AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

AI isn’t taking the career. It’s taking the first rung.

And the first rung is the job career colleges train for. Here is a way to audit your programs before the outcomes data forces the question.



John P. Girard
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Swipe for the audit →

THE EVIDENCE

The entry-level seat is where hiring is slowing

−11%

Employment of 22-to-25-year-olds in the most AI-exposed occupations, late 2022 to mid-2026. The gap came from weaker hiring, not layoffs.

Stanford Digital Economy Lab

#4

Medical records specialists on a ranking of occupations most exposed to AI. That is billing and coding.

Anthropic labor market study, March 2026

Exposure is not elimination. The first job is changing faster than most catalogs.

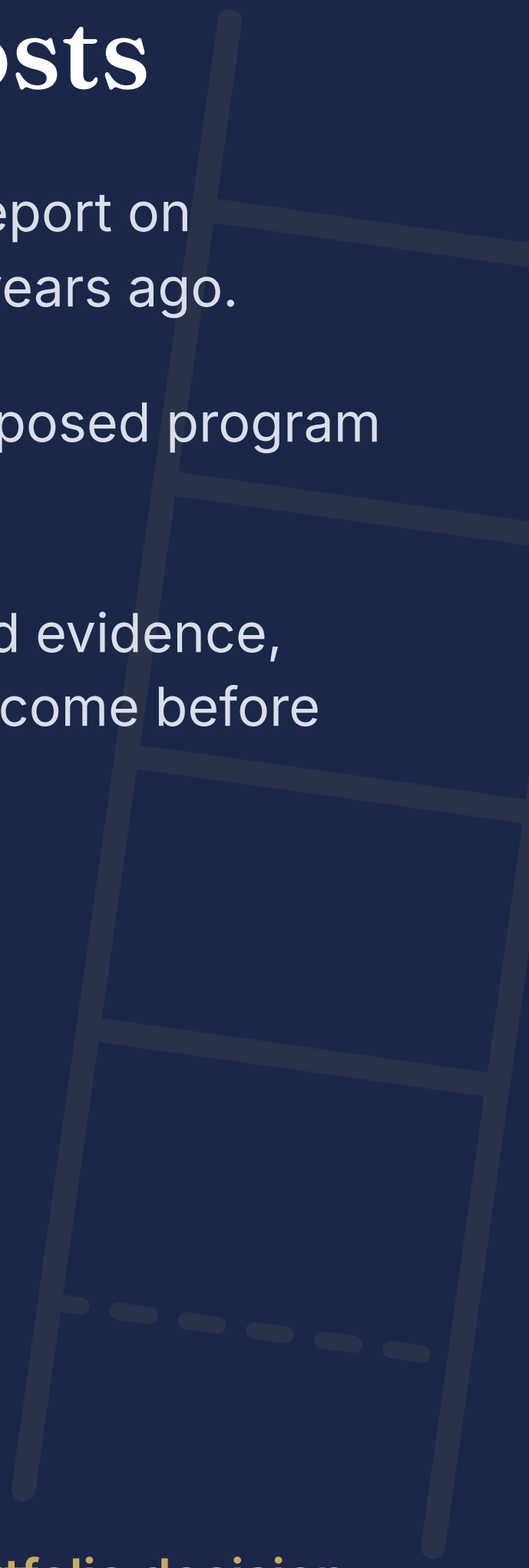
WHY IT IS A PRESIDENT'S DECISION

Waiting has three costs

1 **Outcomes lag.** Placement rates report on students who started one to two years ago.

2 **Marketing amplifies.** Filling an exposed program buys future placement problems.

3 **New programs take time.** Demand evidence, faculty, equipment and approvals come before the first start.



Which programs a campus offers is a portfolio decision, not a curriculum-committee task.

Six steps from a program list to a decision for each one

1 **Inventory**
Every program, its first-job titles and its outcomes

2 **Map the tasks**
What a graduate is paid to do in the first year

3 **Ask employers**
Advisory committees answer: do you still hire for this?

4 **Score**
Four measures, 1 to 5, the same for every program

5 **Place on the map**
AI exposure against local employer demand

6 **Decide and assign**
Grow, rebuild, replace or fix, with an owner and a date

STEP 4 · SCORE

Four measures, scored 1 to 5

Task exposure

How much of the first job can AI already do?

Human anchor

Does the work need hands, presence or a license?

Together these set **exposure**

Entry-rung health

Are local employers still filling entry-level roles?

Outcomes margin

How far above benchmark are graduation and placement?

Together these set **demand**

STEP 5 · PLACE ON THE MAP

Two scores sort every program

Local employer demand

High

Grow

Hiring is strong and the work needs hands, presence or a license.

Add capacity. Move marketing here.

Nursing · vet tech · sonography · trades

Rebuild

Hiring is strong, but AI does the old entry-level task.

Keep the field. Move the starting line.

Coding and billing · help desk · medical admin

Fix

Hiring is weak and AI is not the reason.

An ordinary program problem: fix or right-size.

Poor placement in an unexposed field

Replace

Hiring is weak and the core task is automated.

Set a teach-out date. Redirect resources.

Data entry · transcription · office admin

Low

Low — **AI exposure of the entry-level tasks** — High

STEP 6 · DECIDE AND ASSIGN

Four results, four different instructions

Grow

Hiring is strong and the work needs hands, presence or a license. **Add capacity. Move marketing here.**

Rebuild

Hiring is strong, but AI does the old entry-level task. **Keep the field. Move the starting line.**

Fix

Hiring is weak and AI is not the reason. **An ordinary program problem: fix or right-size.**

Replace

Hiring is weak and the core task is automated. **Set a teach-out date. Redirect resources.**

The mistake is treating all four the same way: adding an AI module to everything and calling it done.

FOR YOUR NEXT LEADERSHIP MEETING

Five questions

1 What is the first task a graduate of each program is paid to do, and can AI already do it?

2 When did our advisory committees last tell us something we did not want to hear?

3 Which program are we marketing hardest, and where does it sit on the map?

4 If placement in our most exposed program fell ten points next year, what would we wish we had started today?

5 Who owns the program portfolio, by name?

READ THE FULL POST

Teach for the Job That Will Exist

The evidence, the six steps, the portfolio map and the accreditation path.

MORE FROM MY AI SERIES

- AI Is Now Your Prospective Student's First Advisor
- Where AI Belongs in School Operations — and Where It Doesn't
- The Answer You Never See: A Quarterly AI Audit for Career Colleges
- The Reputation Blind Spot
- Your Reviews Are Talking to AI. Is Anyone Answering?



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