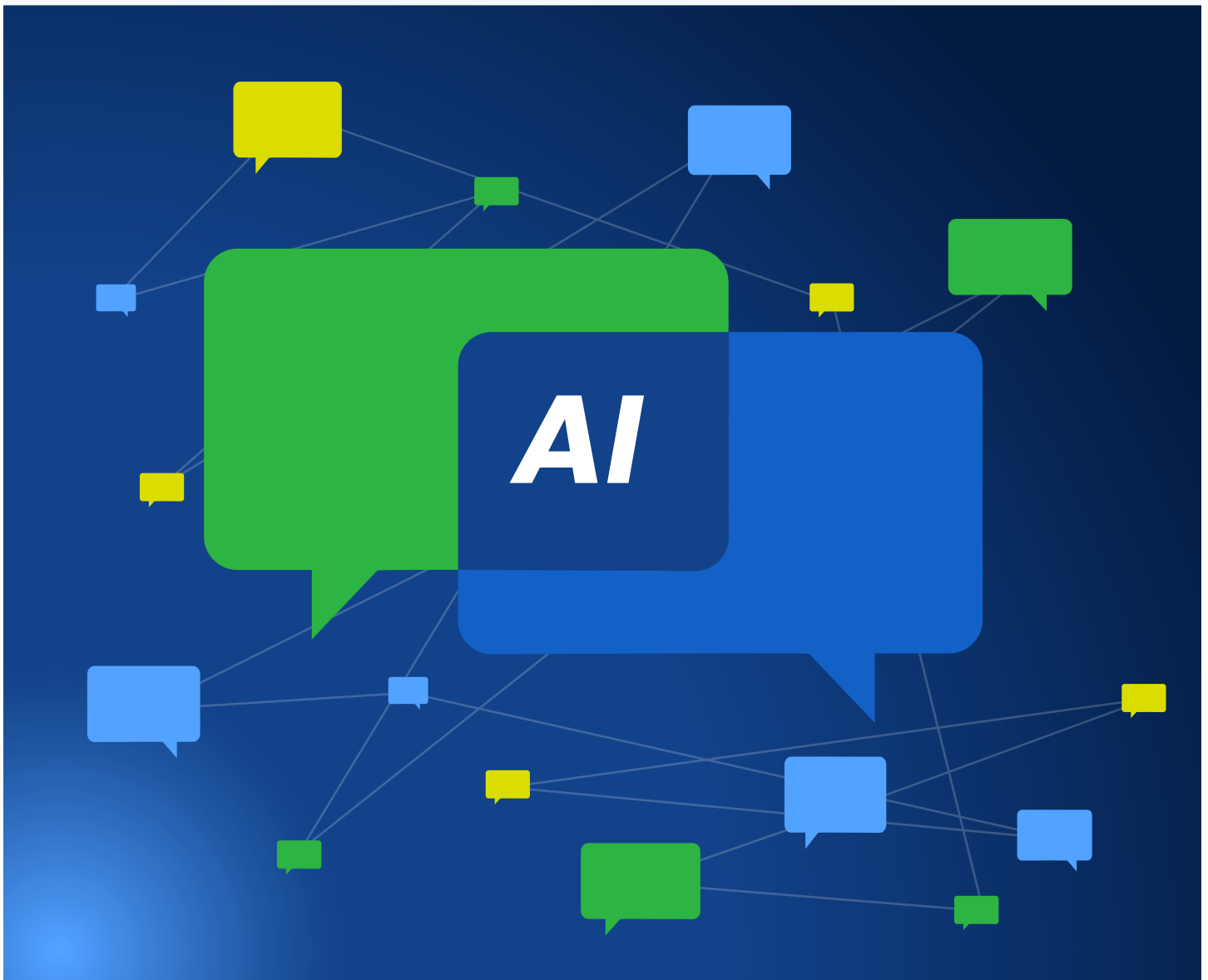# Anthology
power of together

Ethical AI in Action

Trends, insights, and success stories from Anthology's groundbreaking AI roadshow

AI

Working Together to Seize the AI Opportunity

At Anthology, we began actively discussing ethical AI use in education with our global institution partners from as early as 2018. This spirit of collaboration has continued to guide us in recent years, as the arrival of generative AI at scale has magnified both the opportunity and potential risks that AI adoption brings for higher education. Input from partner institutions has played a central role in the development of **Anthology's Trustworthy AI Approach**, which outlines key principles that we apply for our work in this space, and institutional leaders have worked directly with our product development teams to ensure that all use of AI in our technologies is appropriate for education. This led to the release of Anthology® Blackboard's AI Design Assistant in 2023—providing first-to-market generative functionality to inspire instructors' course and assessment creation—which has since **revolutionized the learning experience at hundreds of great institutions all around the world**.

The conversation around responsible AI use in education is only just beginning, however, and we remain convinced that collaboration is essential to forge an innovative and ethical path forward. With this in our minds, and the Power of Together™ on our t-shirts, in October 2024, we embarked on the *Ethical AI in Action World Tour*. This 25-city extravaganza brought thousands of education professionals from around the globe together to discuss this crucial topic. From Santiago to Sydney, Madrid to Manila, and Leeds to Lima, we gathered at some of the world's most storied venues of higher learning to review the development of AI technologies, discuss broad principles for ethical AI frameworks, and dissect how AI can advance pedagogical best practices and improve student outcomes.

This brief paper is both a reflection on and a celebration of the *Ethical AI in Action* tour. We learned a tremendous amount from attendees, both through their participation in the event and a survey they completed afterward. This report summarizes these lessons and how they have informed our thinking about AI in Blackboard moving forward. The tour also provided a platform for institutions to share their AI success stories with their peers, and we've amalgamated a selection of these case studies here to further inspire best practices and innovation.

Forward-Looking Statement

Statements regarding our product development initiatives, including new products and future product upgrades, updates, or enhancements represent our current intentions but may be modified, delayed, or abandoned without prior notice and there is no assurance that such offering, upgrades, updates, or functionality will become available unless and until they have been made generally available to our customers.

Ethical AI in Action: Success Stories from Around the World

The *Ethical AI in Action* events provided a great platform for institutions to celebrate how they're using AI in their courses. In all corners of the globe, leading institutions are leveraging the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) and Anthology's Trustworthy AI Approach to create innovative, engaging lessons that directly impact student outcomes.

BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY

Bellevue University (US) is using Blackboard's AI Design Assistant to **streamline course development**. What was previously a 16-week instructional design cycle has been cut in half to just 8 weeks. **Read the case study**.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University of Leeds (UK) was an integral member of our AI Advisory Council, and among the first to report that the AI Design Assistant has driven **massive time savings for instructors**. This allows faculty to spend more time directly engaging with their learners. **Read the case study**.

MAPÚA MALAYAN COLLEGES MINDANAO

Mapúa Malayan Colleges Mindanao (Philippines) has used the AI Design Assistant to **slash the instructional design period for their math department** from four weeks down to four days, while ensuring that government directions for required learning competencies are strictly adhered to.

UPSTATE University of South Carolina

University of Southern Carolina Upstate (US) is using the AI Conversation tool to **build learner confidence**. Instructors set tasks that mirror those in industry, allowing learners to perfect their skills in a private environment before applying them in the real world. **Read the case study**.

UPC Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas

Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (Peru) is leveraging the AI Design Assistant's capacity to create **test question banks**, creating **consistent and coherent assessment practices** and allowing instructors to focus on their learners.

KU LEUVEN

KU Leuven (Belgium) is integrating AI in education, focusing on governance, transparency, and instructional benefits. Blackboard's AI Design Assistant enhances course design efficiency while **ensuring data privacy, human oversight, and academic quality**.
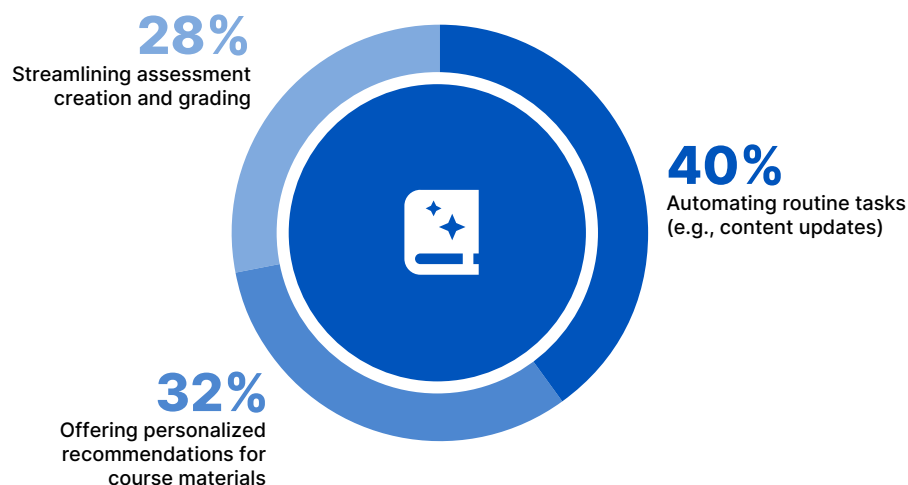
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Wichita State University (US) has noted that, as well as time savings, the AI Design Assistant is providing **inspiration to develop more engaging courses**. AI suggestions provide a spark to start new courses and assessment tasks, which the instructional designer can then use their expertise to expand and fine tune. **Read the case study**.

AI and Higher Education: Insights on Global Sentiment

As part of the event experience, more than 600 attendees of the *Ethical AI in Action World Tour* completed a brief survey on their current attitudes towards AI in education. For each of the five questions, they were asked to select what they believe is most important from a shortlist of options. The results should be viewed in this light—that an option might have received a relatively low score doesn't mean that it isn't important; rather, it just reveals that, at this moment in time, it isn't the top priority for institutions.

Here we review answers to the five questions, looking at both the global view as well as any regional nuances that emerge from the data. We complement this with insights drawn from discussions at the event to outline the current AI sentiment in the sector, then note how our ongoing development plans for Blackboard are responding to these institutional needs.

1 **Where do you see the most potential for AI to simplify and enhance course design?**

28%
Streamlining assessment
creation and grading

40%
Automating routine tasks
(e.g., content updates)

32%
Offering personalized
recommendations for
course materials

When asked about AI's potential to improve course design, "Automating routine tasks" was the option most selected by event attendees at 40%. Though "Offering personalized recommendations for course materials" and "Streamlining assessment creation and grading" ranked as lower priorities, they still received 32% and 28% of the vote, respectively, indicating that these are also areas where institutions can see potential over time.

Much of the conversation around generative AI to date has focused on efficiency. Both within education and elsewhere, there has been a lot of discussion on how formerly arduous administrative tasks can be improved with AI, and it is thus understandable that for many in higher education their priority is using technology to streamline processes. Indeed, there remains huge potential here, particularly for instructors who so often find that a large admin load reduces their time for teaching.
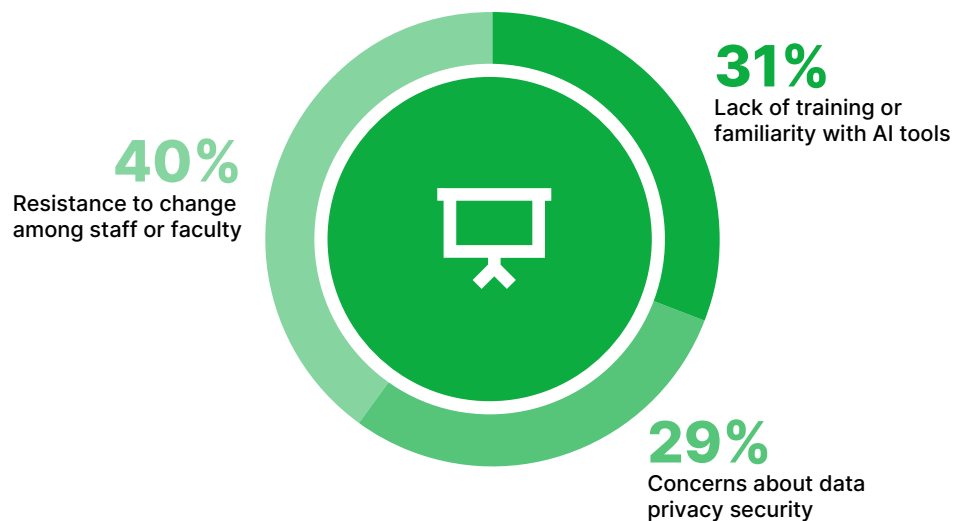
In North America, Africa, and the Middle East, "Offering personalized recommendations for course materials" emerged as the most popular option, though here again, all three options were well supported. This is an area that generated a lot

of discussions during the events, with instructors, in particular, excited about the possibility of moving from a modular course design approach to one that allows the learner to pursue an individual path that matches their competencies and objectives. We anticipate that interest in this area will grow further in the coming years as AI becomes more embedded in teaching and learning practices and the focus evolves from administrative efficiency to effectiveness.

Application in Blackboard:

- Task automation:
  - AI suggestions are coming soon to the Blackboard Content Designer to further streamline the process of creating engaging course materials, complementing the capabilities of the AI Design Assistant.

- Personalized materials:
  - In partnership with Obrizum, we're in the process of developing AI-powered adaptive learning in Blackboard—stay tuned to quarterly roadmap sessions for updates.

2 What is your biggest challenge in incorporating AI-driven tools in your teaching?

31%
Lack of training or familiarity with AI tools

40%
Resistance to change among staff or faculty

29%
Concerns about data privacy security

The biggest barrier to adopting AI remains a lack of clarity and confidence among education professionals. This was consistent across the world, though slightly lower in Africa and the Middle East. The rapid rate of change has left many in the sector, including instructors, feeling like they don't have sufficient knowledge to include AI technologies in their curriculum.

This is largely explained, in our view, by the second most popular selection, "Lack of training or familiarity with AI tools." Many institutions haven't established guidelines, training, or resources to help their staff embrace AI, which in turn has their instructors either unsure of how to best leverage AI or reluctant to do so at all. During the first half of the *Ethical AI in Action* events, we reviewed and discussed key pillars for AI policies to assist institutions that are looking to provide more clarity in this area.

There is good news here. When we initially unveiled plans for the AI Design Assistant in Blackboard in 2023, many instructors were cautious about leveraging AI for course and assessment creation. By complementing the technology with our Trustworthy AI Approach and ensuring that faculty maintain control of all outputs, this confidence has grown
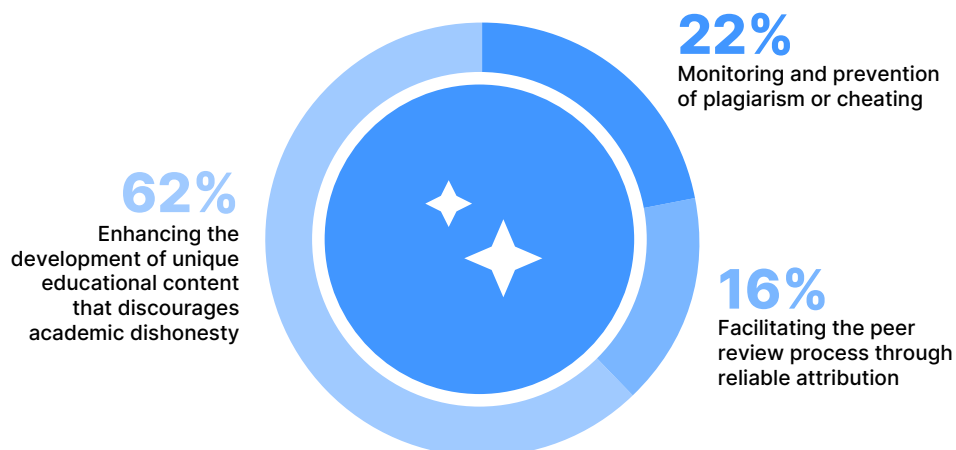
over time, and instructors are now reaping the benefits—with 96% reporting time savings and 90% saying that the AI Design Assistant provides inspiration for their classes. Institutions can take a similar approach internally and provide the training and resources necessary to bring all stakeholders along on their AI journey.

Lastly, though "Concerns about data privacy and security" polled only 29% of the vote, discussions at the live events affirmed that this is a key ethical consideration for AI adoption. At the top of institutions' concerns here is the possibility that their students' data could be used to train external data models, with many leaders asserting that they seek assurances that this isn't the case when assessing technologies that include AI.

Application in Blackboard:

- Empowering faculty:

    ◦ Our annual Digital Teaching Symposium provides thousands of instructors with practical tips for virtual classes, including considerations for using generative AI. Recordings from the November '24 event remain available for partner institutions on the **Anthology Community**.

- Promoting data privacy and security:

    ◦ With Blackboard's AI features, no institutional, instructor, or student data is used to train AI models. We employ a "closed loop" approach that secures data while extending AI capabilities.

    ◦ Anthology is committed to advancing the highest security standards and adapting to regulatory changes as they emerge. Review our latest paper on **Navigating the EU AI Act**.

3 **What role do you think ethical AI should play in developing and enforcing academic integrity policies?**

22%
Monitoring and prevention of plagiarism or cheating

62%
Enhancing the development of unique educational content that discourages academic dishonesty

16%
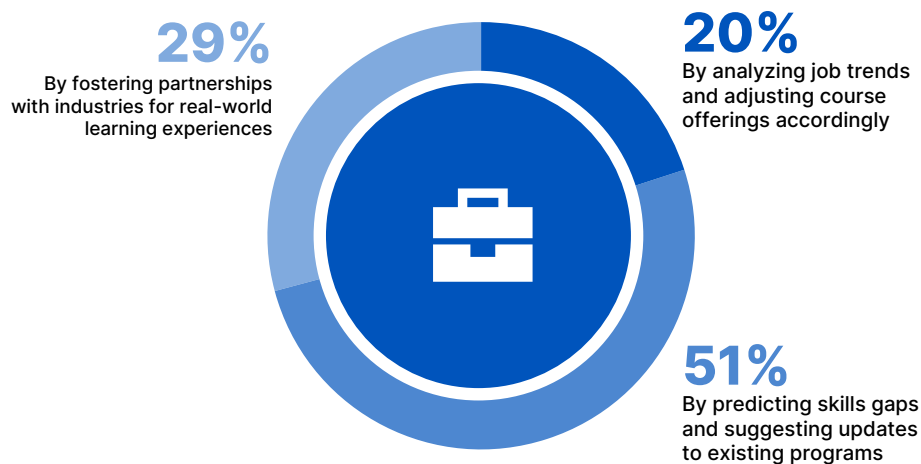Facilitating the peer review process through reliable attribution

Academic integrity and plagiarism were among the hottest discussion topics throughout the *Ethical AI in Action World Tour*. The rise of generative AI has fundamentally changed assessment processes, and many instructors attended the event in the hope of hearing from their colleagues on how they have modified their courses accordingly.

The survey result is in line with broader research, as distilled in a **detailed white paper that we've published previously**. Detecting AI plagiarism is very difficult and initial attempts to do so have proven inaccurate and often biased, causing disruption to the learning process. The more effective response to AI plagiarism, as 62% of respondents indicated, is to embrace unique assessment tasks that are harder for AI tools to replicate—a process often referred to as "authentic assessment." Institutional leaders at the event shared that they've wished to adopt authentic assessment practices for some time and that the threat of AI plagiarism has been a catalyst for positive change in this area.

Application in Blackboard:

The AI Design Assistant includes features to generate suggestions for authentic assessment tasks, such as discussions, journals, and assignments. This leverages Bloom's Taxonomy to apply technology in an effective and pedagogically sound way.

4 **How could AI-driven analytics inform and shape the future of curriculum development to better align with industry needs and future job markets?**

29%
By fostering partnerships with industries for real-world learning experiences

20%
By analyzing job trends and adjusting course offerings accordingly

51%
By predicting skills gaps and suggesting updates to existing programs

Attendees at *Ethical AI in Action* events were eager to discuss how the rise of AI can help align education with the needs of the workforce. The opportunity here is two-fold. Firstly, AI literacy itself is a valuable skill that will be essential for jobs of the future, and institutions are looking for ethical ways to build understanding around AI as part of the learning process. Secondly, AI analytics provides enhanced potential to align instruction with the professional skills that employers are seeking, improving the pipeline from education to employment and improving student motivation.

Survey results indicate that "predicting skills gaps and suggesting updates to existing programs" (51%) is the current priority for institutions in this space. Rather than a complete overhaul of the curriculum, higher education leaders are looking for opportunities to embed skills-based learning into their current courses and are intrigued by the possibility of AI to streamline this process.
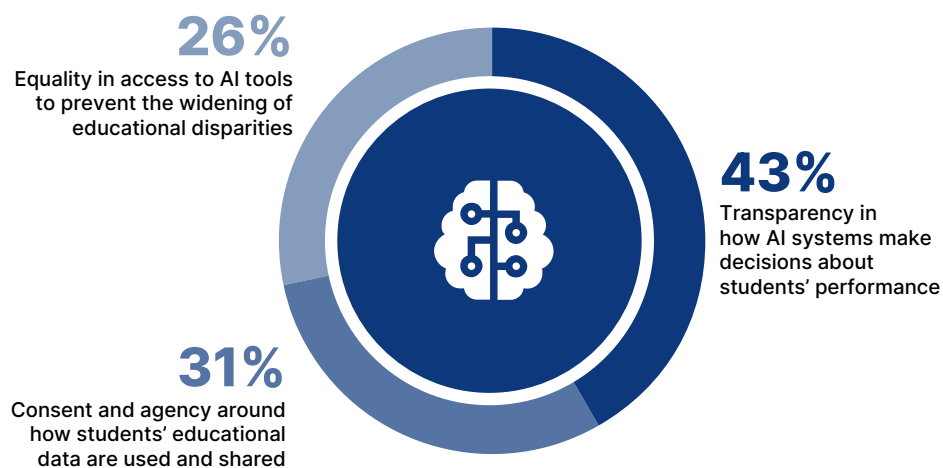
"Fostering partnerships with industries for real-world learning experiences" attracted 29% of the vote, with attendees in San Juan, Leeds, and Edinburgh the most likely to give preference to this option. With AI able to help simulate real-world scenarios, particularly when coupled with other emerging technologies like virtual reality, there is tremendous potential

for employers and institutions to partner to develop work-ready graduates and fuel the local economy.

Application in Blackboard:

- The AI Conversation tool allows instructors to create real-world scenarios for learners and then review their interaction with AI to assess their progress. It also involves learner reflection to develop their AI literacy skills. As of March 2025, this is already in use at 330+ institutions around the world.

- Blackboard's premium badging and micro-credentials tool, Anthology® Milestone, has an AI Badge Design Assistant feature planned in the roadmap for 2025. This will not only streamline badge creation but will also import labor market data to help institutions embed relevant competencies into their courses.

5 **When considering the ethical implications of AI in education, what safeguards should institutions prioritize to protect students and educators?**

26%
Equality in access to AI tools to prevent the widening of educational disparities

43%
Transparency in how AI systems make decisions about students' performance

31%
Consent and agency around how students' educational data are used and shared

Transparency emerges as a crucial requirement for ethical AI use, with 43% placing it as the highest priority. Institutions are open to the possibilities that AI holds for both learners and instructors, but they believe it essential that all stakeholders have clarity on where AI is being used and the function that it serves. This, in turn, develops trust and encourages them to engage further with AI technologies.

The discussions at the *Ethical AI in Action* events reinforced this need for transparency but also raised several additional considerations for responsible AI use in education. The conversation spanned, among other things, sustainability, accessibility and inclusion, data security, and cultural sensitivity, as attendees worked with their peers to interrogate the breadth of potential applications for AI and, subsequently, all the factors that impact ethical applications. We look forward to continuing these discussions with our global education community into the future.

Application in Blackboard:

All use of generative AI within Blackboard is clearly flagged to the user. This will remain a core part of our philosophy for future releases.

The Ethical AI in Action World Tour: A Snapshot

29 global events

1.7M unique uses of Blackboard's AI tools (September 2023-March 2025)

1,000+ education leaders

> " It was particularly gratifying to hear instructors from my institution share their experiences and their clear understanding of how correct use of AI tools in teaching and learning processes can strengthen and elevate to new levels the development of student capabilities. "
>
> **—Silvana Balarezo**
> *Director of Digital Learning Experiences, Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas*

What's Next?

Our experience in bringing AI technologies to market indicates that close partnerships between institutions and technology providers lead to the best results. We encourage Blackboard customers to join the **Anthology Community**, participate in the **Anthology Idea Exchange**, and keep up to date with the latest innovations in AI by registering for **our quarterly roadmap webinars**.

To learn more about the AI capabilities in Blackboard, **contact Anthology for a demonstration** or **sign up for a free trial**.

About Anthology

Anthology delivers education and technology solutions so that students can reach their full potential and learning institutions thrive. Millions of students around the world are supported throughout their education journey via Anthology's ecosystem of flagship SaaS solutions and supporting services, including the award-winning Blackboard® (LMS), Anthology® Student (SIS/ERP), and Anthology® Reach (CRM). Through the Power of Together™, we are uniquely inspiring educators and institutions with innovation that is meaningful, simple, and intelligent to help customers redefine what's possible and create life-changing opportunities for people everywhere. **anthology.com**