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AI

# Future-Ready Institutions:

## Assessing U.S. Higher Education Sector's AI Adoption and Capabilities

Sponsored by Microsoft

Research by: Ritu Jyoti and Hayley Sutherland    February 2020

# Executive Summary
## Partnership with a trusted advisor and enabler is paramount.

**Artificial intelligence (AI)** is at the heart of digital disruption across nearly every industry. AI is the now and future of education. There is an increasing recognition that AI solutions can optimize an extremely wide range of processes throughout the education field — benefiting not only the students but also the institutions. It is enabling educators to engage with students like never before. As per this joint IDC and MSFT study, *Assessing U.S. Higher Education Sector's Use and Readiness for AI*, AI is expected to increase **competitiveness**, **funding**, and **innovation** twofold over the next three years. The key drivers for AI are increasing efficiencies and driving better **student engagement**, and the top use cases are focused on improving student and prospect experience, enabled by AI technologies to make learning more **accessible and inclusive**.

As per IDC's AI MaturityScape framework, institutions need readiness with **vision**, **people**, **process**, **technology**, and **data** to realize the full potential. Trusted and ethical AI will be core to widespread adoption. While institutions of all sizes report strong cultural and strategic (subdimensions of vision) readiness, they are critically challenged with **people** (skills), **technology**, and **data strategy** for an AI-ready future. Partnering with a trusted advisor and enabler is crucial to an institution's ability to accelerate its adoption, realization of superior business outcomes, and sustainable competitive advantage.
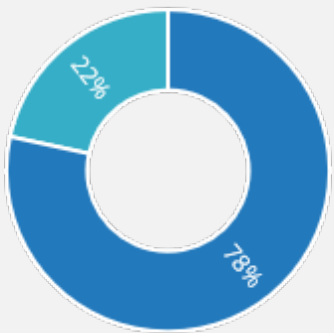
# About the Research

**Sample size: Total N = 509 U.S. institutions; 78% public, 22% private**

**215 management, 294 staff**

**Average gross income = $300M**

**Currently using AI = 17.5%, Exploring or evaluating options = 82.5%**

■ Public Institution  ■ Private Institution

22%
78%

**Institution sizes:**

**65% small and midsize, 35% large**

■ 20 to 249  ■ 250 to 999  ■ 1,000 or more

# of employees

35%  33%
32%
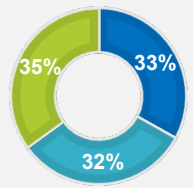
**Respondent profiles and roles:**

**42% management, 58% staff**

■ Management  ■ Staff

42%
58%

**Head of Admin/Operations**

**Dean of Technology**

**Dean of Academic Resources**

**ICT Director or VP**

**Program Director or VP**

**IT/Systems Admin Director or VP**

# Sections

Why AI for Higher Education?

# AI is expected to increase competitiveness, funding, and innovation twofold over the next three years.
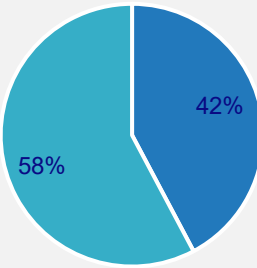


Chart comparing "Today" and "3 Years" measured impact across business drivers:

| Business Driver | Today | 3 Years |
|---|---|---|
| Better Student Engagement (n=54) | 18.79 | 31.54 |
| Improve Efficiency (n=66) | 19.52 | 32.90 |
| Increase Competitiveness (n=52) | 19.53 | 38.75 |
| Higher Funding/Margins (n=44) | 21.06 | 36.98 |
| Accelerated Innovation (n=47) | 20.44 | 38.12 |

Legend: ■ Today ■ 3 Years

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# AI is instrumental to institutions' competitiveness in the next three years.

**99.4%** Have multiple use cases within their institution.

**15%** Call it a game changer!

Q: How important is AI to your institution's competitiveness in the next three years?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

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# The key drivers for AI are **increasing efficiencies** and driving **better student engagement.**

AI

71%
Improve Efficiency

63%
Better Student Engagement

56%
Increase Competitiveness

53%
Accelerated Innovation

41%
Higher Funding/Margins

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What Do Institutions Need to Realize the Potential?

# Institutions need maturity in these five dimensions:

**AI**

**1** Vision
**2** People
**3** Process
**4** Technology
**5** Data Readiness

**Vision**
- Strategy
- Culture
- Business value/ROI
- Business model

**People**
- Skills
- Training
- Organization structure
- Human-machine collaboration

**Process**
- Business processes revamp
- IT, LOB, compliance functions — joint governance
- Agile metrics & measurements

**Technology**
- Model build/deployment is operationalized
- Intelligent core
- Centrally governed information architecture

**Data Readiness**
- Acquisition/prep — includes real-time processing and as-a-service
- Bias assessment & remediation
- Data lineage, security & risk

**These will help drive improved competitiveness, funding, and innovation**

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# AI Readiness Model

**Vision**

- 1: AI not considered as part of institutional strategy; little to no AI investment. Risk-averse culture with rigid siloes and top-down decision-making.
- 4: AI considered a game changer and a core part of strategy, with current and increasing investment. Proactive, bottom-up innovative culture with empowered employees.

**Data**

- 1: Standalone datacenters with reliance on Excel as analytics tools.
- 4: Data is accessible to all business users through an enterprise data estate with well-managed quality control, access, and governance services.

**People**

- 1: Little to no human-machine collaboration; employees have limited AI-related skill sets.
- 4: Human-machine collaboration is a core part of multiple processes; high percentage of employees with AI-related skill sets.

**Technology**

- 1: No internal capabilities for model development, deployment, or monitoring. Few AI tools/systems, with limited functionality.
- 4: Centralized, dedicated teams of developers, data scientists, and engineers across entire AI model life cycle. Advanced AI tools and systems (RPA, NLP, etc.).

**Process**

- 1: Institution is unaware of business drivers and benefits of AI. Data is siloed with little to no governance.
- 4: Institution strategically uses AI to achieve key business objectives. Data governance practices are ongoing, institution-wide, and performed jointly by IT, LOB, and compliance.

4
3
2
1
0

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With the goal of **increasing competitiveness, funding, and innovation** by nearly **2X** over the next three years, institutions need to **embrace AI to thrive.**
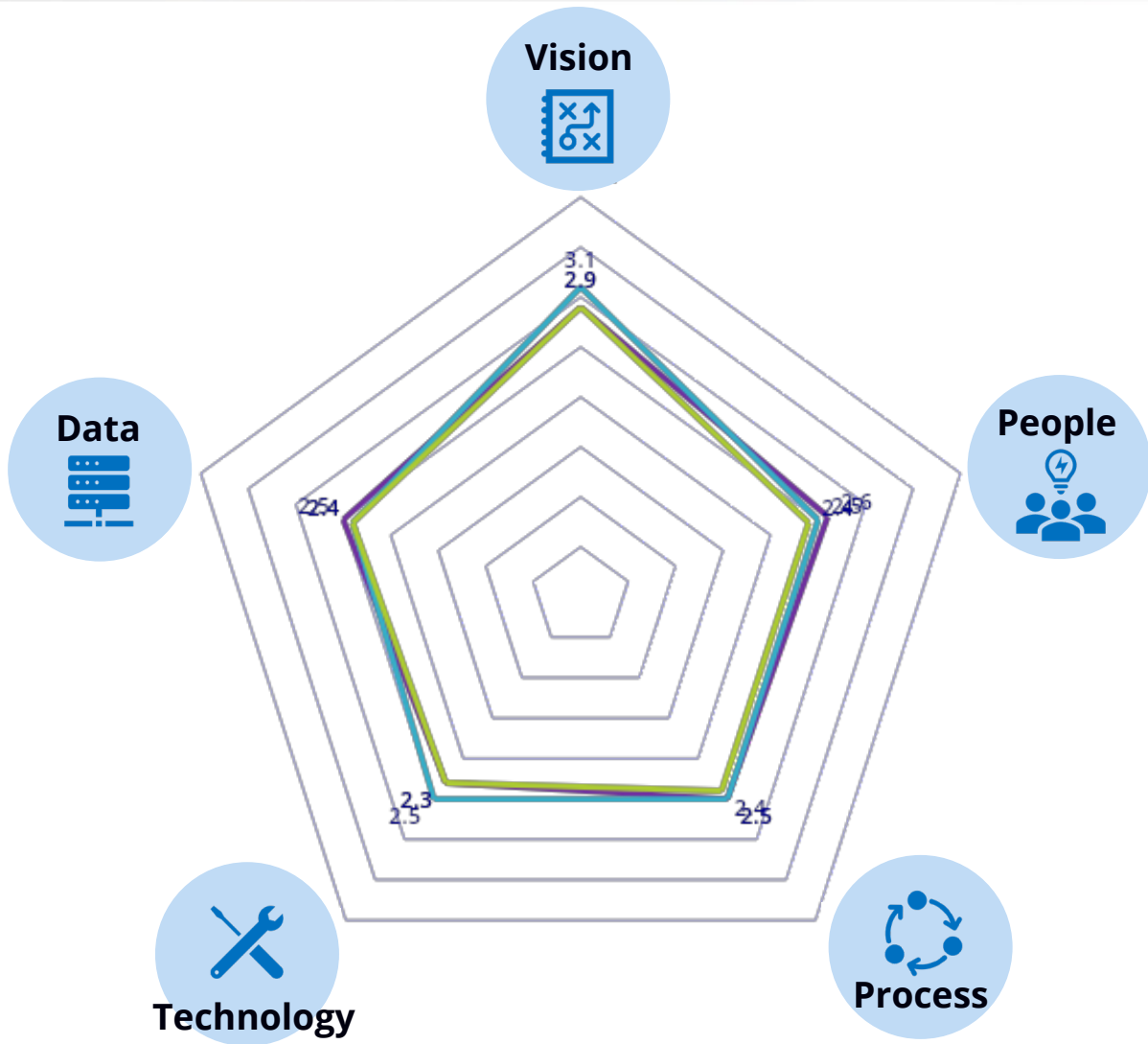
What Is the Current State of Readiness?

# AI readiness is similar across institution sizes.



On a scale of 1 to 4, rating overall AI readiness, institutions have the **highest rating** for the **Vision dimension**.
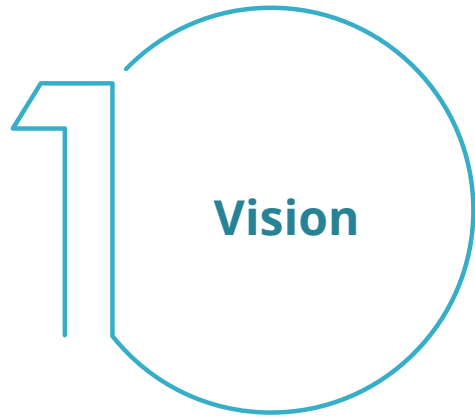
**Institution size (# of employees)**

—— 20-249

—— 250-999

—— 1,000+

# Assessing Vision Readiness

**Vision**

**Strategy, culture, business value, business models**

# A majority of institutions have started/ adopted AI as part of their strategy.

**54%**

**Have started to experiment with AI as part of their strategy.**

**38%**

**Have adopted AI as a core part of their strategy.**

**8%**

**Have not started to consider AI** as part of their core strategy.

Q: Which of the following statements best describes your institution's view on AI?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

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# Strategy readiness is strongest in midsize institutions.

AI

**20 to 249**

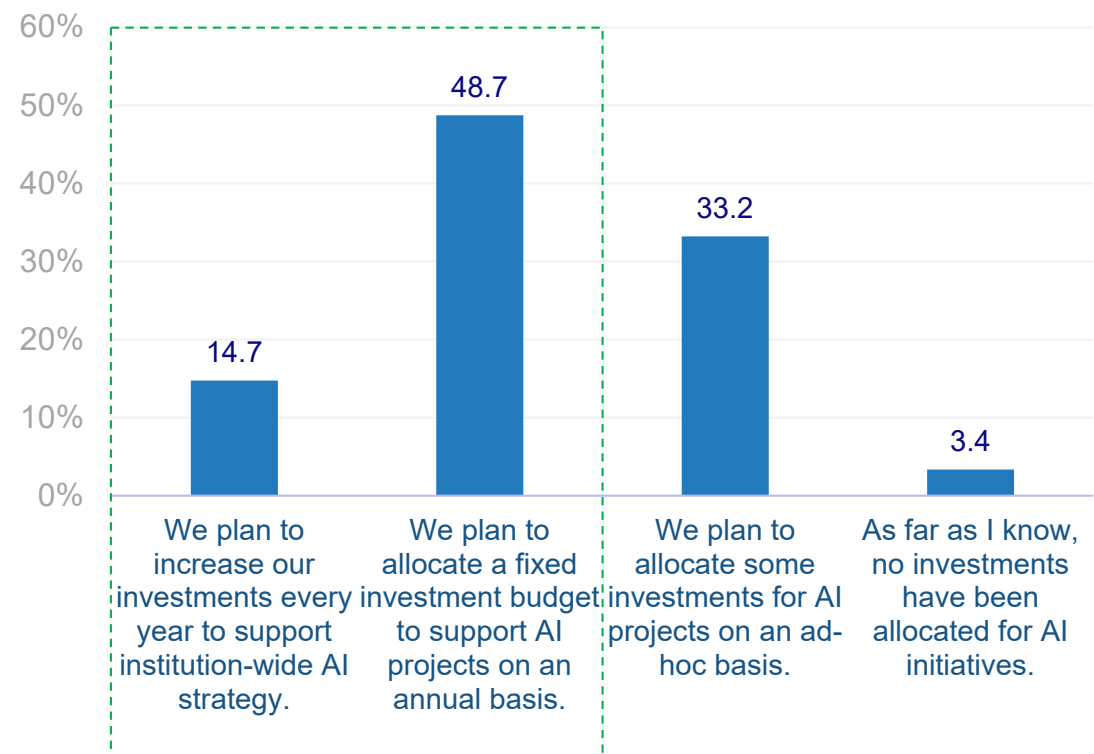**250 to 999**

**1,000+**
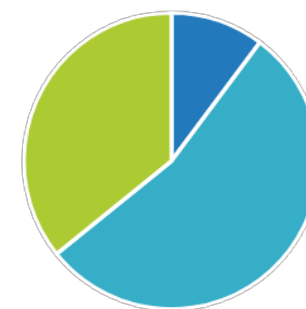
## Which of the following statements best describes your institution's view on AI?
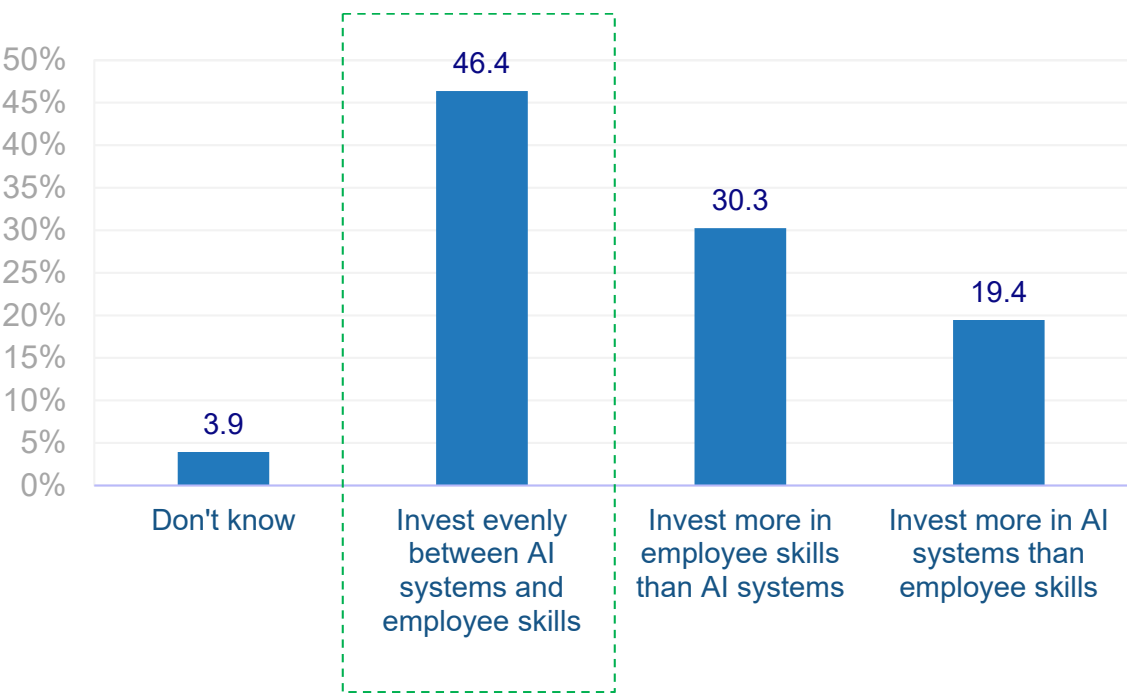
- We have not started to consider AI as part of our strategy.
- We have started to experiment with AI as part of our strategy.
- We have adopted AI as a core part of our business strategy.

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# Two thirds see investments in AI as strategic, and half plan to invest evenly between solutions and employee skills.

**AI**

## Chart 1

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| We plan to increase our investments every year to support institution-wide AI strategy. | 14.7 |
| We plan to allocate a fixed investment budget to support AI projects on an annual basis. | 48.7 |
| We plan to allocate some investments for AI projects on an ad-hoc basis. | 33.2 |
| As far as I know, no investments have been allocated for AI initiatives. | 3.4 |

Q. Which of the following best describes your institution's investments for developing, deploying, and maintaining AI solutions?

## Chart 2

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Don't know | 3.9 |
| Invest evenly between AI systems and employee skills | 46.4 |
| Invest more in employee skills than AI systems | 30.3 |
| Invest more in AI systems than employee skills | 19.4 |

Q. Looking ahead, in which area is your institution likely to focus its AI investments and efforts?
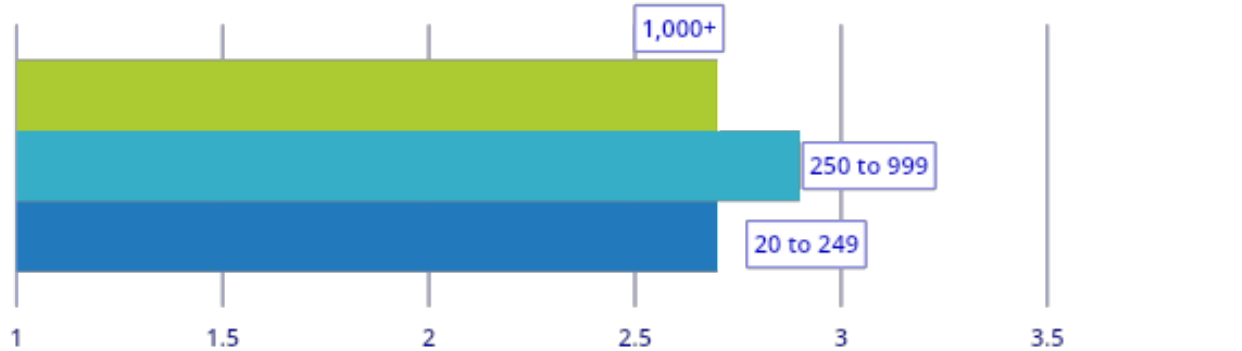
# Investment Readiness of Education Sector by Institution Size

*Similar strategies, different spend.*

## Education organizations' current **investment strategy:**



1. No investments have been allocated for AI initiatives.
2. We plan to allocate some investments for AI projects on an ad-hoc basis.
3. We plan to allocate a fixed investment budget to support AI projects on an annual basis.
4. We plan to increase our investments every year to support institution-wide AI strategy.

## Education organizations' **current investment spend...**
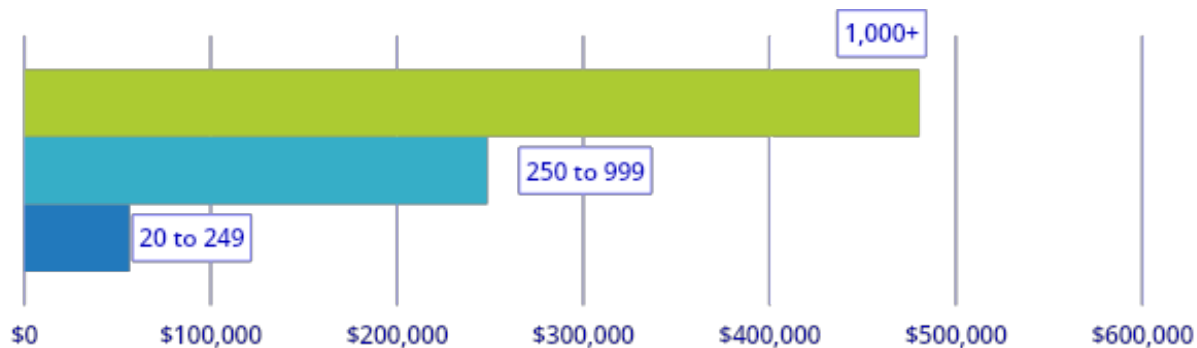


## ...and **planned investment increase:**



Institution size = Number of employees

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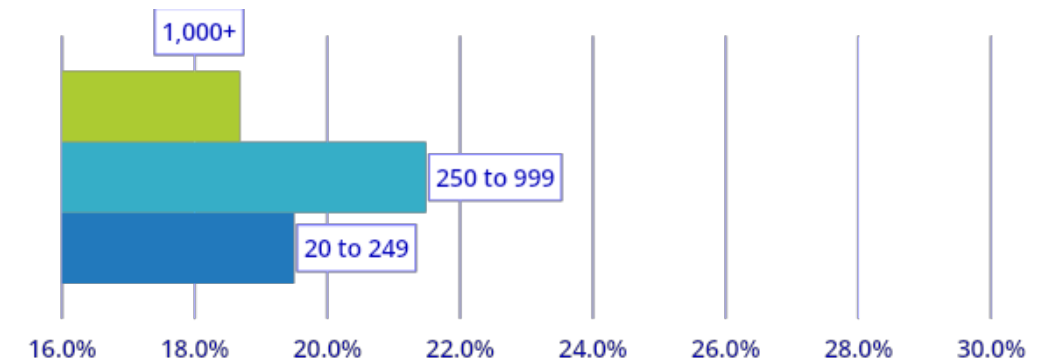
# Culture readiness is strong across institutions of all sizes.



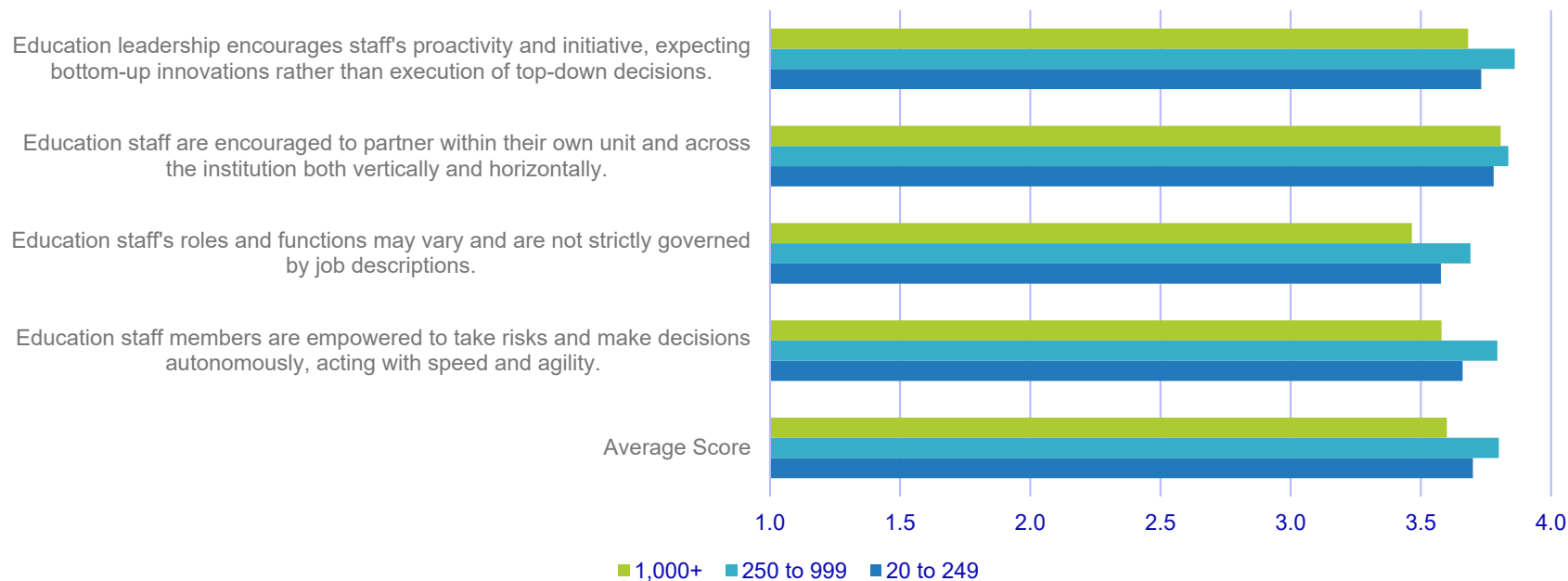Education leadership encourages staff's proactivity and initiative, expecting bottom-up innovations rather than execution of top-down decisions.

Education staff are encouraged to partner within their own unit and across the institution both vertically and horizontally.

Education staff's roles and functions may vary and are not strictly governed by job descriptions.

Education staff members are empowered to take risks and make decisions autonomously, acting with speed and agility.

Average Score

1.0   1.5   2.0   2.5   3.0   3.5   4.0

■ 1,000+   ■ 250 to 999   ■ 20 to 249

Q: Please rate how much the following statements describe your institution's culture and agility.

N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

# Assessing People Readiness

## 2 People

**Skills, training, organization structure, human-machine collaboration**

# Automation is playing a significant role in institutions' operations.

AI

**More than one quarter of institutions say automation is part of some of their processes.**

**27%**

**73%**
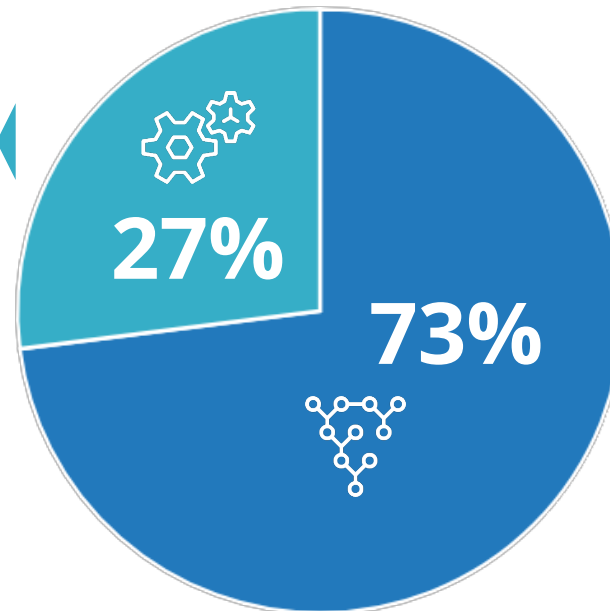
**Almost three quarters of institutions say automation is integral to multiple processes.**
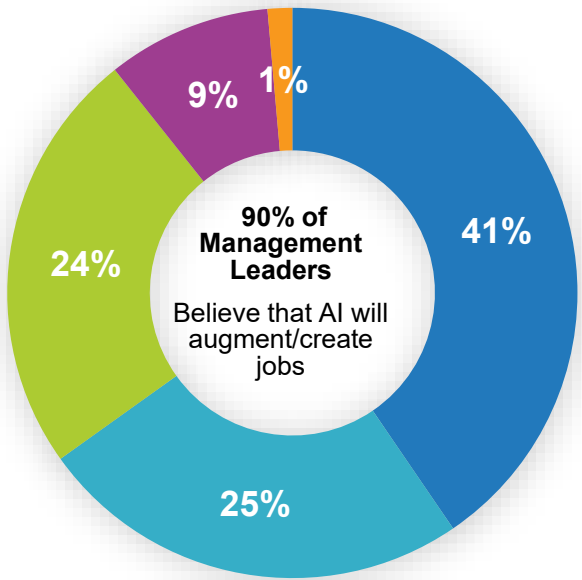
Q: How much would you say automation is playing a part in your institution's operations?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

# Education leaders and staff both believe AI will augment or create new jobs, far outweighing any negative impacts to jobs. There is good alignment on human-machine collaboration.



N = 215

**90% of Management Leaders**
Believe that AI will augment/create jobs

- 41%
- 25%
- 24%
- 9%
- 1%

N = 294

**85% Staff**
Believe that AI will augment/create jobs
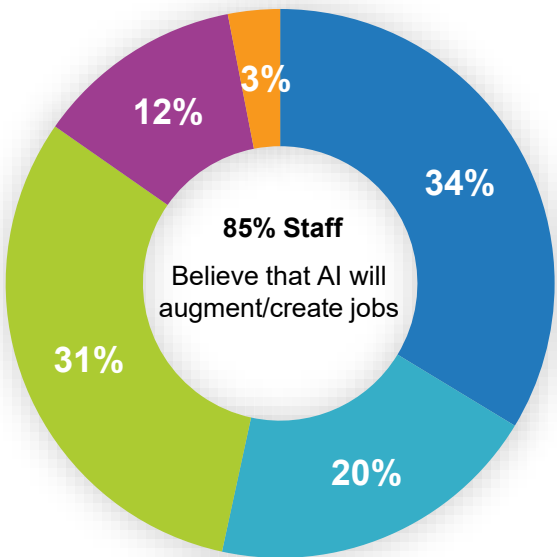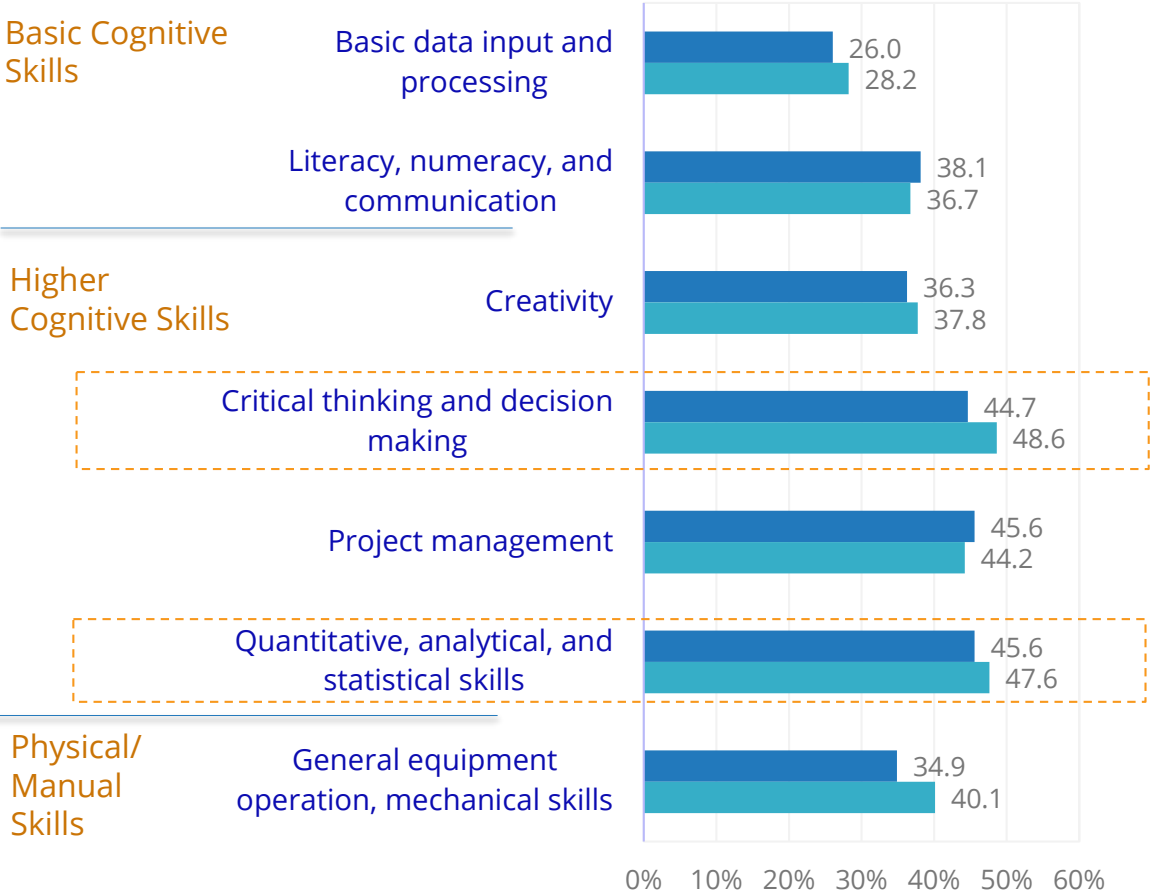
- 34%
- 20%
- 31%
- 12%
- 3%

Legend:
- ■ Help employees do their jobs better
- ■ Reduce repetitive routine tasks
- ■ Create new knowledge-based jobs
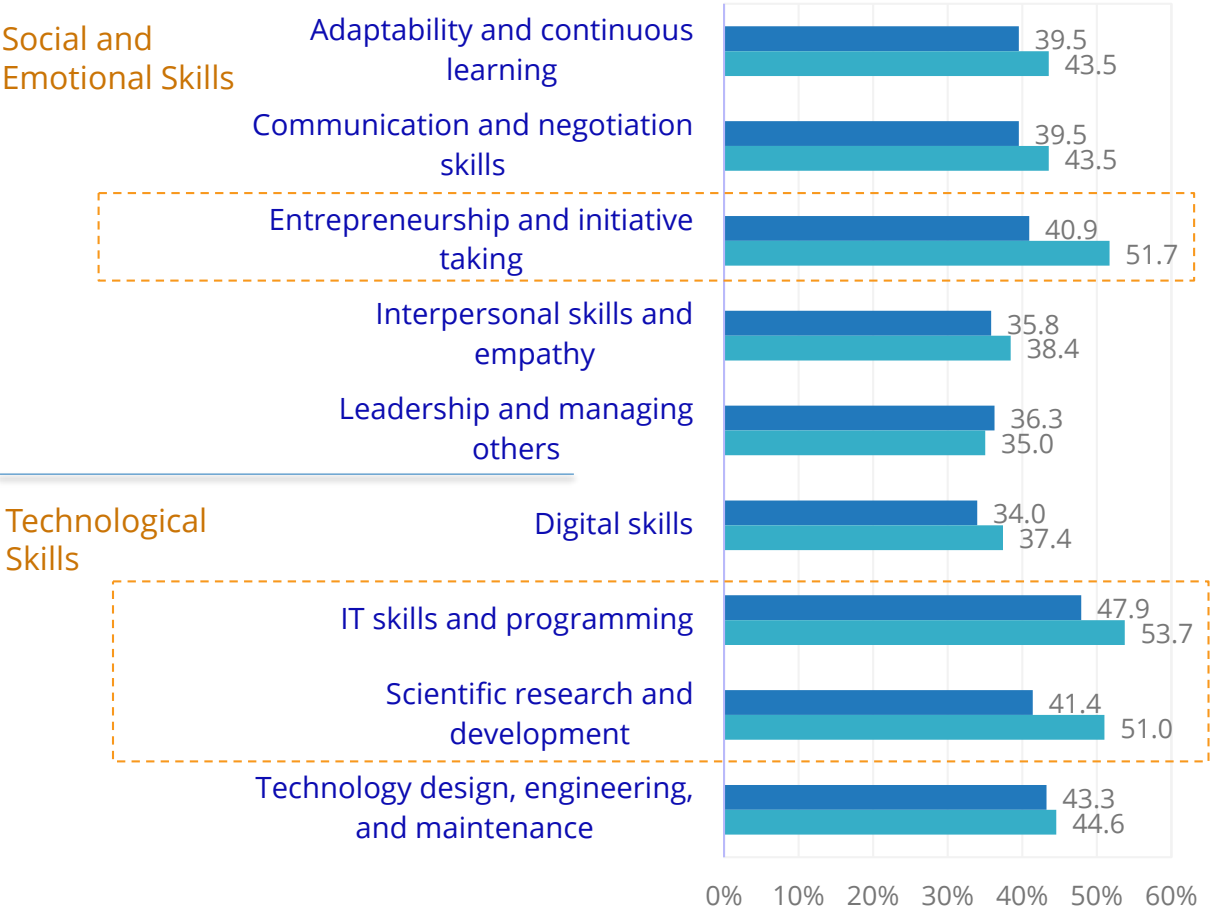- ■ Will take over jobs
- ■ No impact on jobs

Q: How do you think AI will MOST impact jobs in the education sector?
N = 509, N = 215 (leaders), N = 294 (staff); Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

# Higher cognitive, technological, and entrepreneurship skills are the most needed skills for an AI future.



**Basic Cognitive Skills**

| Skill | Management | Staff |
|---|---|---|
| Basic data input and processing | 26.0 | 28.2 |
| Literacy, numeracy, and communication | 38.1 | 36.7 |

**Higher Cognitive Skills**

| Skill | Management | Staff |
|---|---|---|
| Creativity | 36.3 | 37.8 |
| Critical thinking and decision making | 44.7 | 48.6 |
| Project management | 45.6 | 44.2 |
| Quantitative, analytical, and statistical skills | 45.6 | 47.6 |

**Physical/ Manual Skills**

| Skill | Management | Staff |
|---|---|---|
| General equipment operation, mechanical skills | 34.9 | 40.1 |

**Social and Emotional Skills**

| Skill | Management | Staff |
|---|---|---|
| Adaptability and continuous learning | 39.5 | 43.5 |
| Communication and negotiation skills | 39.5 | 43.5 |
| Entrepreneurship and initiative taking | 40.9 | 51.7 |
| Interpersonal skills and empathy | 35.8 | 38.4 |
| Leadership and managing others | 36.3 | 35.0 |

**Technological Skills**

| Skill | Management | Staff |
|---|---|---|
| Digital skills | 34.0 | 37.4 |
| IT skills and programming | 47.9 | 53.7 |
| Scientific research and development | 41.4 | 51.0 |
| Technology design, engineering, and maintenance | 43.3 | 44.6 |

Management (N=215)    Staff (N=294)

Q. Which do you think is most needed 3 years from now in the AI-enabled workplace?

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# Scientific R&D, quantitative, and entrepreneurship skills have the highest demand-and-supply gap.



**Supply > Demand**

**Demand > Supply**

### Basic Cognitive Skills
- Basic data input and processing — Supply 79.2, Demand 27.3
- Literacy, numeracy, and communication — Supply 60.3, Demand 37.3

### Higher Cognitive Skills
- Creativity — Supply 58.9, Demand 37.1
- Critical thinking and decision making — Supply 51.9, Demand 47
- Project management — Supply 56.6, Demand 44.8
- Quantitative, analytical, and statistical skills — Supply 38.1, Demand 46.8

### Physical/ Manual Skills
- General equipment operation, mechanical skills — Supply 53.6, Demand 37.9

### Social and Emotional Skills
- Adaptability and continuous learning — Supply 44.8, Demand 41.8
- Communication and negotiation skills — Supply 47.7, Demand 41.8
- Entrepreneurship and initiative taking — Supply 40.7, Demand 47.2
- Interpersonal skills and empathy — Supply 48.1, Demand 37.3
- Leadership and managing others — Supply 39.9, Demand 35.6

### Technological Skills
- Digital skills — Supply 52.1, Demand 36
- IT skills and programming — Supply 51.3, Demand 51.3
- Scientific research and development — Supply 41.3, Demand 47
- Technology design, engineering, and maintenance — Supply 39.5, Demand 44

**Supply** / **Demand**

# Barriers to reskilling are high among management and staff.

**Management N = 215**

| Barrier | Value |
|---|---|
| They don't have enough time | 36.7 |
| They don't know what courses to take | 35.8 |
| There are no suitable training programs for them to take | 32.1 |
| They do not want to spend the money | 31.2 |
| They cannot afford the courses | 26.5 |
| They have no interest | 19.5 |
| It is too difficult for them to develop new skills | 25.1 |

**Staff N = 294**

| Barrier | Value |
|---|---|
| I don't have enough time | 31.0 |
| I do not know what courses to take | 17.0 |
| There are no suitable training programs for me to take | 31.3 |
| I do not wish to spend the money | 14.6 |
| I cannot afford the courses | 23.8 |
| I have no interest | 4.4 |
| It is too difficult for me to develop new skills | 14.3 |

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# Assessing Process Readiness

**3** **Process**

- **Business processes revamp**
- **IT, LOB, compliance functions — joint governance**
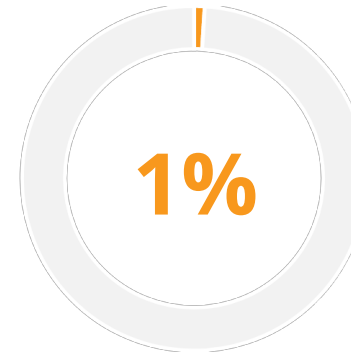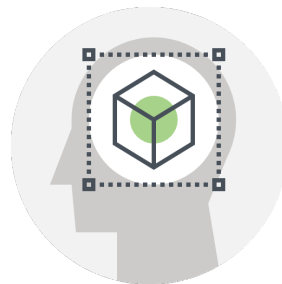- **Agile metrics & measurements**

# Almost all institutions have well-defined agile metrics for measurement of success.

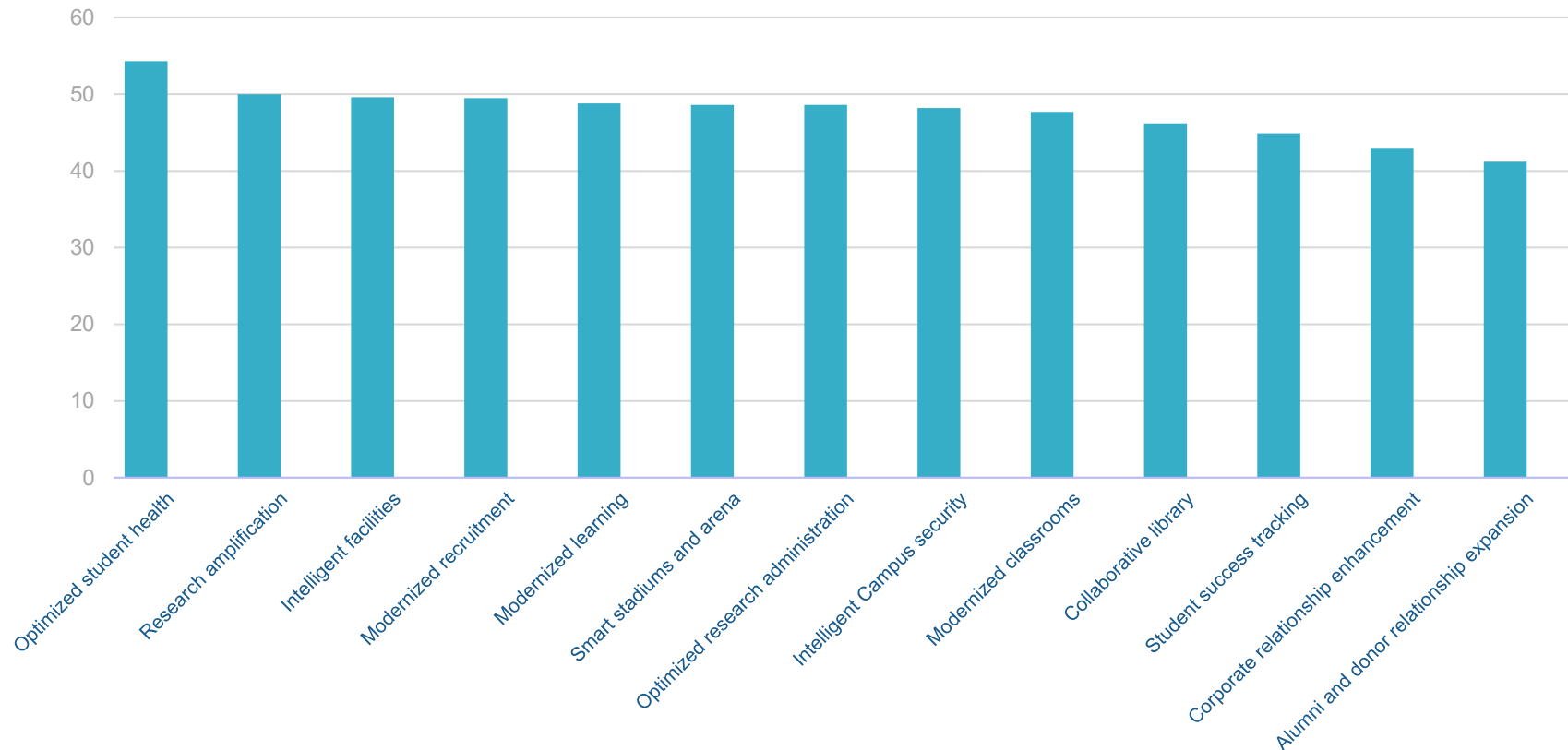**99%**

**Have defined their business drivers for AI adoption.**

**1%**

**Don't know or have yet to solidify their drivers.**

# Institutions are undergoing business process transformation across the breadth of their key functions.
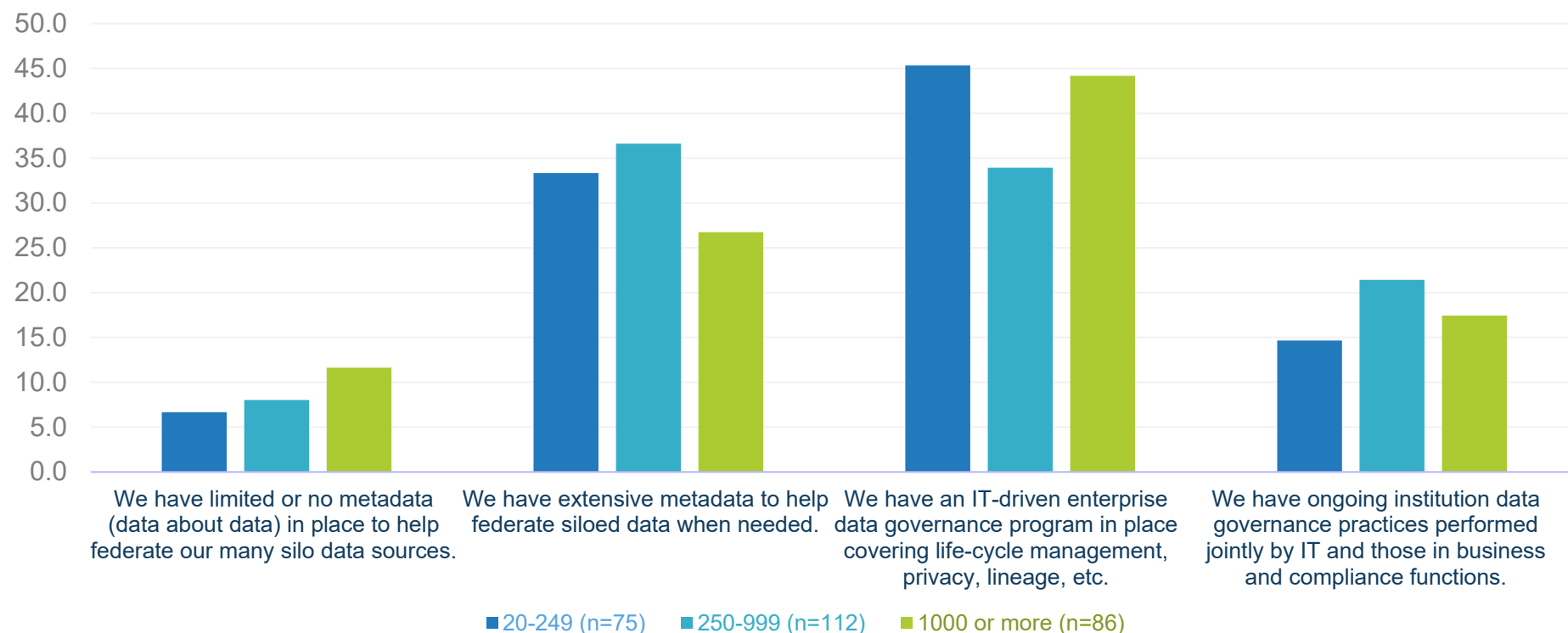
## Intelligent Task or Process Automation



Bar chart values (approximate, left to right):
- Optimized student health — 54
- Research amplification — 50
- Intelligent facilities — 49.5
- Modernized recruitment — 49.5
- Modernized learning — 48.5
- Smart stadiums and arena — 48.5
- Optimized research administration — 48.5
- Intelligent Campus security — 48
- Modernized classrooms — 47.5
- Collaborative library — 46
- Student success tracking — 45
- Corporate relationship enhancement — 43
- Alumni and donor relationship expansion — 41

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# A majority of the institutions recognize the importance of data governance.

**An IT-driven program is in place; LOB and compliance function collaboration is shaping up.**

## Data Governance by Institution Size – Number of Employees



Legend:
- ■ 20-249 (n=75)
- ■ 250-999 (n=112)
- ■ 1000 or more (n=86)

X-axis categories:
- We have limited or no metadata (data about data) in place to help federate our many silo data sources.
- We have extensive metadata to help federate siloed data when needed.
- We have an IT-driven enterprise data governance program in place covering life-cycle management, privacy, lineage, etc.
- We have ongoing institution data governance practices performed jointly by IT and those in business and compliance functions.

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# Assessing Technology Readiness



**Technology**

- **Model build/deployment is operationalized**
- **Intelligent core**
- **Centrally governed information architecture**
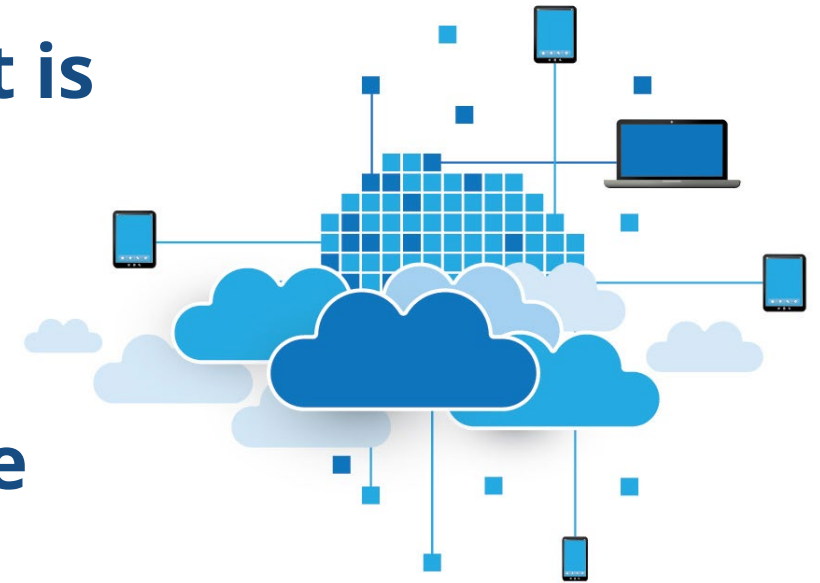
# Most of the institutions are in the early stages of their technology readiness.

Institutions need to build on skills that could be scaled across a spectrum of initiatives. In order to enable a broad set of AI-powered transformation, they also need to expand their data infrastructure for unstructured content, and expand data across cloud and hybrid cloud deployments.

**53%**

**We have some AI and analytics skills** scattered throughout the institution, which can be leveraged on a project basis.

Q: What best describes your institution's capability to develop AI models and other complex analytics?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

**48%**

**We have an institution data warehouse** that captures the bulk of our analytic data or have department-level siloed databases.

Q: Which of the following best describes your institution's data infrastructure?
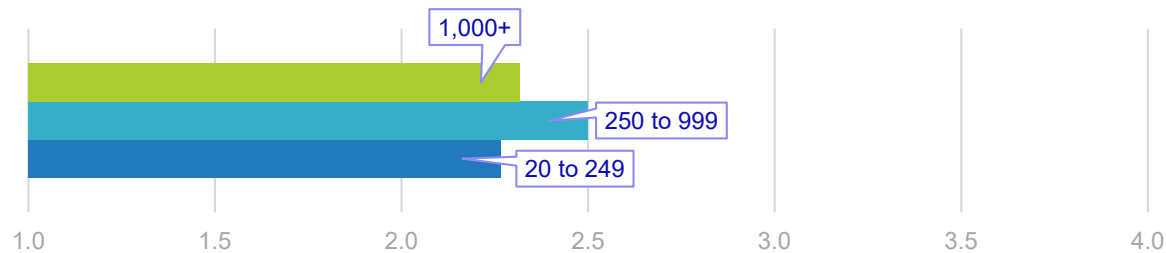N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

# Model development/deployment readiness of midsize institutions is the highest.

## EDU organizations' **AI model development capabilities:**



Bars labeled: 1,000+ ; 250 to 999 ; 20 to 249
X-axis: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0

**Q. *Which of the following best describes your institution's capability to develop AI models and other complex analytics?***

1. We do not have internal capabilities for model development.
2. We have some AI and analytics skills scattered throughout the institution which can be leveraged on a project basis.
3. Most LOBs have data analytics specialists and business intelligence staff.
4. We have centralized teams of data scientists and data engineers to develop and validate AI and analytics models.

## EDU organizations' **AI model deployment and monitoring capabilities:**



Bars labeled: 1,000+ ; 250 to 999 ; 20 to 249
X-axis: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0
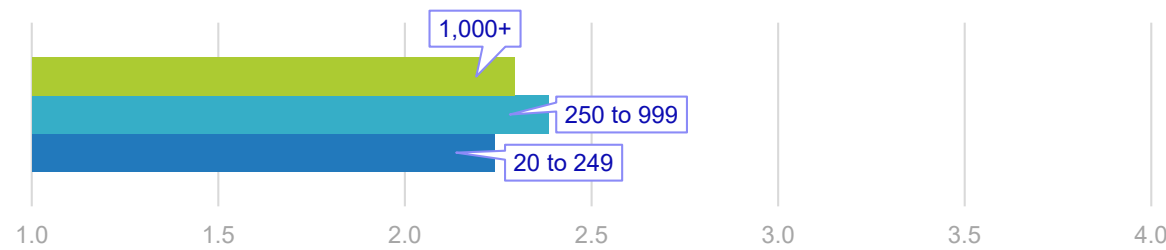
**Q. *Which of the following best describes your institution's capability to deploy and monitor AI models, projects, and applications?***

1. We would rely on solution providers and business partners to handle that for us.
2. We would rely on a mix of an internal development team and external partners to handle that for us.
3. We mainly use our internal development team to handle it for us.
4. We have dedicated developers, specialists and data engineers to deploy and monitor our AI applications.

## EDU organizations' **AI development and deployment tools:**



Bars labeled: 1,000+ ; 250 to 999 ; 20 to 249
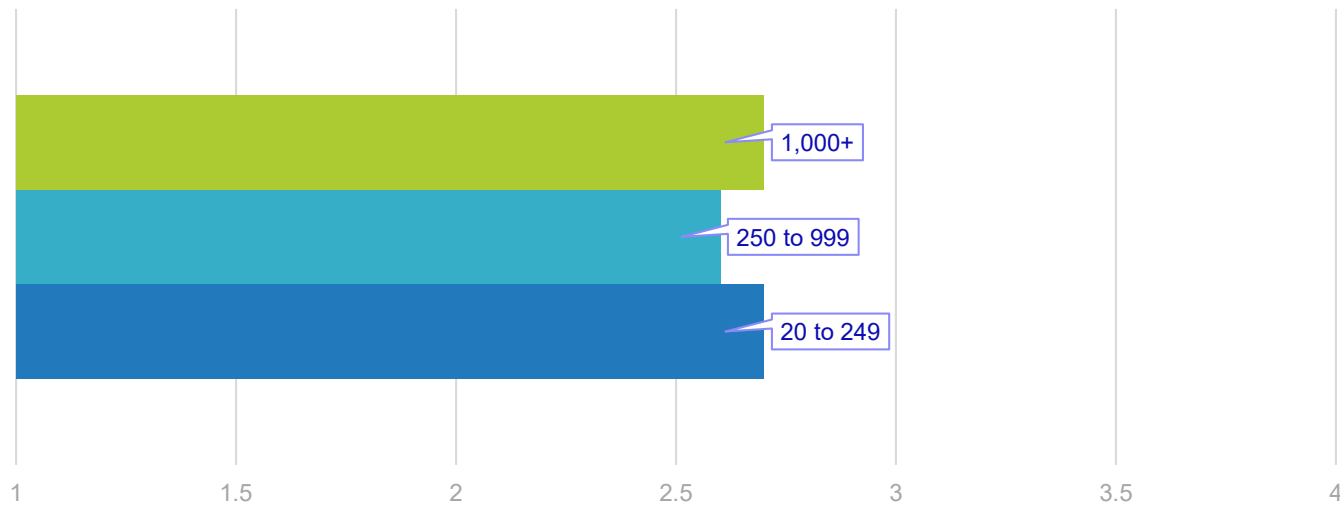X-axis: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0
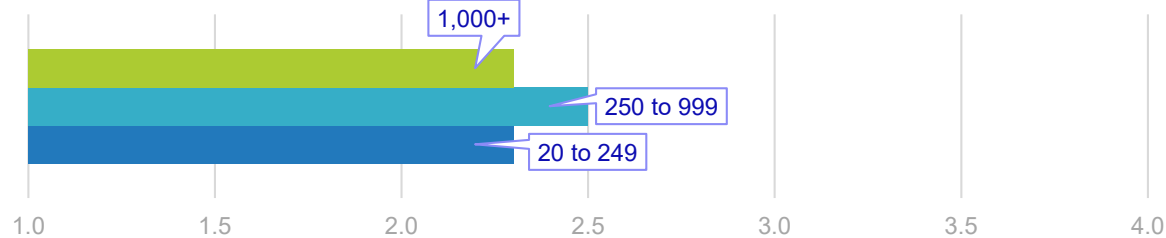
**Q. *Which of the following describe the availability of tools and systems to support specialized analytics and AI model development and deployment in your institution?***

1. We have simple end user tools such as Excel.
2. We have business intelligence and reporting tools.
3. We have augmented business intelligence, machine learning tools, and predictive systems.
4. We use cloud or on-premise AI analytics and tools such as robotic process automation, natural language processing, etc.

Institution size = Number of employees

# Infrastructure Readiness by Institution Size

*Midsize institutions are slightly behind the small and large institutions.*

Chart — Data infrastructure readiness score (x-axis: 1 to 4) by institution size (number of employees):

- **1,000+**: approximately 2.7
- **250 to 999**: approximately 2.6
- **20 to 249**: approximately 2.7

**Institution size = Number of employees**

1. Our data infrastructure is mostly department-driven with silo databases and data marts.
2. We have an institutional data warehouse that captures the bulk of our analytic data.
3. As well as a data warehouse we have an on-premise data lake to capture additional unstructured data.
4. We have structured and unstructured enterprise data warehouses running on cloud or hybrid cloud.
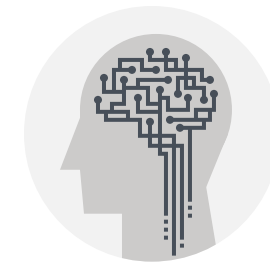
Q. Which of the following best describes your institution's data infrastructure?
N=509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

# Assessing Data Readiness

**5** Data Readiness

- **Acquisition/prep — includes real-time processing and as-a-service**
- **Bias assessment & remediation**
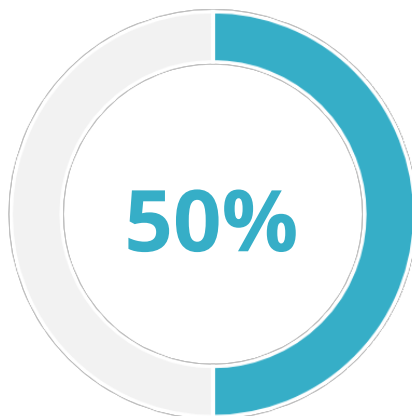- **Data lineage, security & risk**

# Most of the institutions are in the early stages of their data readiness journey.

Institutions need to build continuous data pipelines, embrace tools and technologies to help improve data quality, and make them accessible to all data scientists in the institution, including those in the LOB units.

**50%**

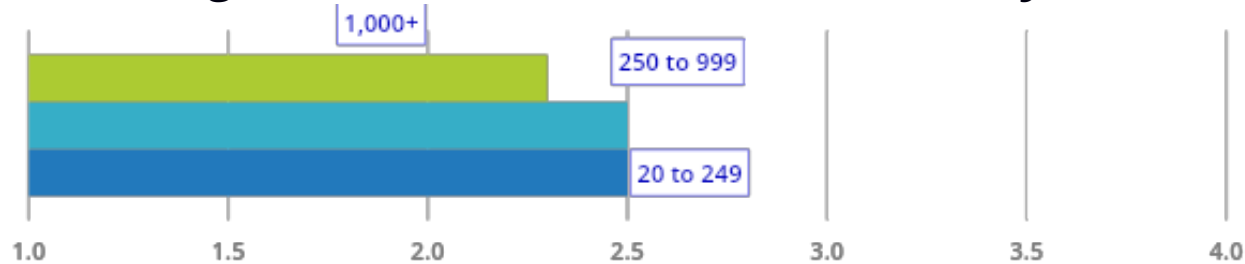**Have centrally federated data accessible** to centralized or departmental analytics teams.

**40%**
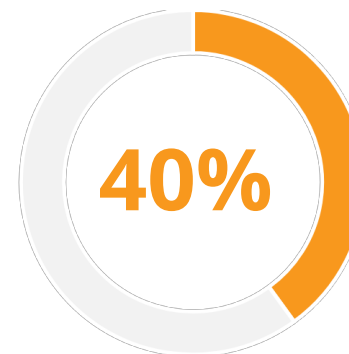
**Have major data quality and timeliness issues,** which are dealt with on an ad hoc basis by LOBs.

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# Data readiness of the education sector is similar across institution size.

## EDU organizations' current **data availability:**



Chart showing data availability by institution size (1,000+; 250 to 999; 20 to 249) on a scale from 1.0 to 4.0.

1. Data is scattered in siloed departmental systems and difficult to access.
2. Data is centralized and accessed by a centralized analytics team.
3. Data is centrally federated and accessible to analytics teams in each department.
4. Data is centrally federated and accessible to all departmental business users.

## EDU organizations' current **data quality:**



Chart showing data quality by institution size (1,000+; 250 to 999; 20 to 249) on a scale from 1.0 to 4.0.
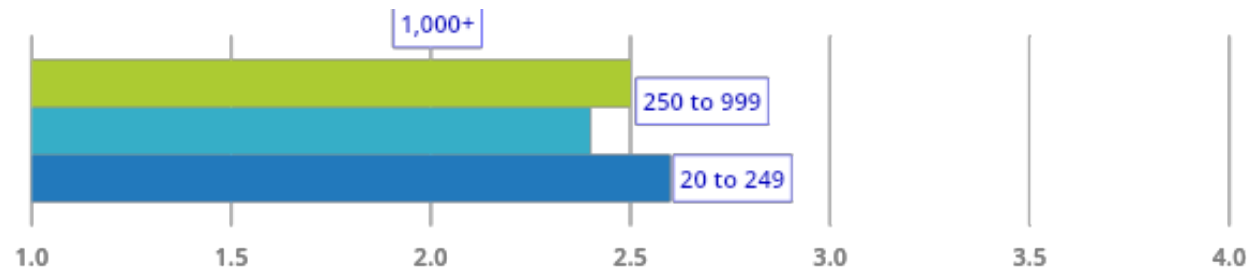
1. Data timeliness and quality are driven by data sources and are not really addressed at an institution level.
2. Data quality and timeliness are still major issues, which are dealt with on an ad hoc basis by LOBs.
3. Data is maintained in an institution data warehouse with detailed data quality controls and checks.
4. Data is maintained in an enterprise data lake with well-managed quality control, access, and governance services.

**Institution size = Number of employees**

Q: Which of the following best describes your institution regarding the availability of data to train task-based AI solutions?
Q: Which of the following best describes your institution regarding the quality and timeliness of data to train task-based AI solutions?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019
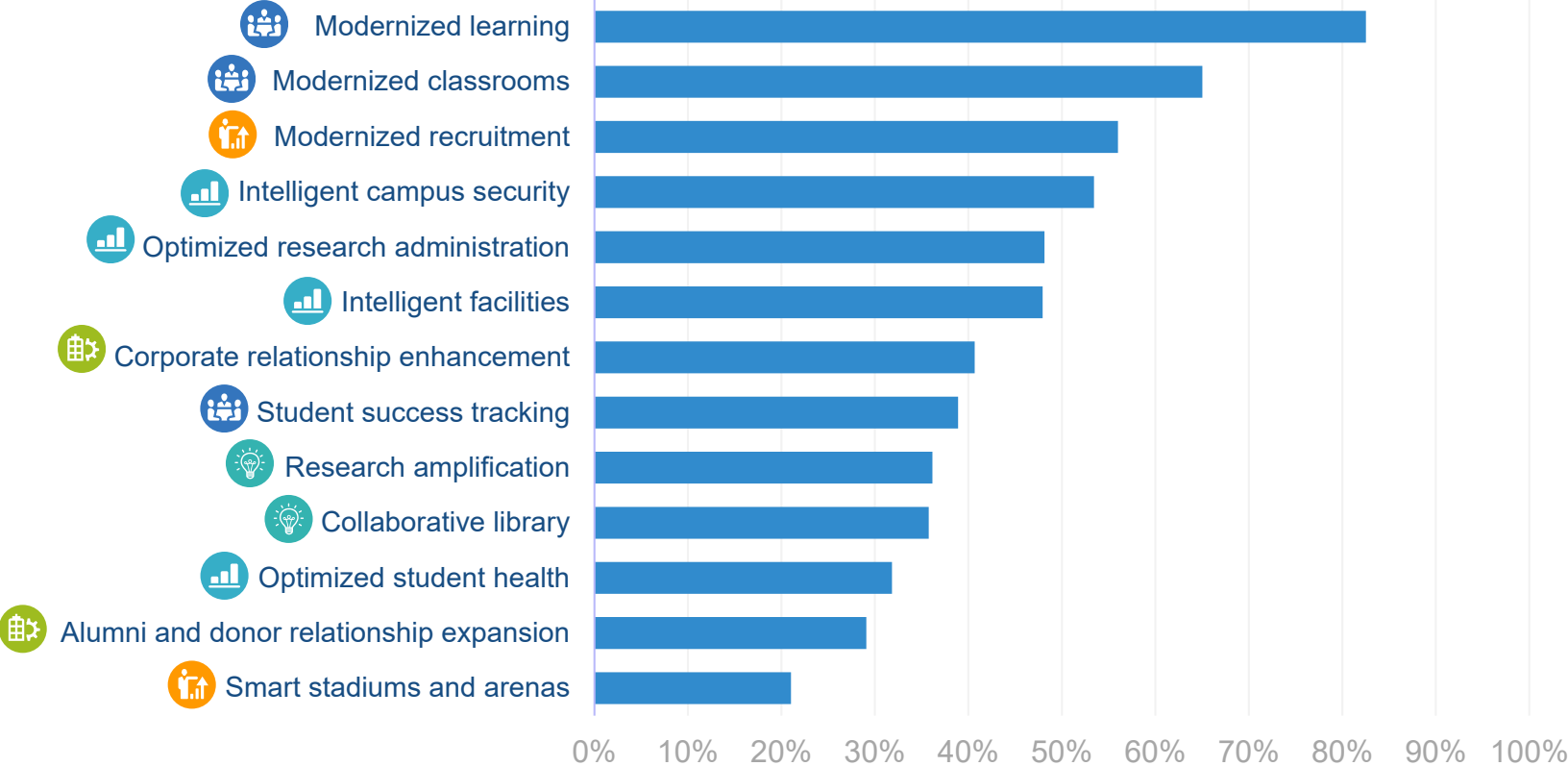
US45978920   © IDC

Key Priorities for Institutions of All Sizes

# Improving student & prospect experience, campus safety, and maintenance are the top use cases.



Chart: Use cases (left to right bar chart)

- Modernized learning — ~82%
- Modernized classrooms — ~65%
- Modernized recruitment — ~56%
- Intelligent campus security — ~54%
- Optimized research administration — ~48%
- Intelligent facilities — ~48%
- Corporate relationship enhancement — ~41%
- Student success tracking — ~39%
- Research amplification — ~36%
- Collaborative library — ~36%
- Optimized student health — ~32%
- Alumni and donor relationship expansion — ~29%
- Smart stadiums and arenas — ~21%

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

## PRIMARY GOALS

- Better Student Engagement
- Increase Efficiency
- Increase Competitiveness
- Higher Funding/Margins
- Accelerated Innovation

Q: In which of the following functions/use cases has your institution already deployed AI or is planning to use AI in the next 12-18 months?
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019

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Education institutions are focused on using AI to **improve learning outcomes and implement solutions** that will help all students succeed.

AI is helping to make learning more **accessible/inclusive.**

**AI-powered translation tools** can transcribe classroom lectures in real time for hundreds of enrolled students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Closed captions can be projected onto lecture hall screens via **Presentation Translator.**

What Are Institutions' Overall Strengths and Challenges?

On a scale from 1-4, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

| Statement | Rating |
|---|---|
| Education leadership encourages staff proactivity and initiative, expecting bottom-up innovations rather than execution of top-down decisions. | ~3.8 |
| Education staff are encouraged to partner within their own unit and across the institution both vertically and horizontally. | ~3.9 |
| Education staff roles and functions may vary and are not strictly governed by job descriptions. | ~3.6 |
| Education staff members are empowered to take risks and make decisions autonomously, acting with speed and agility. | ~3.7 |

Scale: 1.0 – 2.0 – 3.0 – 4.0

Q: Please rate how much the following statements describe your institution's culture and agility.
N = 509; Source: AI Higher Education Survey, IDC, November 2019
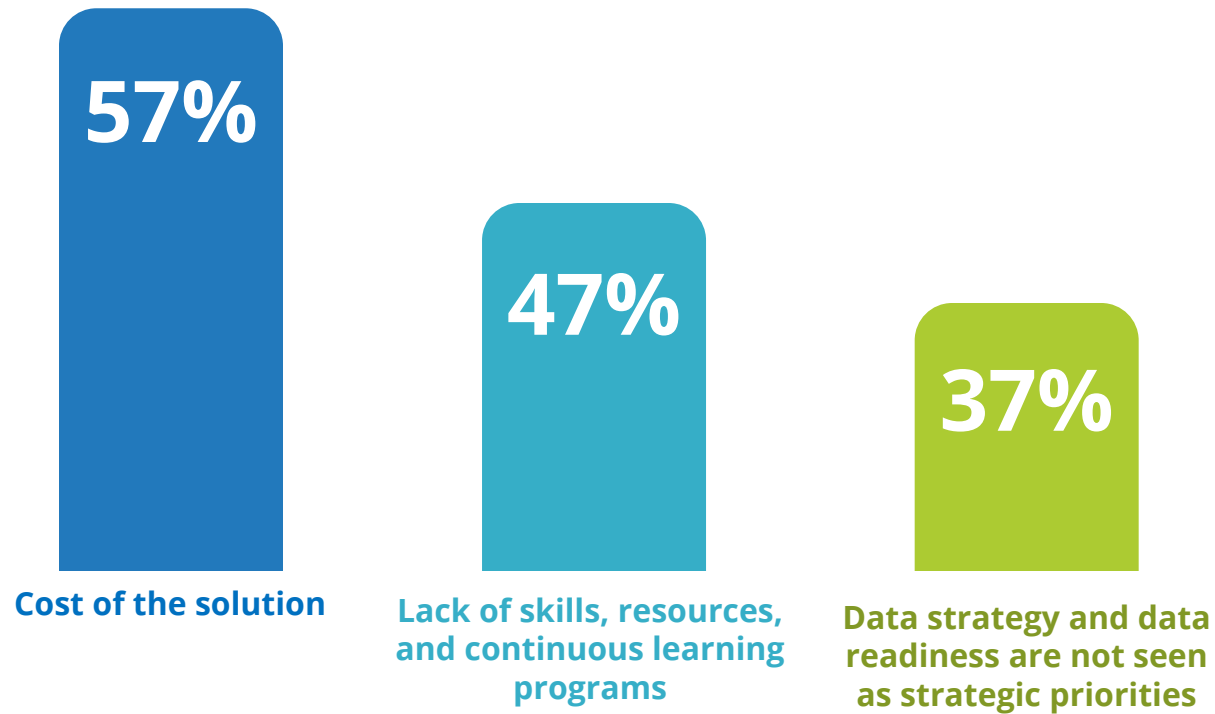
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# Top AI Adoption Challenges for Education

*Cost, skills, and data*

Solution cost and lack of skills are top challenges impacting the adoption of AI-enabled solutions, while lack of a data strategy shows that many institutions aren't clear on what's needed to execute.

**57%**

**Cost of the solution**

**47%**

**Lack of skills, resources, and continuous learning programs**

**37%**

**Data strategy and data readiness are not seen as strategic priorities**

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# Conclusion

*AI will help transform every step of the education journey. The time to act is now!*

## INSTITUTION 🏛

### Improving student outcomes and institutional standings

- ✓ Attracting the brightest students and creating industry-ready graduates
- ✓ Enabling the workforce of the future (new skill sets and lifelong learning)
- ✓ Engaging and/or competing with MOOCs and professional education programs
- ✓ Managing loans, sponsor or beneficiary funds through grants management
- ✓ Improving accessibility and inclusion

### Optimizing campus administrative & operational efficiencies

- ✓ Innovating for smart campus operations
- ✓ Enabling digital ID and data security
- ✓ Supporting federated research clouds
- ✓ Developing staffs' (academic, teaching, or administrative) digital competencies

## STUDENT 🎓

### Enhancing personalized learning

- ✓ Digital teacher-to-parent and teacher-to-student portals/ applications for "out-of-classroom" interactions
- ✓ Personalized learning
- ✓ Flipped classrooms and peer learning
- ✓ Next-generation virtual classrooms
- ✓ AR/VR for blended learning

# How Can Microsoft Help?

# Microsoft is at the forefront of AI for accessibility

Accessible, affordable technology

Skills and continuous learning

Partnership for long-term AI strategy

# Message from the sponsor

**To learn more about Microsoft's offerings, select one of the options below:**

❖ The AI Business School is Microsoft's starting point for guidance to understand AI and build workable short- and long-term strategies.

❖ Faculty and teachers can use Microsoft Teams for an inclusive classroom.

❖ Level the playing field with powerful accessibility features in Windows 10 and Office 365.

❖ Get inclusive classroom training and explore free learning tools.

❖ Use the Microsoft Power Platform to build apps, bots, and solutions today.

❖ Microsoft provides a number of learning paths to develop skills on the Power Platform.

❖ Visit Microsoft AI Innovation to learn more about Microsoft's AI and ML offerings.

Microsoft