

THE PATHIFY MAGAZINE

Collegium

FALL 2026
VOLUME #11

ONE FRONT DOOR, ALL THE ANSWERS

How the AI Agent moves past legacy chatbots

GROUNDED, GOVERNED, READY

Governance, budgets and building AI higher ed trusts



/01

FALL ISSUE | #11

Photo Credit: Unsplash

CONTENT

INNOVATION

07 **Budgeting Through Uncertainty**
Pathify's CFO on spending without losing sight of the mission

13 **When Your Cabinet Asks About AI, What Do You Hand Them?**
Four questions every campus should ask its AI vendors

PROOF

05 **By the Numbers**

11 **Chasing the Holy Grail**
MIT Sloan moves from chatbot to enterprise AI Agent with Pathify

17 **When the University Fits the Student**
Streamlining student access to services and support at Swinburne University of Technology

21 **970 Hours**
Alabama A&M turns AI Agent conversations into staff hours saved

VOICES

03 **Faces & Places**

23 **Cook's Corner**

27 **Pathify's Product Roadmap**

29 **Brain Games**

31 **The Final Word**
Musings from Matt Hammond, Pathify's Chief Revenue Officer



EDITOR'S LETTER

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Picture the first week of a new semester: financial aid forms due, a class schedule to confirm and a login for the library delivered in an email you already deleted. Now imagine each of those living on a different site, with a different password, none of them talking to each other. This daily reality followed me through my community college experience.

People probably don't build link farms on purpose. Systems sprawl this way — one login bolted onto the next, year after year. And none of this reflected the school I attended. My professors cared, the financial-aid office helped when I needed it, and I fought my way through it with the goal of transferring. The technology simply lagged behind. And what administrators need to understand is that you can no longer deliver this kind of tech experience to students and expect them to have a great overall experience. I'm proof.

I transferred to the University of Denver (loyal Pathify customer) and I noticed the difference before I even set foot on campus. Applying to DU felt simpler than anything I'd used at my previous school. Once I enrolled, this still held true. I found what I needed faster. The platform looked less cluttered — no wall of dense text crammed onto every screen — and the headaches I used to get from staring at a barrage of pages stopped. No more opening 80 tabs just to get through registration. I spent more time on my actual coursework instead of hunting for how to turn in homework.

Students deserve institutions built to serve them, paired with technology keeping pace instead of slowing them down — not just the ones who land at a school with the resources to fix it. Budgets vary. Staffing varies. Legacy systems linger for reasons far outside a student's control. But that same student sitting at a laptop at midnight doesn't experience any of those reasons. They experience four logins, or one. A cluttered platform, or a clear one. Extra tabs, or none. Every institution serving students today owes them something that works, not something to work around.

Libby Evans
Editor in Chief

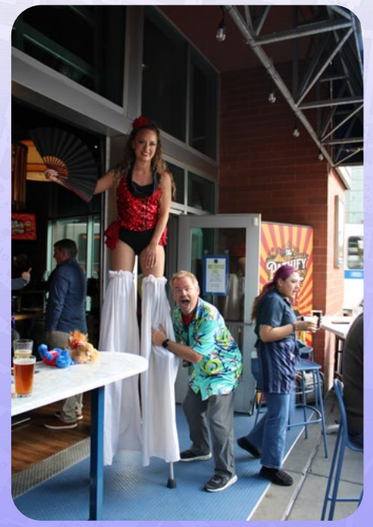
03 FACES & **PLACES**





































Proof

05 BY THE NUMBERS

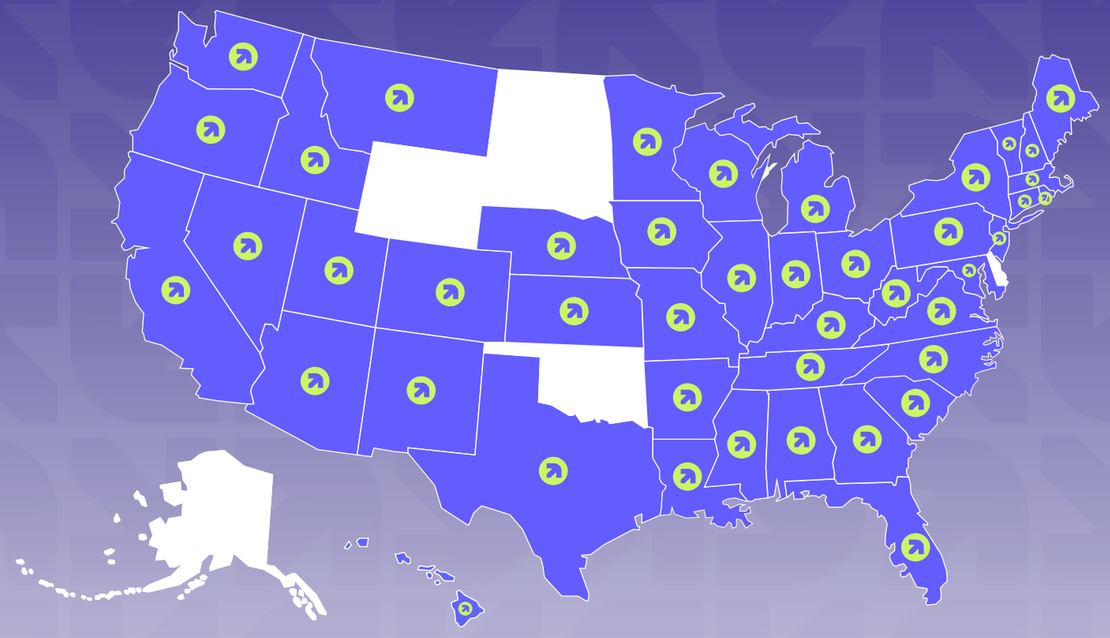
From large, public systems to smaller, private campuses, Pathify supports:

314 CUSTOMERS

44 U.S. STATES

6 COUNTRIES/ TERRITORIES

AUSTRALIA
CANADA
DENMARK
GRENADA
UNITED STATES
PUERTO RICO



RECORD-BREAKING NUMBERS

500K
More unique users visited the Hub by mid-August 2026 than by mid-August 2025.

1.6M/44M
Unique Hub visitors/ total visits in August 2026 — the highest-traffic month in Pathify history.

2.65M
Unique Hub visitors year-to-date.

THE AI SURGE CALLS...

AI USAGE ACROSS CAMPUS

95% of students report using AI in at least one way

68% call AI skills essential to their future, but only 48% feel their institution helps them build those skills

Source: HEPI Student Generative AI Survey, 2026

PATHIFY'S AI AGENT ANSWERS.

AI AGENT — GROWING FAST

516%
Growth in AI Agent users in 2026

456%
Growth in AI Agent messages in 2026

146K+
Messages exchanged with the AI Agent in 2026

The AI Agent keeps expanding across campus — see what's next on page 27.

STUDENTS FEEL THE CONNECTION GAP...

ONLY 28% used their institution's community app to communicate with other students

64% wanted their institution to make it easier to communicate with other students

65% wanted easier ways to find out about groups and clubs

Pathify's 2025 Student Digital Experience Survey. Surveyed students attend institutions who don't yet use Pathify.

ENTER PATHIFY COMMUNITIES.

Institutions without Pathify still feel this gap. Institutions with Pathify Communities close it — check out 2026 so far:

150
Institutions running Communities

204K+
People who participated in Communities — up 32.9% from 2024

20K+
Communities events held — up 35.4% from 2024

07

Innovation

BUDGETING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF THE MISSION



Photo Credit: Unsplash

Across higher ed, institutions navigate enrollment uncertainty, rising operating costs and greater scrutiny of spending. Simultaneously, students still expect responsive support, modern technology and a connected experience.

Leaders must handle two difficult imperatives at once... respond to immediate financial pressure while continuing to invest in institutional long-term health amid fierce competition.

This environment raises a difficult question: How do institutions exercise financial discipline without weakening the student experience?

Decisions protecting the current budget create higher costs later. Deferring investments, leaving inefficient processes unchanged or refusing to consider anything new may improve the short-term result but risk making the institution less efficient, less competitive and less able to serve students over time.

Fixed Budgets, Flexible Decisions
A traditional annual budget creates the impression financial planning ends once leadership approves the numbers. In reality, approval should begin an ongoing process of allocating resources to their highest-value uses.

A budget reflects the priorities and information available at a point in time. It should not become a reason to preserve every existing cost or reject every new idea until the next cycle.

Holding every budget line in place may feel disciplined on paper, but it introduces inefficiency into the institution's cost base. True financial discipline differs from inaction. It requires deciding which initiatives continue, which stop, and where investment will reduce future costs or improve outcomes.

Not Every Cost Creates Equal Value
When pressure increases, instinct often defaults to maintaining the status quo while placing new initiatives on hold. Yet uncertainty creates an opportunity for institutions to examine failing processes and find smarter operational models.

Some spending directly supports recruitment, retention, student wellbeing or institutional efficiency. Other activities and systems may have continued for years without reassessment.

System consolidation represents a critical lever. Institutions often accumulate platforms performing overlapping functions, requiring multiple integrations and creating extra work for staff. Replacing fragmented tools with a unified Campus Experience Platform (CXP) cuts costs while elevating the student experience.

Leaders must ask: What outcome does this expenditure produce? What evidence proves its efficiency? What if we stopped doing it? Do multiple tools or teams solve the same problem?

This extends beyond simply cost-cutting. It redirects limited resources toward the areas that matter most.

The False Choice Between Technology and Restraint
Technology investments present challenges during uncertain periods. New platforms require funding, implementation effort and institutional attention — making decision deferral appear financially prudent.

Delay occasionally makes sense. But it carries real costs. Institutions must also account for the cost of fragmented systems, manual work, poor communication, and student frustration. If employees spend hours reconciling information across different platforms, or students struggle locating essential resources, the institution already pays a heavy price.

Doing nothing protects this year's budget while allowing those hidden costs to grow.

The core question shifts away from, "Can we afford to invest in this technology?" to "What expense do we sustain by continuing without it?"

A well-considered tech investment improves an important outcome, reduces an existing cost or creates the capacity to do both.

Using AI to Expand Capacity
AI should be assessed through the same practical lens. It delivers maximum value in higher ed not through novelty or staff replacement, but through capacity expansion.

Staff spend significant time answering routine questions, directing students to resources and searching disconnected systems for information. An integrated AI agent resolves common questions at any time, guides students toward relevant resources and allows staff to focus on situations requiring judgment, empathy or personal intervention.

This creates value on both sides of the budget: students receive faster support, while institutions reduce repetitive administrative work and make better use of existing teams.

The Cost of Standing Still
Financial discipline and a strong student experience should not be treated as competing objectives.

In an environment where many institutions face enrollment pressure — the student experience matters more than ever. Competition for prospective students intensifies daily while expectations rise.

Institutions compete not only on academic programs and reputation, but on operational ease — how quickly students find information, access support and build campus connections.

Standing still is not a neutral choice. Without continuous improvement in the student experience, an institution risks falling behind those investing in better service, stronger engagement and more connected digital experiences. Investment in the way the broader community experiences technology represents a comparatively low cost but high impact opportunity for a massive improvement in student sentiment — and success.

Institutions must actively manage resources rather than simply freeze them — stopping low-value activity, consolidating unnecessary systems and protecting existing investments to improve outcomes and lower the long-term cost to serve.

The strongest institutions will make deliberate choices about where to reduce spending, where to improve and where continued investment safeguards their mission.

Uncertainty does not have to produce paralysis. With clear priorities and a disciplined focus on value, it may become a catalyst for better decisions.

JAMES
MCCUBBIN



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James McCubbin is the Co-Founder and Chief Financial Officer of Pathify, where he oversees the company's financial strategy. He works closely with higher education leaders navigating questions of investment, efficiency and long-term sustainability. He believes the best financial decisions balance discipline with a clear understanding of the people and outcomes an organization exists to support.

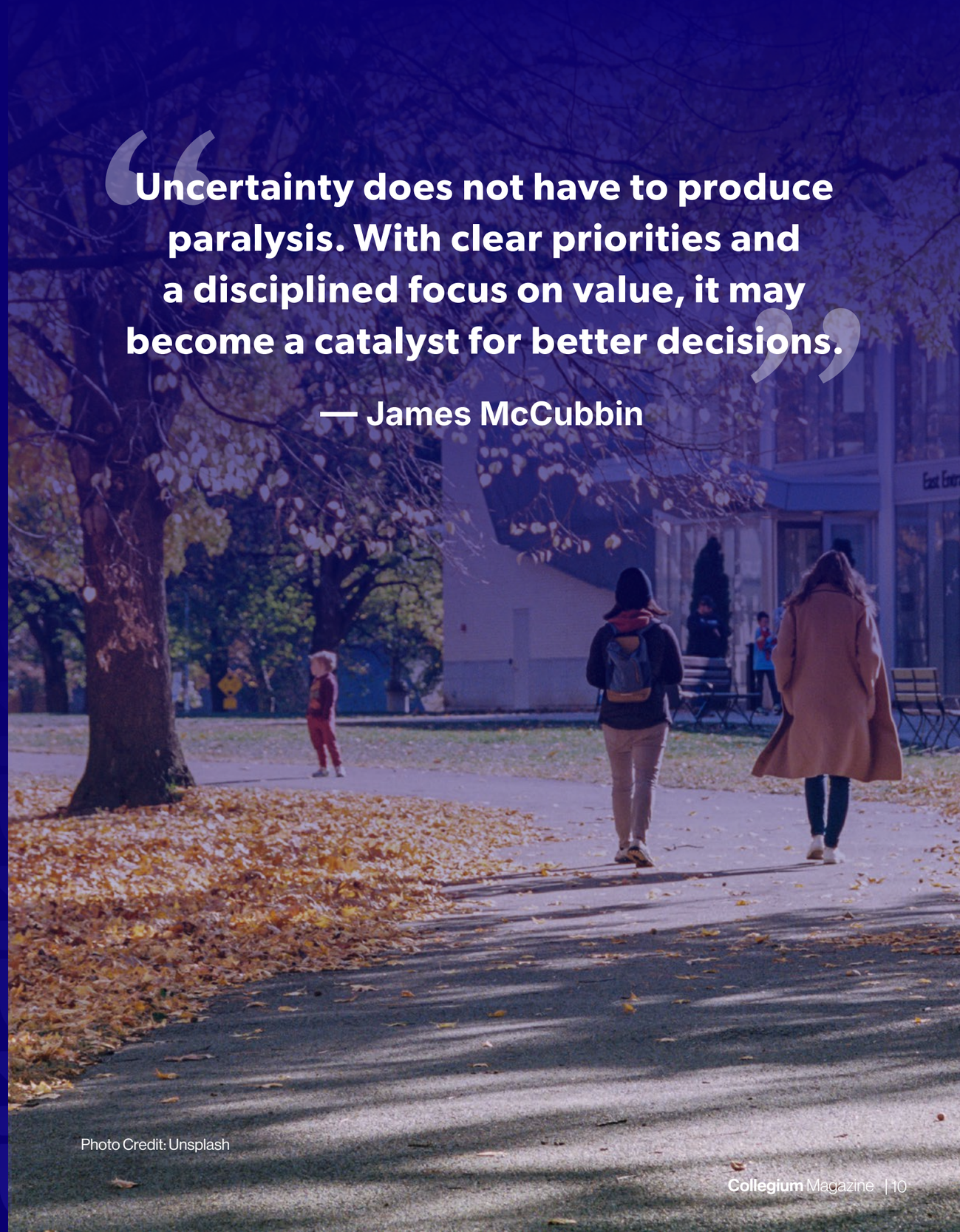


Photo Credit: Unsplash

Proof

CHASING THE HOLY GRAIL

MIT SLOAN MOVES FROM CHATBOT TO ENTERPRISE AI AGENT WITH PATHIFY

MIT Sloan School of Management operates one of higher ed's most demanding technology environments, where accuracy and governance leave little room for error. Rajiv Shridhar, Managing Director and Deputy CIO of Sloan Technology Services, holds every tool his team runs to that bar. So when Pathify's AI Agent first arrived as a modest question-and-answer chatbot, Shridhar watched more than he committed — and across the past year, he saw it grow into something far larger.

A Chatbot Grows Up
The change happened release by release. A refreshed interface turned a utilitarian bot into an experience students reached for. Deeper administrative controls gave the people who manage the agent genuine command over its configuration, content sources and guardrails. And a widening analytics layer turned everyday conversations into institutional insight — showing Shridhar's team what the community asked, where the agent came up short and where staff attention counted most. The modest bot Shridhar first met now carried the weight of an enterprise AI Agent, built for the accuracy and control higher ed demands.

The maturation settled something for Shridhar. A chatbot worth trusting today pointed to an AI Agent worth betting on tomorrow — and four capabilities on Pathify's short-term roadmap drew his attention: Agent Studio, Agent Orchestration, Agent Actions, and the Pathify Integration Agent.

Agent Studio and Personalized Student Experience
The maturation opened doors across campus, and Shridhar's student-facing support teams arrived with a pointed request: an agent that preferred course-registration information (dates, deadlines, exceptions) whenever registration questions came in — yet never lost its grip on everything else the institution needed it to know.

Agent Studio, premiering at the 2026 EDUCAUSE Annual Conference, answers that request directly. The no-code environment lets non-technical staff assemble dedicated agents (like an Event Registration Agent) — each with their own name, scope and instructions — then test and approve before a single student sees them.

"A lot of different things around campus include 'registration' — there's course registration, registration for events, registering a club, and more. The Registrar's Office wants an Agent that prioritizes course registration dates and other important registration information without forgetting everything else about the institution," Shridhar said. "Agent Studio fills a clear and common use case like this, seamlessly."

Agent Orchestration
Agent Studio solves one office's problem. MIT Sloan's ambition runs wider. Across the school, teams build agents and bots in a range of tools, each one sharp inside its own domain and blind to the rest. Agent Orchestration closes that gap. A single lead agent reads a student's intent and routes the conversation to the right specialist, then carries the context forward so no one repeats themselves. The student meets a single front door, and the institution keeps its many rooms behind it.

"We build agents for all sorts of work at MIT Sloan, plenty of them running business processes that never touch a student," Shridhar said. "The ones that shape the student experience are what matter here — Agent Orchestration lets us connect any of those downstream bots to the Pathify AI Agent, so a student works in one interface and never has to know how many agents are answering behind the scenes."

Agent Actions
Answers alone stop short of what students actually need. Agent Actions closes the loop, letting a student finish the task inside the same conversation it surfaced. The design draws a careful line between thinking and doing: the model chooses the right tool, then a deterministic, human-confirmed workflow carries out the step the same way every time — submitting an assignment, booking an advisor appointment, registering for an event — with the accuracy of a person clicking through each step and the speed of a chat. "We really focus on user experience, and on helping students efficiently get to what they want or need to do, so that they can spend more time doing that work. Give students one place to stay up-to-date, find information and get things done downstream, and we start talking about a holy grail student experience," Shridhar said.

The Pathify Integration Agent
Every capability so far rests on connection — an agent proves only as useful as the systems it reaches. The Pathify Integration Agent widens that reach. It knows Flow, Pathify's integration middleware, inside and out — its connectors, its transformations and the integration patterns institutions lean on most — and it puts that fluency to work building the custom connectors and tool calls extending both the AI Agent and the Pathify Campus Experience Platform (CXP). Teams work with it directly inside Flow, or call it from the coding assistant they already favor, whether Claude Code, Cursor or another. For a team like Shridhar's, already building in Flow, the promise lands as time saved and game-changing potential for the student experience.

"Adding an agent that works in the tools my team already uses and knows Flow top-to-bottom is a force-multiplier," Shridhar said. "Not only does it mean my team will save huge amounts of time, it means more integrations with the Agent and the CXP, and ultimately, a simpler, more powerful campus experience."

A Partnership, Not a Purchase
A year in, Shridhar frames the story less as a purchase and more as a partnership. With support from MIT Sloan, Pathify reshaped a simple chatbot into an enterprise Agent for a modern campus, with room still to grow.

"Rajiv pushed me and the team not just to build for what higher ed demands, but where it's going," said Chase Williams, CEO and Co-Founder of Pathify. "Partners like MIT Sloan make the roadmap sharper and the future of the campus experience brighter."



Photo Credit: MIT Sloan School of Management

About MIT Sloan School of Management

Student Headcount: ~1,300 students

Institution Type: Private graduate school of management

Location: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Tech Stack: SAP, Oracle, Ellucian Banner, Canvas, Microsoft 365

Technology Consolidated into Pathify: SharePoint student portal, CampusGroups, ServiceNow

MIT Sloan School of Management develops principled, innovative leaders who improve the world and generates ideas that advance management practice. Located along the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Sloan serves approximately 1,300 students across 11 degree and non-degree programs. Learn more at mitsloan.mit.edu.

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

GARY
LAFEVER



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary LaFever is General Counsel of Pathify, where he leads the company's legal, privacy and AI governance work. He works closely with higher education leaders navigating questions of student data, vendor accountability and AI oversight. He believes the strongest governance is the kind an institution can show rather than assert, in documentation specific enough to answer the question actually being asked.



WHEN YOUR CABINET ASKS ABOUT AI, WHAT DO YOU HAND THEM?

A year ago, the AI conversation on campus revolved around whether to allow it. That conversation is over. A harder one has replaced it: when someone asks you to account for an AI system running on your campus, what do you actually hand them?

The person asking varies — your general counsel, an auditor, an accreditor, a state regulator, a reporter, a parent, or eventually opposing counsel. The question rarely does: Who approved this, on what basis and how do you know it operates the way you described?

The Compliance Clock

The policy deadlines approach. SUNY requires state-operated campuses to publish or update AI policies by December 31, 2026 and address seven specific elements. New York's policy for state entities requires human oversight for AI-assisted decisions affecting the public and points agencies to the NIST AI Risk Management Framework. Colorado's new law, effective January 1, 2027, focuses on whether a system materially influences a consequential decision about a person.

The encouraging part: higher education already knows how to ask many of the right questions. FERPA trained institutions to ask who gets access to student records, under what authority, where the data goes, who remains responsible, and what evidence must be retained. AI governance does not mirror FERPA exactly, but the compliance instinct draws on the same instincts.

Most institutions respond by writing a policy. Necessary, but not sufficient. A policy states intent. The scrutiny comes later, and it lands on execution — who implemented the intent, and what evidence demonstrates it. Words alone settle nothing.

The Vendor Gap

The gap usually sits in the vendor layer. Campus AI almost never arrives labeled as an AI project. It arrives inside the SIS, the LMS, the CRM, the portal, or the chatbot on the admissions page. Your institutional policy governs your people. The behavior under scrutiny often belongs to software you purchased. Vendor assurance does not close that gap. "We take AI safety seriously" is just a promise, not a record. Ask each AI function the four questions FERPA already taught you to ask: what does it do, what data does it touch, who decides, and what documentation does the institution get to keep?

The Four Questions

1. *Which specific functions use AI, and what does each one do?* Do not ask only, "Is this product AI?" The answer now comes back yes almost every time. A single product often contains several AI functions with genuinely different risk profiles. Answering questions from published campus content differs entirely from flagging a student conversation for staff follow-up. A vendor who describes only the product as a whole skipped the analysis.

2. *Does any function materially influence a consequential decision about a person, and if so, who makes the final decision?* This parallels the FERPA question about who remains responsible. In those settings, meaningful human review becomes the load-bearing safeguard. The reviewer needs access to the underlying records, authority to disagree with the system and where the stakes warrant it — an auditable record of the review. Approval by default fails as oversight.

3. *Where does the data go?* Institutions know this FERPA question. Ask whether the vendor transmits student record values to an outside model provider. If it does, ask what triggers that transmission, and under which legal framework. A vendor cannot simply declare itself covered by the school official exception — the institution must establish that the FERPA requirements for that relationship are satisfied. If a vendor struggles to describe its data flow in plain language, ask whether anyone ever mapped it.

4. *What do I get to keep?* Ask for artifacts, not assurances: a per-feature record of what your institution enabled, a mapping to the framework your policy references, and a written data-flow description. A vendor promise alone demonstrates neither FERPA compliance nor AI governance. The vendor should supply the factual inputs your institution needs to assess and govern the system.

Evidence Moves Faster

Nothing here argues for slowing down — closer to the opposite. Institutions with evidence move faster, because the review that stalls an AI deployment for two semesters usually started with no documentation and required manufacturing.

Budgets run tight, and the pressure to show AI progress runs high. In that environment, instinct says buy the demo. Buy the documentation with it. Ask for it before you sign, when you still have leverage, rather than in the middle of an inquiry when you do not.

These questions led Pathify to develop its Acceptable AI Policy. It identifies AI function by function, specifies who decides, and documents where data goes. A cabinet may not use the language of FERPA or NIST, but it will want the same answer: what the system does, what information it uses, who remains accountable, and what evidence the institution produces when asked.

From FERPA Questions to AI Governance Questions

The compliance instinct is familiar. The technology is new.

Familiar FERPA questions	Parallel AI governance questions
Who gets access to student information, and for what purpose?	Which specific functions use AI, what does each one do, and what student data does it touch?
Who remains responsible for decisions affecting the student?	Does any AI function materially influence a consequential decision, and who makes the final decision?
Is student data disclosed outside the institution, and on what basis?	Where does the data go, including to outside model providers or subprocessors, and under what authority and controls?
What records do we keep to demonstrate compliance?	What artifacts can the institution retain: feature inventory, framework mapping, data-flow description, and oversight record?

AI governance builds on familiar compliance habits:
Know the function, know the data flow, know who decides, and keep the record.

Illustrative governance questions aligned with FERPA, the NIST AI Risk Management Framework, New York's AI oversight approach, and Colorado's consequential-decision framework.

Photo Credit: Pathify

> **A policy states intent. The scrutiny comes later, and it lands on execution — who implemented the intent, and what evidence demonstrates it. Words alone settle nothing.**
>
> **— Gary LaFever**

Photo Credit: Unsplash

Proof

WHEN THE UNIVERSITY FITS THE STUDENT

Students arrived at Swinburne University of Technology expecting a fluid digital experience — instead, they hit a tangle of disconnected platforms and logins standing between them and their first class. This structural fragmentation stalled the university's bold *Ad Astra* strategic roadmap — a blueprint positioning Swinburne as a digital-first, technology-driven and fundamentally student-centered experience. Swinburne leaders, including Laura-Anne Bull, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Education, Experience and Employability, envisioned a frictionless, 24/7 support ecosystem to guide users through critical academic milestones with genuine personal touch. This framework specifically prioritized targeted resource distribution for first-in-family learners navigating the high-stakes first year.



Decoding the Fragmented Digital Maze

Swinburne managed a digital ecosystem fracturing user attention long before partnering with Pathify. Bull characterized the early environment as "at best very fragmented," noting how the institution failed to make resource location simple for either staff or students. In 2024, the student guide forced individuals to navigate 72 separate links and a barrage of QR codes just to locate core campus resources. Because separate teams managed distinct webpage formats and a standalone app on isolated timelines, the university environment frequently sent out conflicting, out-of-sync updates.

This fragmentation exposed an Experience Gap — the distance between campus services and a student's actual awareness of them. Finding basic help required learning unfamiliar academic vocabulary or guessing internal organizational hierarchies. Bull highlighted the barriers institutions inadvertently construct, explaining, "Universities assume students understand what we're talking about, but it's almost like we talk in a different language." In many cases, students needed to decipher these internal structures just to discover a service.

Institutional survey data from 2025 quantified this disconnect. Students who utilized university services reported high satisfaction, yet overall awareness of those support tools sat as low as 40%.

For several specialized services, awareness dropped even lower — leaving the majority of the student body completely blind to the institutional network built to support them. Swinburne recognized continuing down this path risked isolating the learners they wanted to retain. Resolving this gap required a complete structural reset — starting not with an administrative mandate, but with the students themselves.

The Pathify Solution

Swinburne built its digital transformation around the learners themselves. The university developed a comprehensive student experience framework over a five-month period, directly engaging close to 4,000 students. Instead of merely consulting users on software options, administrators tasked participants with defining institutional outcomes and describing how they wanted to feel during their academic journey. This research revealed a deep sense of belonging directly sustaining student engagement. Students wanted an intuitive landscape offering personalized assistance and immediate resource access whenever and wherever they needed help. Pathify met this explicit need, providing a single front door to unify the campus experience.

Branded locally as "My Swinburne," the new platform centralized the university's scattered digital properties into a cohesive Campus Experience Hub.

This shift freed Swinburne to retire its standalone student app entirely — eliminating redundant software maintenance cycles while drastically lowering production costs for the student guide.

When asked about tool consolidation, Bull relayed, "Pathify ultimately replaced a patchwork of search engines, mobile apps and a portal students used to have to navigate... One platform, one login and everything in one place. What more could you ask for?"

This unified architecture triggered an immediate overhaul of institutional communications. Previously, the university blasted unsegmented mass emails to the entire student body. Pathify replaced this noisy approach with targeted, profile-based notifications. Staff now segmented critical updates by specific student cohorts — ensuring individuals encountered only highly relevant messages while reducing inbox clutter.

This consolidation paved the way for an entirely new student communication strategy.

"We mapped all the communications we send to students from pre-arrival all the way through to the end of week 6. It covered all the walls in one room. 52 email communications before week 3. And we wondered why they weren't reading them! Pathify reduced the volume and ensured students only receive what's relevant to them," said Bull.

This relentless volume meant students regularly chose not to read the incoming messages. Swinburne overhauled its student newsletter and shifted distribution directly into the platform. Staff abandoned campus email blasts in favor of targeted announcements, ensuring individuals encountered only updates matching their specific academic profile.

Realizing the Measurable Return

The unified platform serves as the primary delivery mechanism for the university's student support ambition, connecting users with vital services in a fraction of the time it used to take. Pathify provides the connective tissue for a 24/7, AI-driven support ecosystem pushing engagement and retention by building a genuine sense of belonging. Through a single entry point, students instantly access wellbeing support through TalkCampus, writing assistance via Studiosity, peer-to-peer mentoring with Vygo, and academic guidance from Swinburne's own digital assistant. This seamless layout protects students from dropping out during critical first-year milestones.

Swinburne also bypassed standard rollout hurdles by bringing students directly into the platform's build phase. Learners road-tested early iterations, flagging what worked and what needed improvement before the official launch. This co-design strategy paid off immediately with high usage rates and exceptionally strong adoption across the community. While the university awaits detailed data from its upcoming SWIN Survey, early feedback delivers overwhelmingly positive reviews.

I don't think there are any other ways to go about the student-centered experience. The Campus Experience Platform is really a game changer, enabling us to do so.

— Laura-Anne Bull

Photo Credits: Swinburne University

Bull urged the higher ed sector to abandon the search for a single, all-encompassing lifecycle system, pointing instead to Pathify's capacity to serve as an open, flexible integration layer:

"Universities really need to start listening to their students. And students are telling us we've made it too difficult to access what they need, when they need it. What Pathify provides is a single pane of glass or front door to plug in the best platforms for the experience you're trying to deliver. Whether it's a platform providing mentoring, medical appointments, or timetabling, Pathify pulls it all together in one place. I don't think there are any other ways to go about the student-centered experience. The Campus Experience Platform is really a game changer, enabling us to do so."

On the back end, consolidation delivered clear financial value by eliminating redundant systems and lowering platform operating costs. Although an 18-month roadmap will generate precise downstream savings metrics regarding staff time and service uptake, the baseline elimination of duplicate tools already proves the platform's value.

Flipping the Higher Ed Paradigm

Swinburne's digital transformation signals a broader, necessary shift across the global higher education landscape. For decades, institutions operated under the assumption students must bend their lives to accommodate inflexible university structures. By implementing a unified digital front-door, Swinburne inverted this framework, proving modern institutions must adapt to the operational realities of modern learners.

Technology serves as the primary mechanism to achieve this institutional flexibility. Rather than forcing students to log into isolated systems to manage different facets of their academic journey, the single pane of glass model meets users exactly where they are. This strategy anchors Swinburne's Ad Astra strategic roadmap, establishing a scalable blueprint for a digital-first, technology-driven and thoroughly student-centered ecosystem.

Bull challenged the traditional higher education sector to confront its legacy operational structures directly, "The way we deliver education remains largely unchanged from 50 or 100 years ago, but the world has changed so much it is almost unrecognizable. Technology is just a tool to help institutions deliver the flexibility to fit into learners' lives, as opposed to them fitting into ours. Students no longer just fit into our world and a centuries-old model. The way we truly deliver education sits on the cusp of something quite different. We must actually deliver on flexibility."

By putting the student at the center of the higher ed journey, Swinburne eliminated the systemic noise historically stalling student engagement. The partnership with Pathify provides more than just a software consolidation — it establishes an open infrastructure where the university plugs in best-in-class support services to deliver an individualized, frictionless experience right across the student lifecycle.



Photo Credits: Swinburne University



About Swinburne University of Technology

Student Headcount: ~ 66,000 students

Institution Type: Public research university

Location: Melbourne, Australia

Tech Stack: TechnologyOne StudentOne, Canvas, Microsoft 365

Technology Consolidated into Pathify: Homegrown portal, third-party mobile app

Swinburne University of Technology operates as a world-class, innovation-led institution based in Melbourne, Australia. Founded in 1908, the university consistently ranks among the top 250 universities globally, cultivating a reputation for high-impact research, technological disruption and deep industry integration.
Learn more at swinburne.edu.au.

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Proof

970 HOURS

ALABAMA A&M TURNS AI AGENT CONVERSATIONS INTO STAFF HOURS SAVED

Alabama A&M University already counted the savings. Over a year ago, Ryan Adkins, Cloud Application Administrator at AAMU, set out to solve a specific frustration: students wasting time hunting for basic information scattered across systems. "We didn't want users wasting time hunting down information," Adkins said in our earlier story on AAMU's consolidation. "We wanted to deliver it in a personalized, timely way." Working alongside AAMU's CIO, Adkins evaluated Ellucian Experience and Unifyed before landing on Pathify, consolidating a legacy mobile app, student portal, employee intranet, and campus-wide chatbot into a single platform and saving the university $25,000 a year — 18% of its IT budget. A year into running Pathify's AI Agent, Adkins found a second return sitting in the conversation logs: time.

From Chatbot to Enterprise Agent

AAMU folded its legacy campus-wide chatbot into Pathify as part of the same consolidation push. "Pathify's AI Agent matched — and in some areas exceeded — the performance and functionality of our previous provider," Adkins said. "Much like the Campus Experience Hub, the Agent enhances user experiences while seamlessly integrating into our Pathify ecosystem. It's one less vendor to manage." The savings tracked a shift AAMU watched unfold over the same year: the chatbot matured into an enterprise Agent solution completing real work, not just answering questions. AAMU expects the newer Agent's time savings to compound further as it takes on more of the routine load.

A Second Return

AAMU's AI Agent logged 23,272 conversations with students and prospects over the past year. Assuming a 50% deflection rate — a conversation the Agent resolved without a staff member stepping in — and five minutes saved per deflection, the math produced 970 working hours reclaimed, just over six working months of staff time no longer spent answering routine questions.

A Number that Keeps on Growing

Adkins does not expect 970 hours to stand as next year's ceiling. As the Agent takes on more real work — completing tasks instead of pointing users toward an answer — the hour count grows without adding a single new conversation to the log.

Adkins runs every system decision through the same filter. "I don't believe in paying extra for duplicated services or systems," Adkins quipped. "Every time we consolidate costs, it's a win for the end user's experience and the team managing the tech stack."

The same filter shaped how AAMU thinks about every tool on campus, the Agent included. "Everything lives in one place," Adkins said. "It provides a simpler, more efficient tech stack, less vendor management and a smoother campus experience prioritizing what matters most — the student."

What Comes Next

As Alabama A&M watched Pathify's AI mature from a standard chatbot into an enterprise Agent solution, the technology transformed daily operations far beyond routine question-answering. Unifying reclaimed staff hours with earlier cost consolidation shifted the university's long-term digital strategy. "When you tie the time savings together with the ROI we already get from the systems and costs we've consolidated using Pathify, it becomes even more of a no-brainer for our university," Adkins said. By eliminating software redundancies while automating administrative tasks, AAMU created a scalable model — positioning campus operations to absorb future growth without increasing staff workload.



About Alabama A&M University

Student Headcount: ~7,800 students

Institution Type: HBCU and 1890 land-grant institution

Location: Huntsville, Alabama

Tech Stack: Ellucian Banner, Blackboard, Google Workspace

Technology Consolidated into Pathify: Ellucian portal, third-party mobile app, student engagement platform, chatbot

Alabama A&M University (AAMU) is a historic, community-focused institution located in Huntsville, Alabama. Reflecting on its heritage as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and a traditional 1890 land-grant institution, AAMU functions as a teaching, research and public service institution, including extension. Founded in 1875 by a former slave, Dr. William Hooper Councill, AAMU is a dynamic and progressive institution with a strong commitment to academic excellence. The university provides more than 60 undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs and concentrations, a diverse international faculty, 50+ student organizations and an extensive alumni network, many of whom are change agents on the local, national and international stage. Learn more at aamu.edu.

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

Photo Credit: Alabama A&M University

COOK'S CORNER

By Libby Evans



Some desserts you slice. Some you scoop. This one you smash. Under each crisp little meringue dome hides a stash of raspberry coulis, lemon curd and whipped cream — and the only way in is a confident whack with a spoon. Dessert and stress relief, together at last.

Fair warning: pavlova rewards preparation and punishes shortcuts. Get the conditions right — exact measurements, a spotless bowl, a low and patient oven — and four humble ingredients puff into something crisp on the outside and marshmallowy in the middle. Wing it, and you pull a sad, sticky puddle out of the oven.

This issue talks plenty about AI, so here comes the kitchen version. AI works a lot like meringue: simple ingredients, exact conditions and most of the work finished long before anyone takes a bite. The two share a favorite trick, too — personalization. No one-size-fits-all centerpiece here: every guest gets a dome of their own, filled just for them.

While the Product team perfects the digital recipes (turn to page 27 for the Product Roadmap), Cook's Corner sticks to the analog kind: hands, whisks, spoons, and a little patience. Bake the shells ahead, fill them at the last minute, then hand out the spoons and stand back.

Photo Credits: Pathify

Pavlova Bombs

Crisp meringue shells hiding raspberry coulis, lemon curd and cream — a make-ahead showstopper you get to smash.

Prep Time: 45 minutes
Cook Time: 1 hour 50 minutes
Cooling Time: 4 hours or overnight
Yield: 5 Pavlova Bombs

Ingredients:

For the Pavlova Shells
1/3 cup egg whites (from 3 large eggs — measure them, egg sizes vary)
2/3 cup caster sugar (do not reduce — the shell needs every gram to bake crisp)
1¼ tsp cornstarch
½ tsp white vinegar

For the Raspberry Coulis
8 oz raspberries, fresh or frozen
2½ tbsp caster sugar
½ tsp lemon juice

For the Lemon Curd
3 tbsp caster sugar
1 tbsp lemon zest
¼ cup lemon juice
3 egg yolks (rescued from the shells — zero waste, zero orphaned yolks)
3½ tbsp unsalted butter, cubed
Pinch of salt

For the Whipped Cream
1 cup heavy cream, cold
1½ tbsp caster sugar
½ tsp vanilla extract

For Garnish
20 raspberries
1½ tbsp pistachios, finely chopped
5 mint sprigs
Powdered sugar, for dusting

Assembly and Cooking:

Separate and Measure: Separate the eggs while cold — the whites release cleaner. Measure exactly 1/3 cup of whites and let them reach room temperature, about 15 minutes. Reserve three yolks for the curd.

Whip the Meringue: In a scrupulously clean, dry bowl, beat the whites on high for 1 minute until soft peaks form. With the mixer running, add the sugar gradually over 30 seconds, then keep beating for 5 minutes until the meringue turns thick and glossy and no sugar grit remains when rubbed between two fingers. Add the vinegar and cornstarch and beat 30 seconds more.

Pipe and Bake: Transfer to a piping bag with a 1.5cm opening and pipe 5 tall domes onto a parchment-lined tray. Bake for 1½ hours at 225°F (110°C) until the bases feel dry to the touch.

Cool Slowly — Trust the Process: Turn the oven off and leave the domes inside for 3 hours or overnight. No peeking — a sudden temperature drop cracks the shells.

Make the Raspberry Coulis: Combine the raspberries, sugar and lemon juice in a saucepan over medium heat. Once simmering, mash with a fork for about 3 minutes, then blend until smooth and press through a fine sieve to banish the seeds. Cool completely.

Make the Lemon Curd: Rub the sugar and zest together with your fingertips to wake up the lemon oils. Whisk in a saucepan with the yolks, lemon juice, butter and salt over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens to a custard — about 3 to 4 minutes after the first bubble. Strain, press plastic wrap onto the surface and chill for at least 1 hour.

Whip the Cream: Beat the cream, sugar and vanilla to firm peaks.

Load the Fillings: Transfer the coulis, curd and cream to three piping bags. Using a small sharp knife, cut a 1cm hole in the base of each dome — the base, not the top, holds more structure — then hollow out a little space inside with a chopstick.

Fill and Seal: Pipe in about 1½ teaspoons of coulis, follow with 2 to 2½ teaspoons of curd, then plug the hole with whipped cream. Resist overfilling — too much liquid breaks the delicate shell.

Plate and Detonate: Set each dome on a bed of whipped cream, scatter raspberries and pistachios, tuck in a mint sprig and dust with powdered sugar. Serve immediately — hand everyone a spoon and encourage smashing.

Shell cracked? Congratulations — you invented Eton Mess. Layer the pieces in a glass with the fillings and call it intentional.

The Classic Champagne Cocktail

The dessert explodes — the drink stays elegant. Though look closely: this one hides its own tiny bomb, a bitters-soaked sugar cube fizzing away at the bottom of the flute.


The Classic Champagne Cocktail

Total Time: 3 minutes

Servings: 1 cocktail (repeat liberally)

Ingredients:

1 sugar cube

2 to 3 dashes Angostura bitters

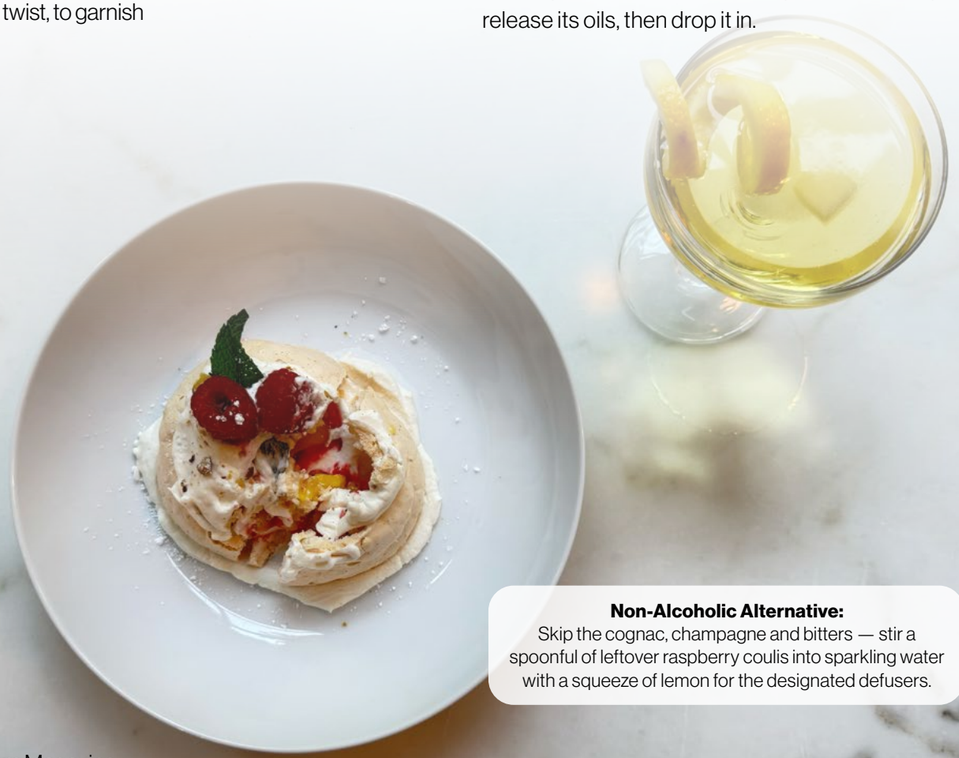
¾ oz cognac (optional — but traditional)

4 to 5 oz chilled brut champagne or dry sparkling wine

1 lemon twist, to garnish

Assembly:

Soak the sugar cube with the bitters. Pour the cognac (if using) into a chilled flute, then drop in the cube and watch it fizz on arrival. Tilt the glass and pour the champagne slowly — rush it and the foam stages its own explosion. Twist the lemon peel over the top to release its oils, then drop it in.



Non-Alcoholic Alternative:
Skip the cognac, champagne and bitters — stir a spoonful of leftover raspberry coulis into sparkling water with a squeeze of lemon for the designated defusers.

Photo Credits: Pathify

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LOOKING AHEAD

PATHIFY'S PRODUCT ROADMAP

Campuses keep adding doors — new bots, new systems, new places to look. Pathify organizes them into just one.

Pathify's short-term roadmap puts the AI Agent to work: taking action instead of just answering, and directing traffic when a dozen specialized bots each claim a piece of the conversation. Behind the scenes, admins gain an enterprise Reporting Center, a page editor built for full-width design, and an Integration Agent that turns plain-English requests into working Flow integrations.

Take a look at what's planned for the months ahead.

Agent Actions

The campus community gets stuck between knowing what to do and getting it done. They might find the right form, the right portal, the right deadline — then bounce between systems to finish, or give up somewhere in the middle.

Pathify sets out to solve this decades-old higher ed problem. Submit an assignment, book an advisor appointment or top up a campus card — right from the conversation, with human-in-the-loop confirmation built in.

No hunting for the right tool, no relearning each system, no digital runaround.

Agent Orchestration

Agents keep multiplying across campus — one for admissions, another for financial aid, a chatbot on the IT help desk, with more arriving every semester.

For the campus community, that means a new maze: which bot answers which question, and starting over every time they switch.

Nobody should need to know which system or bot holds the answer. With Agent Orchestration, institutions turn Pathify's AI Agent into a lead agent identifying when a specialized downstream bot belongs in the conversation and routes to it — so everyone chats in one interface and the experience stays simple.

Reporting Center

Admins know the platform holds the answer. Finding it means clicking through tab after tab, relearning each one and stitching the exports together by hand.

The Reporting Center gives all platform reporting a single, structured home. Start with an overview of the metrics across every domain, drill into consistent, filterable reports, or build a custom one — announcement engagement by role, say — without writing a query. Save it, share it or schedule it to arrive by email. Everything exports cleanly to CSV, and every existing analytics view carries over.

An instant health check on top, the details one click below.

Advanced Page Editor

Some pages need a paragraph and a link. Others need to look like a landing page — full-width, media-rich, built to a theme. Until now, the Simple editor served both.

The Advanced Page Editor gives admins a second choice at page creation. It uses the same sections-and-elements building blocks as the Dashboard Creator — text, image, icon, video, iFrame and stacked layouts — with theme editing, device previews, light and dark mode, and undo/redo. Drafts stay separate from the live page, version history restores any past publish, and an updated Pages list adds filters and bulk actions for growing libraries.

Simple when simple works. Advanced when it doesn't.

Integration Agent

Build integrations by describing them.

Instead of writing code, describe an integration in plain English — the systems to connect, the data to move, the result you need — and the Integration Agent builds it on Flow.

Run it directly in Flow or call it from the coding assistant your team already works in.

What once required a Flow specialist now takes a conversation and saves a ton of time.

BRAIN GAMES

PATHIFY PUZZLE CHALLENGE

Scan or click for answer key

SPOT THE KOALA

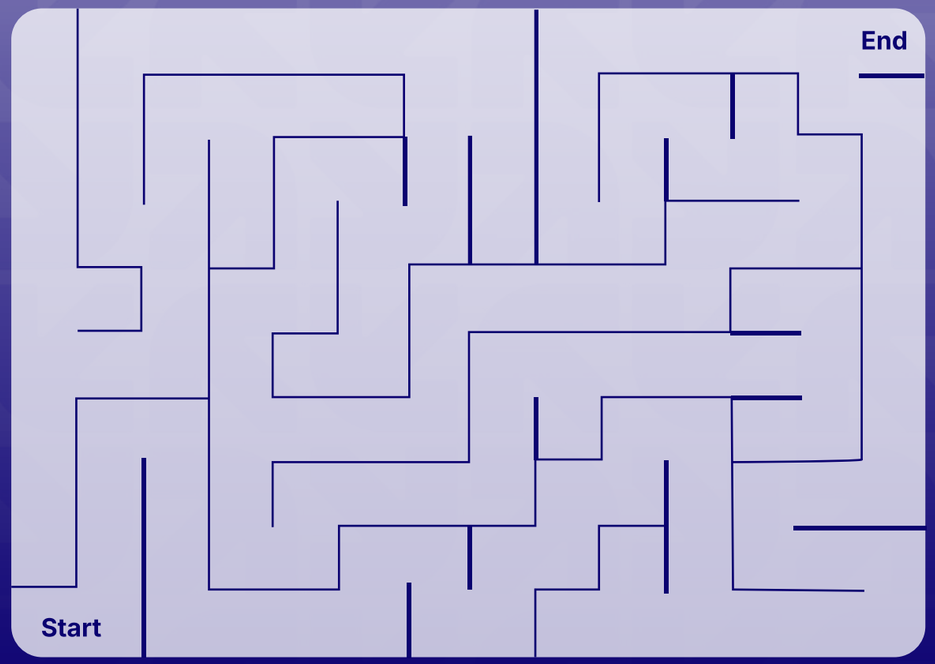
Five koalas escaped Swinburne's story and scattered through this issue. Track down all five, then note the page where each one hides.



KOALA 1	KOALA 2	KOALA 3	KOALA 4	KOALA 5
Page ___	Page ___	Page ___	Page ___	Page ___

MAZE

Trace a path from Start to End without crossing a wall.



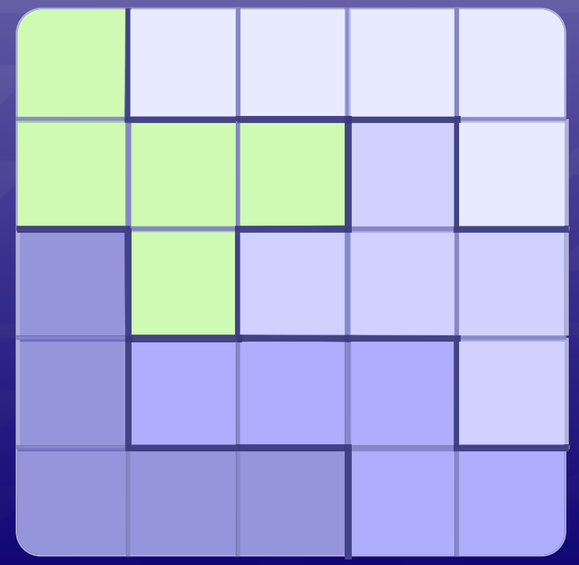
SUDOKU

Fill each row, column and square with the numbers 1-9, without a repeat in any row, column or square.

					9	6		8
	7	9	8	6	4	2		3
6						5		
		3				4		
	2					1		6
4	5		6	1			7	
7	1			8			6	
3		6			2			9
	9					7		

STAR BATTLE

Place one star in each row, column and shaded region. Keep stars apart, no two touching, not even diagonally. Hint: mark an X in squares that rule out a star.



THE FINAL WORD

By Matt Hammond

"Delay occasionally makes sense. But it carries real costs."

What an insanely simple, true and scary statement made way back toward the beginning of this issue by Pathify co-founder and CFO James McCubbin. I wouldn't say the CRO (sales, marketing, customer success, loves to throw lavish parties as frequently as possible for Pathify customers) and CFO (spreadsheets, financial statements, risk management, hates looking at the receipts from the same lavish parties) always sing from the same sheet of music... but it turns out Jimmy and I couldn't be more aligned on the chilling effect errors of omission currently deliver in higher ed.

Let's play out a theoretical (and sadly common) scenario:

An IT leader at The University of Parthy hears frequently from students a major success blocker remains the impossible complexity of the frankensuite of systems needed to get through each day. This leader grabs a few others from IT, evaluates solutions, identifes one as the objective best, then builds a business case that persuasively outlines why U of P should purchase and implement. The leader engages relevant peers and departments, and people broadly agree this would be a major step forward...then one person says, "we're all kind of hanging on for dear life right now — let's punt on this till next Semester." Next Semester becomes next fiscal year — and Parthy continues to disappoint and confuse students, further exacerbating enrollment issues.

Right now some of the most expensive decisions institutions make are the ones they refuse to make.

And guess what — don't feel too bad if you're looking back on this year and starting to worry about that thing you decided to wait on. It's human nature. (Or nurture. Or both. Need to think about that).

Let's continue the theoretical (and common) scenario:

"You know what, if we punt till next Semester we'll be able to gather more information...be more certain," says the VP of MarComs. "We've lived with things the way they are for a while now — what's one more semester in the grand scheme of Parthy," says the VP of Student Affairs. "Things may be clearer during our next planning cycle, and let's see what happens with enrollment — maybe the budget will be less uncertain," says the VP of Finance.

This discourse seems perfectly reasonable in the moment because it feels non-binding. When you leave the door open to change in the future, it feels like you're just a small step away from making the right decision that brings real improvement. You feel pretty good while avoiding the fear attached to buying.

Making the decision to move forward? That doesn't just feel binding...it often truly feels as if you're handcuffing yourself to all the bad things that could happen if even the smallest thing goes wrong. This, despite the fact a broad consensus of very smart and talented people seriously evaluated and identified an objectively better path forward based on a financially rooted business case.

And The University of Parthy continues to pay the price of the problem they set out to solve — indefinitely.

As someone who's been selling his entire professional life, I'm no stranger to helping buyers wade the tempestuous waters of indecision. What's making life increasingly challenging for buyers and sellers today though appears to impact higher ed more than any other industry. Budget constraints will always exist — but not like we're seeing today as institutions grapple with significant enrollment and image issues.

Traditional recruiting pools continue to shrink, lost revenue from decreased international enrollment creates significant shortfalls, while material tuition increases conflict with the degree ROI calculus driving most prospects' decisions.

The real challenge manifests as institutions choose to do nothing because of uncertainty. Choosing not to invest in technology that improves the student experience becomes a self-defeating prophecy. "Not yet" *must* be recognized as a decision with serious potential for financial risk.

Photo Credit: Unsplash

And one of the most important factors enrollment teams must leverage to break the pattern.

"Sounds great — the CRO of a cool not-so-little software company that just so happens to sell an app that completely revolutionizes the way the entire community experiences technology tells me I should always buy. I can picture a couple uses for this magazine I probably shouldn't verbalize," says the VP of Enrollment.

Hold on! Give me a couple more minutes — I'll get to the point.

I'm not saying every buying decision should be a yes. I'm saying it's worth reframing buying decisions to truly consider whether the expected cost of waiting outweighs the expected cost of moving forward. How will waiting impact enrollment? How will moving forward impact enrollment? If we recruit a few less students and melt a few more next semester — how will that compare to the cost of buying something that could avoid that? (Or even move those numbers in the opposite direction).

The reason for indecision today involves two factors:

Potential buyers who believe a purchase will result in significant improvement remain fearful even the smallest chance of failure could be catastrophic to their futures.

And buyers fail to break through the increasingly common institutional default of "this is a great idea, but let's come back to it when things settle down a bit".

When things get tough, organizations tend to adopt a posture of *certainty* in order to make decisions. This often creates a never-ending, circular phenomenon that leads to further analysis, which extends decision making, which creates more uncertainty, which leads to more analysis... and on and on. It's a fascinating paradox in organizational management — institution or business. Because doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result...well we all know the answer to that Jeopardy clue.

Before postponing a buying decision — ask these questions. What does the problem we're trying to solve cost us each month? Will it get worse if we delay another year? What additional information *would actually change the fact we think this is a great step forward?*

If the answers to these questions truly show "not yet" presents lower financial risk — take that piece of software and punt it off into the ether. If the opposite's true — get with the seller and craft a plan that makes the "not yet" stamp disappear.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask more of ed tech companies. If guarantees remove risk and fear — ask for them. If funky, unorthodox commercials cut through indecision factors — ask for them. If project management resources seem thin — ask for them. This is not all on you. Higher ed tech companies that don't get creative to address your fear and help your institution take on a bit of risk (especially in this ridiculous climate) are definitely not long for this world.

All buying decisions come with a cost. All non-decisions come with a cost. The former reduces the budget. The latter may result in fewer conversions, increased melt, disengaged alumni, and another semester (or decade) of "not yet".

"Delay occasionally makes sense. But it carries real costs."

Well said Jim...let's hold off on building next year's T&E budget.

P.S. Standing ovation to our new Editor in Chief, Libby Evans. We're all blown away by how you wrestled a magazine, new website — and a whole lot of other content to the ground the past few months. You made us better. Thank you.



Matt Hammond
Chief Revenue Officer, Pathify

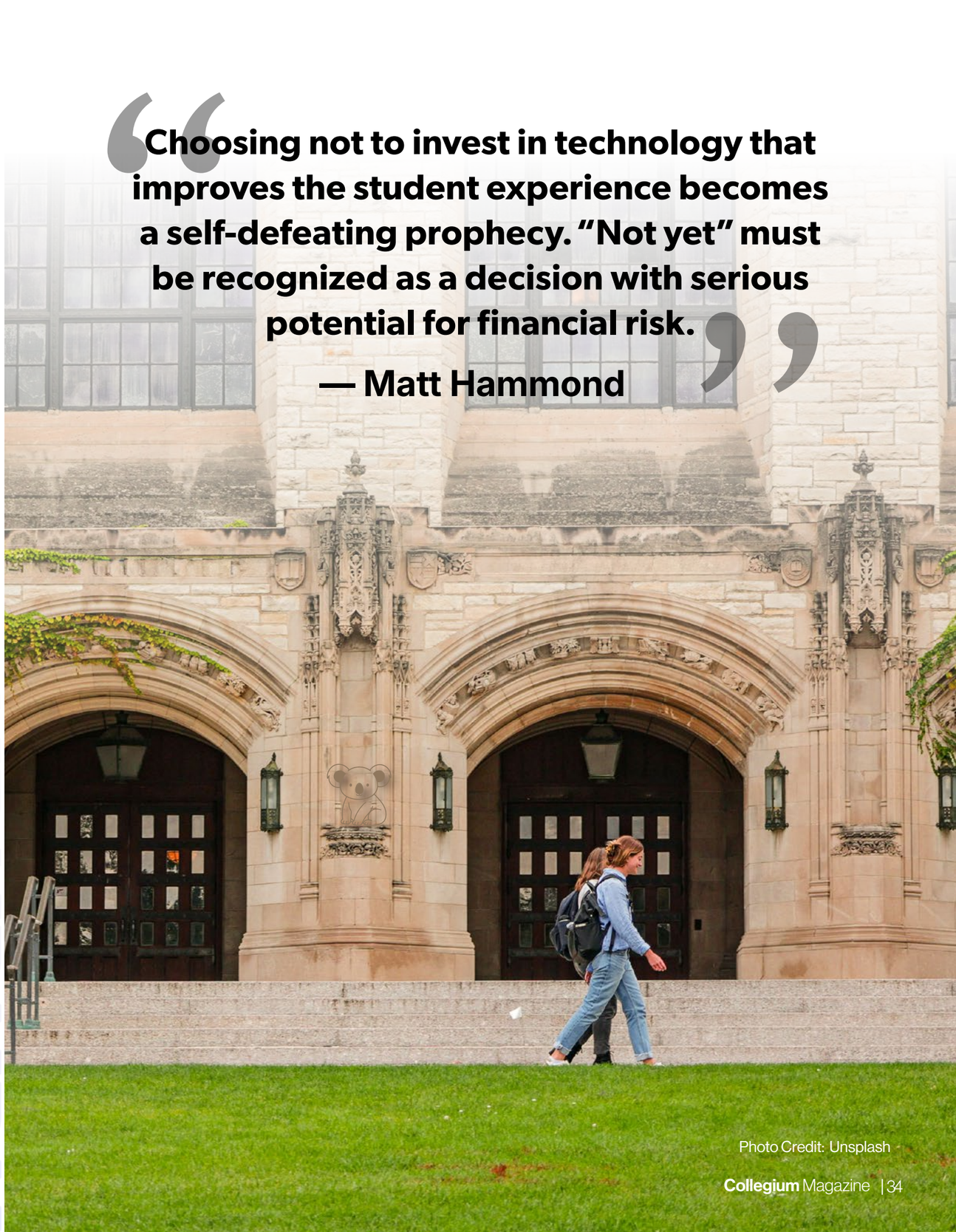


Photo Credit: Unsplash



THE PATHIFY MAGAZINE

Collegium

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