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ResearchReport

Workforce Development Programs in Connecticut Addressing Artificial Intelligence (AI) Skills

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Issue

You asked about workforce development programs in Connecticut specifically addressing worker skills with artificial intelligence (AI).

Summary

While any workforce development programs may include AI skills training, we identified several programs aimed at developing AI skills. These include the state's technology talent pipeline; Tech Talent Accelerator 3.0; the AI Academy; specific AI trainings at UConn, Southern Connecticut State University, and other higher education institutions; and state investments in training with a nonprofit organization and in the Hartford Innovation Center.

In addition, legislation this past session requires two new studies related to the impact of AI and technology on the workforce.

Technology Talent and Innovation Fund Advisory Committee

Housed within the Department of Economic and Community Development, this committee may, among other things, partner with higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations to develop programs to expand the state's technology talent pipeline, including in the fields of AI and quantum computing. By July 1, 2027, it must partner with Connecticut public and private higher education institutions and other training providers to develop programs in the AI field, including in

areas such as prompt engineering (the process of guiding a generative AI system to generate a desired output), AI marketing for small businesses, and AI for small business operations (CGS § 32-7p, as amended by PA 26-15, § 24).

Tech Talent Accelerator

Earlier this year, the governor announced Tech Talent Accelerator 3.0 (TTA 3.0) to expand AI education and workforce training by funding AI skills programs at seven public and private colleges and universities in the state. It will also support industry AI programs. TTA 3.0 has four priorities: (1) reskilling and upskilling the technology workforce for AI, (2) aligning post-secondary training programs with industry's AI needs, (3) expanding work-integrated learning opportunities, and (4) creating pathways to AI skills for secondary students.

AI Academy

Charter Oak State College, through a partnership with Google, currently provides an AI Academy at no cost to state residents to develop their skills with AI.

A new law requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to establish a "Connecticut AI Academy" to offer online courses on AI. It must do this by December 31, 2026, on behalf of Charter Oak State College and in consultation with the Department of Labor (DOL), the State Board of Education, workforce investment boards, employers, and in-state higher education institutions. The academy must:

1. curate and offer online courses on AI and its responsible use;
2. promote digital literacy;
3. prepare students for careers in fields involving AI;
4. offer courses and resources directed at people between ages 13 and 20;
5. offer courses and resources that prepare small businesses and nonprofit organizations to use AI to improve marketing and management efficiency;
6. develop courses on AI that DOL and workforce investment boards may incorporate into workforce training programs;
7. in consultation with relevant stakeholders (including teachers' unions), develop or offer courses and videos for elementary and high school teachers and administrators on the appropriate use of AI in classrooms, how to use AI, and instructing students to use AI;

8. enable people providing free or discounted public Internet access to distribute information and provide mentorship on AI, the academy, and how the public can get free or discounted devices capable of accessing the Internet and using AI;

9. develop a course to develop durable skills based on the Business Higher Education Forum's guidance on essential skills for the AI economy; and

10. collaborate with various industry partners to offer coursework for workers on AI-related concepts and programs to educate state residents on AI-related concepts, with a special focus on small and medium businesses.

The new law requires BOR, in consultation with Charter Oak State College, to develop certificates and badges to be awarded to people who successfully complete courses the academy offers (PA 26-15, § 17).

UConn AI Program for Engineers

Earlier this year, a UConn professor received a grant to develop a "cross-disciplinary, industry-inspired AI workflow agent short course that fits into existing engineering degree pathways." It will include a cross-disciplinary micro-credential for engineers seeking to develop their skills with AI (see this article and the program website).

Other AI Courses Offered by Higher Education Institutions

Other courses offered by state colleges and universities include (1) an online "AI for Everyone" course from UConn's Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills and (2) a number of courses as part Southern Connecticut State University's AI Skills Accelerator Training.

Other State Investments

The governor recently announced that the state would partner with the nonprofit RAISE US to build a "workforce infrastructure that supports and trains workers to thrive in the modern AI economy."

The state is also investing in the Hartford Innovation Center as part of the Innovation Clusters Program. The center will, among other things, help workers "find pathways into better jobs and a place to build a professional network for the future."

New Requirements for Studies and Plans

AI's Impact on State Workforce and Strategy

A new law requires UConn's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) to conduct a study to understand and track AI's impact on the state's workforce and develop a comprehensive strategy to address the impact. The study must:

1. involve research partners with expertise in AI, economics, workforce development, and related fields;
2. assess (a) available methods to track AI-associated layoffs and job displacements, (b) AI's impact on entry-level employment and women and underrepresented populations in the state's workforce, and (c) the data elements DOL and other relevant state agencies collect that may be used to understand and track AI's impact on the state's workforce; and
3. include scenario planning across a range of potential AI adoption and impact levels.

The comprehensive strategy must include recommendations on:

1. ways the state can (a) support the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data needed to understand and track AI's impact on the state's workforce and (b) track AI-associated layoffs and job displacements;
2. additional data elements for DOL and other relevant state agencies to collect to understand and track AI's impact on the state's workforce;
3. a framework for recurring analyses to understand, track, and report on AI's impact on the state's workforce; and
4. changes in state policies and programs (such as workforce training and reskilling programs) to mitigate adverse AI associated employment impacts in the state.

IMRP must submit the study's results and the comprehensive strategy to the General Law Committee by January 1, 2027 (PA 26-15, § 29).

Plan to Ensure That Technological Advancements Serve to Increase Worker Capability

By January 1, 2027, a new law requires the Office of Policy and Management secretary, in consultation with the revenue services and DOL commissioners and chief workforce officer, to submit a plan to the General Assembly to ensure that technological advancements serve to increase worker capability, instead of making it obsolete, and that productivity gains lead to a more skilled workforce. This plan must develop:

1. a mechanism to reinvest capital when business output and labor costs become materially decoupled;

2. steps the state can actively take to minimize this decoupling by fostering collaborative productivity models that increase output without a corresponding decline in the workforce; and

3. a plan for a workforce and productivity gap contribution from employers, which must include (a) an annual surcharge on employers with a productivity gap and (b) depositing surcharge funds in a workforce and economic stability account to be used for grants to employers to acquire and train staff on generative or assistive AI technologies that show a measurable increase in per worker output without reducing the number of workers (PA 26-68, § 274, as amended by PA 26-76, § 59).

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