studio, highlighting how the self-serve tool can integrate multiple data sources to help teams visualize program success.

[Rachel Reed](#) and [Vanshaj Gupta](#) showcased "The Ecology of Learning Data," mapping how learner data flows from the classroom to leadership decision-making.

"New programs tend to be more vulnerable early on," Reed said. "Being able to move from an executive summary down to specific learner experiences helps teams surface issues quickly and respond before challenges grow."

Accessibility-focused demos explored how AI can reduce friction in creating inclusive learning environments.

Online course manager Rogers and instructional designer [Jaclyn Campbell](#) demonstrated Access Granted, which uses Claude AI to support WCAG compliance. Dashe, [Bianca Zietal](#), [Yash Pachchigar](#) and [Divyansh Chandarana](#) presented benchmarking work on AI transcription accuracy in STEM courses, highlighting the importance of precision in numbers, formulas and symbols.

Dashe, Rogers and Campbell also introduced the "PDF Remediator," an AI-supported tool designed to streamline the creation of accessible course materials, making inclusive design part of everyday instructional workflows.

Learning across life stages

Across FOLC Fest, a clear through line emerged: Learning systems need to adapt to learners' lives, not the other way around. Sessions showed how ASU faculty and collaborators are using data, accessibility-first design and carefully applied AI to reduce barriers and support learners earlier and more flexibly.

"That's what Changing Futures looks like in practice," said [Danielle McNamara](#), director of the Learning Engineering Institute and FOLC Fest co-chair. "When learning systems adapt to people's lives, we expand access, reduce barriers and create pathways that support learners wherever they are and wherever they're headed."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Keynote speaker Isabelle Hau, executive director of the Stanford Accelerator for Learning, speaks at ASU FOLC Fest. Photo by EdPlus

Text image(s)



ASU Provost Nancy Gonzales and University Professor of Technology and Innovation Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan present the second day keynote at FOLC Fest. Photo by EdPlus



Pallavi Sharma (right), manager of analytics for ASU Learning Enterprise, demonstrates how to use Google Looker Studio during FOLC Fest. Photo by Cari Frederick/ASU Learning Enterprise