



Azusa Pacific
University System

AI Learning Design Presentation

**Implementing AI Course Assistants: A Rapid
Design Case From Concept to Full Rollout at Los
Angeles Pacific University**

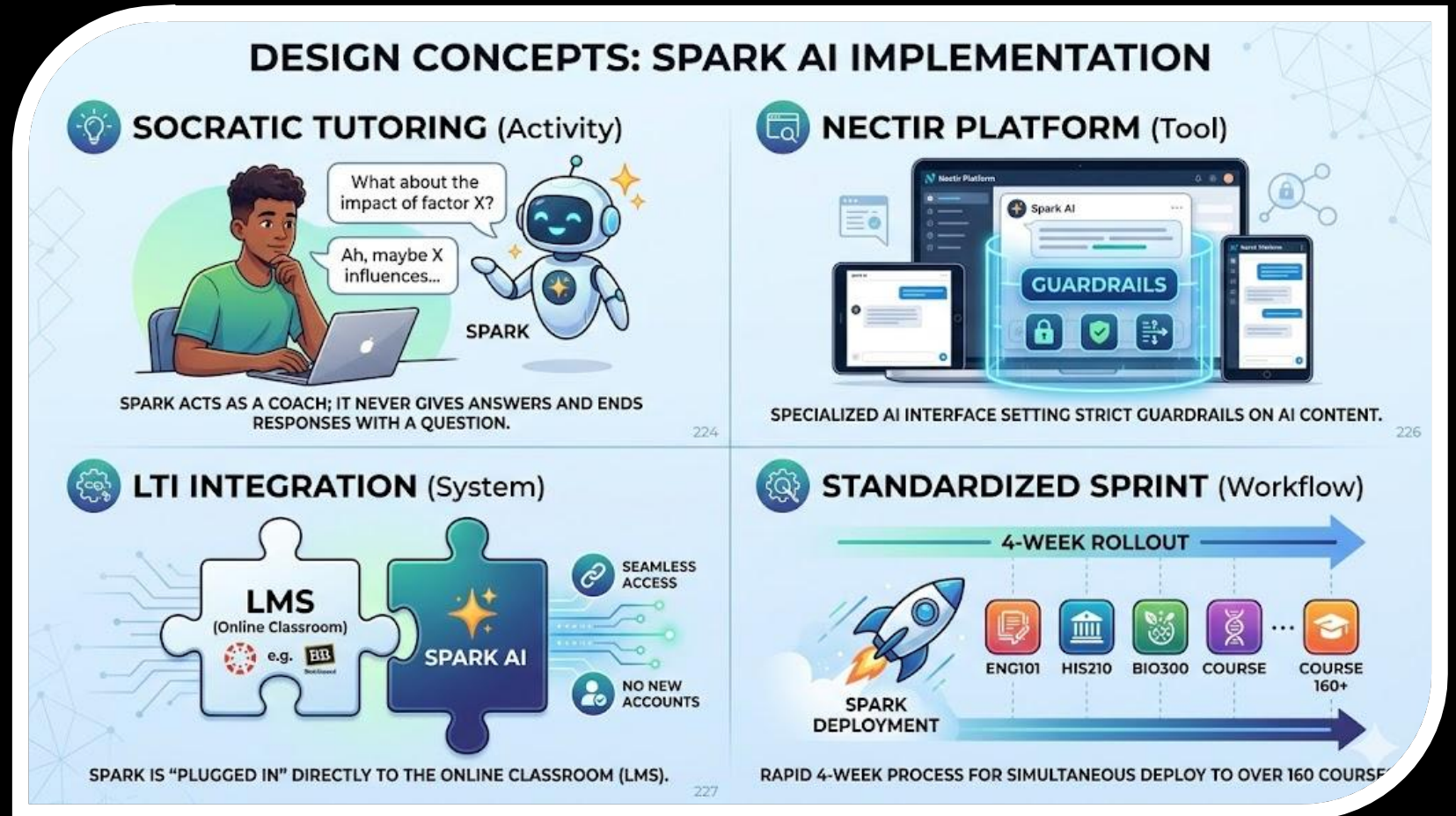
Presentation By: Krista Rundiks
The University of New Mexico
AI for Learning and Performance, OILS-593, Spring 2026
Professor: Dr. Victor Law

About the Design (Activity, Tool, System, Workflow)

The design of the **Spark AI course assistant** at Los Angeles Pacific University (LAPU) was driven by a "student-first" philosophy, aimed at transforming generative AI from a potential academic threat into a powerful catalyst for learning.

Rather than viewing AI as a tool for automation, the **Digital Learning Solutions (DLS)** design team envisioned an **integrated ecosystem** where the technology acts as a "thinking partner" for adult learners.

By grounding the design in **Gabriel's Behavioral Engineering Model (BEM)**, the project focused on creating a seamless, low-friction workflow that balances high-tech efficiency with high-touch pedagogical support.



Learners & Context

Learners and Context at Los Angeles Pacific University (LAPU) are defined by the needs of a fully online, faith-based institution serving adult students who juggle work, family, and education.

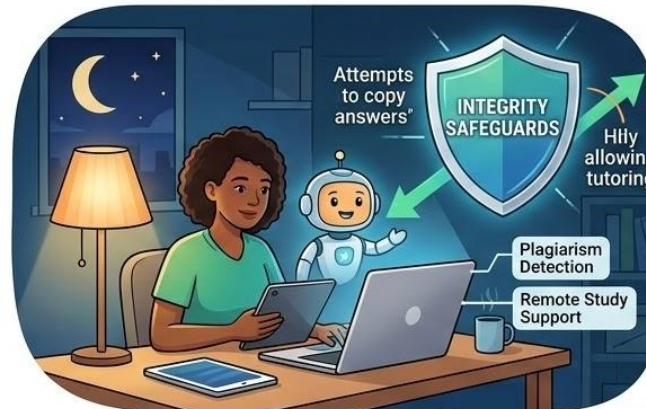
By providing a 24/7 support system that mimics a live instructor, the design team used friendly visual personas and embedded the AI directly into the classroom to lower psychological barriers and create a safe, accessible space for students to engage with material at their own pace.

DESIGN FOUNDATIONS: SPARK AI

CONTEXT

pp. 222, 224

STUDENT-CENTERED INTEGRITY



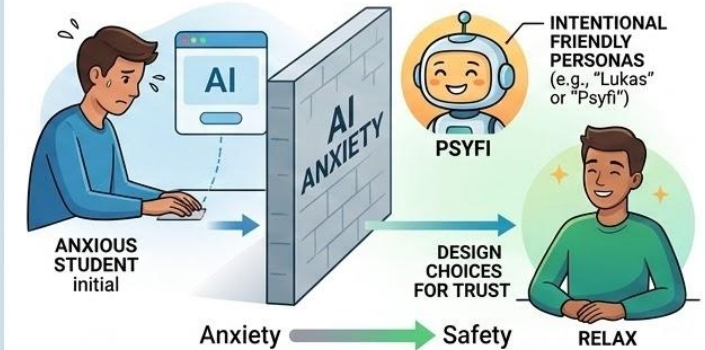
RADICALLY STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT:
Protecting academic integrity (preventing cheating) while maximizing 24/7 ACCESSIBILITY FOR REMOTE USERS

APPROACHABILITY

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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

LOWER PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS:
Reduce Anxiety & Build Immediate Trust with Students



LOWER PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS:
Reduce Anxiety & Build Immediate Trust with Students



Learning Objectives & Outcomes

Learning Objectives and Outcomes for the Spark AI project focused on shifting the role of technology from a content provider to a cognitive **"thinking partner."**

By prioritizing higher-order thinking over simple automation, the design aimed to increase student agency and metacognition.

The primary goal was to ensure students could articulate their reasoning and justify their academic conclusions, leading to measurable increases in student confidence and engagement with difficult course concepts.

IMPACT OF SPARK AI: KEY STUDENT OUTCOMES

Analysis of Objectives, Outcomes, & Implementation (Based on Pages 224-229)

CRITICAL THINKING
| Metacognitive Growth

PROBLEM STEPS, EXPLAIN THINKING, JUSTIFY REASONING.

Spark prompts students to explain their thought process, helping them "learn how to learn"

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ENGAGEMENT
| Active Participation

Pilot results indicate students using Spark provide more thoughtful and original contributions to class discussions

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STUDENT AGENCY
| Self-Directed Learning

PASSIVE CONSUMPTION → ACTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING & INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Outcome is to move students away from "passive consumption" toward active problem-solving

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CONFIDENCE
| Psychological Support

ANY HOUR
MORE CONFIDENT
LESS ALONE

Qualitative feedback shows students felt "less alone" and more confident when tackling complex assignments

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LOS ANGELES PACIFIC UNIVERSITY (LAPU) DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Pedagogical Approaches

Pedagogical Approaches for Spark are rooted in the **Socratic Method** and **Active Learning**, moving away from passive information delivery toward a "thinking partner" model.

By grounding the design in **Gabriel's Behavioral Engineering Model (BEM)**, the team focused on providing the necessary environmental prompts and instructional scaffolding to trigger student engagement.

This approach ensures that the AI functions as a coach that facilitates higher-order thinking, requiring students to articulate their understanding rather than simply receiving answers.

KEY PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

SOCRATIC METHOD | INQUIRY-BASED GUIDANCE



Short Text
Stimulate Thought:
Provide Hints,
End with Question

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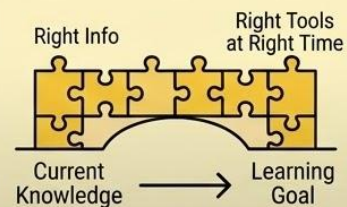
ACTIVE LEARNING | COGNITIVE SCAFFOLDING



Support Think-Pair-Share
& Cognitive Scaffolding

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BEM MODEL | BEHAVIORAL ENGINEERING



Short Text
Bridge Knowledge Gap:
Provide Right Info &
Tools at Right Time

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ROLE-PLAY | SIMULATED INTERACTION



Simulated Interaction:
AI Adopts Personas
(Client, Historical Figure)

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LOS ANGELES PACIFIC UNIVERSITY DIGITAL LEARNING SOLUTIONS

How GenAI Supported Learning

How GenAI Supported Learning was defined by its role as a scalable, 24/7 "teaching assistant" that provided personalized, just-in-time guidance. By moving beyond simple content generation, the GenAI was configured to act as a pedagogical partner that understood the specific context of each course.

This supported learning by offering students a safe space to practice skills, clarify complex concepts, and receive immediate feedback, effectively bridging the gap between independent study and instructor interaction.

HOW GenAI SUPPORTED LEARNING: KEY SUPPORT MECHANISMS

CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE



Course-Specific Tuning

AI TRAINED ON CURATED COURSE PDFs: Outcomes, Assignments, Readings for relevance and accuracy. (p. 224, 235)

SIMULATED PRACTICE



Role-Play Partner

GENAI ADOPTS PERSONAS: Therapy Client, Historical Figure to practice professional application. (p. 225, 227)

JUST-IN-TIME SUPPORT



24/7 Availability

IMMEDIATE SOCRATIC GUIDANCE: Support available during non-traditional hours when faculty are unavailable. (p. 222, 226)

FEEDBACK LOOPS



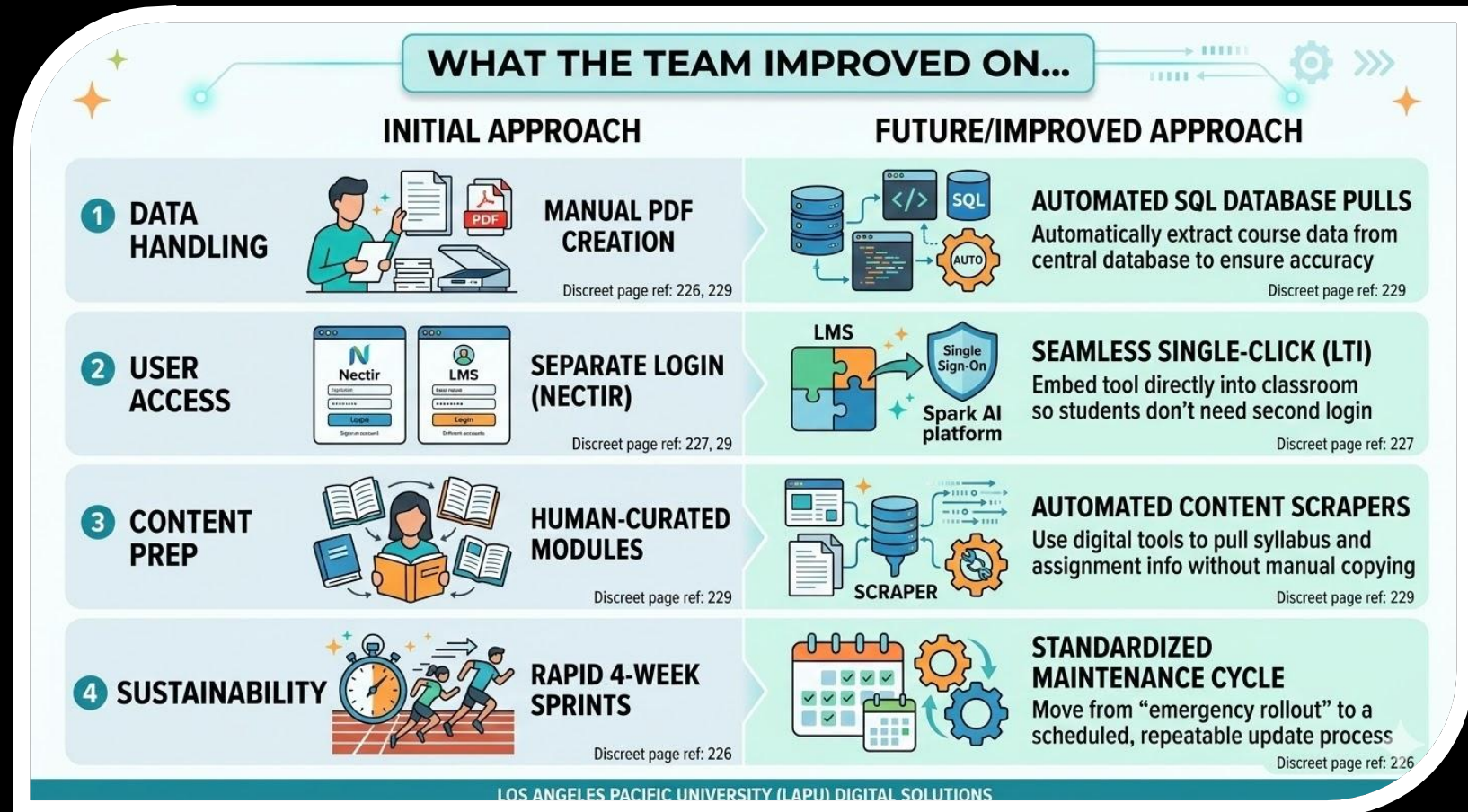
Iterative Reflection

INSTANT FEEDBACK & REFINE IDEAS: Reflect and improve through continuous dialogue. (p. 228)

What the Team Improved On

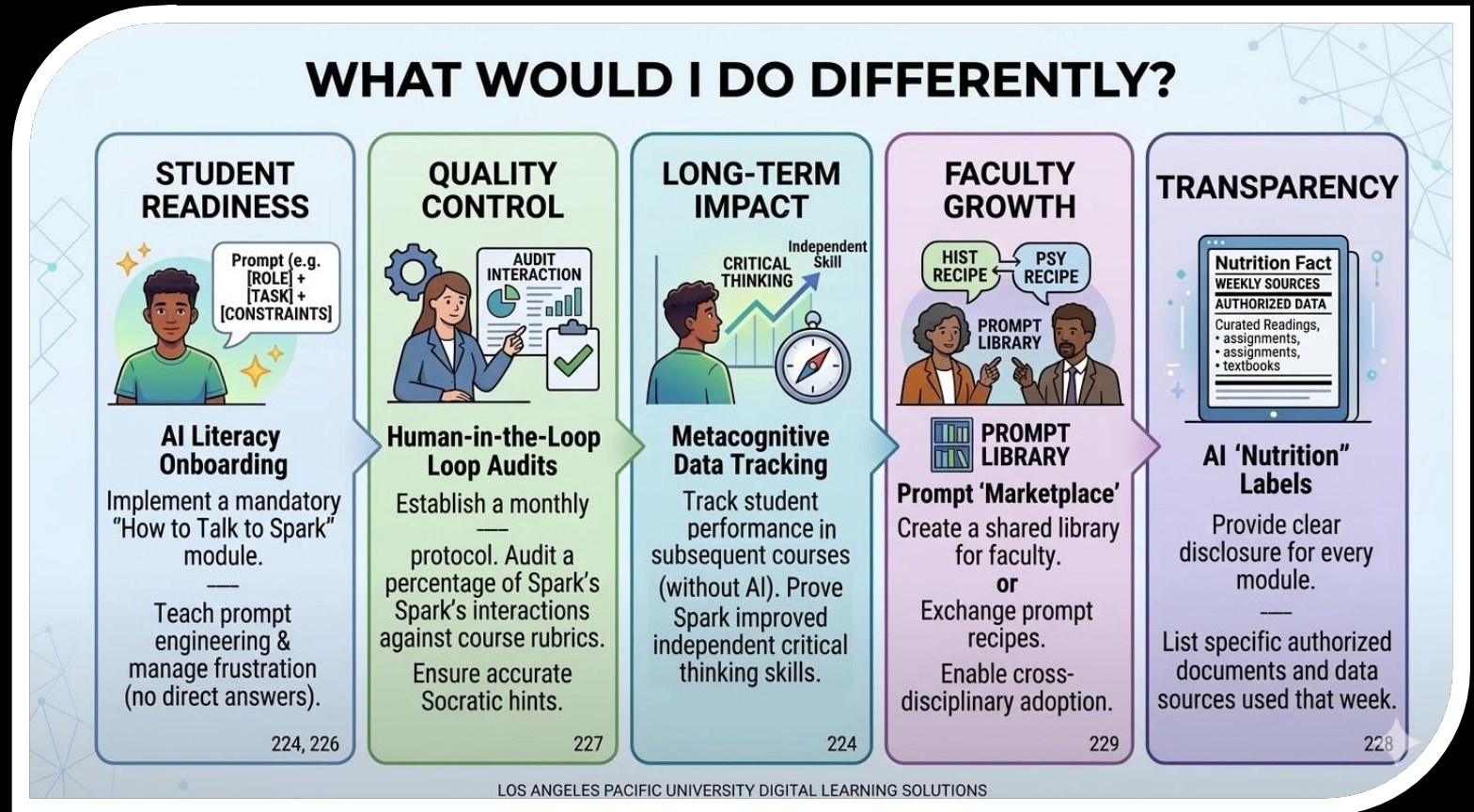
What Would You Do Differently reflect the team's realization that while their "rapid design" was successful for speed, certain manual processes needed to evolve for long-term sustainability. The transition from an emergency response to a permanent infrastructure revealed "friction points" in the user experience and data management.

By acknowledging these early inefficiencies—such as manual document preparation and lack of direct system integration—the team identified the necessary shifts required to move from a pilot phase to a robust, automated institutional standard.



What Would I Do Differently

- If I were an independent contractor, my focus would shift from the initial "emergency rollout" to long-term optimization and proving the ROI (Return on Investment) of the tool.
- The following table highlights how a contractor might refine the project to ensure it is not only functional but also measurable and scalable across the industry.



What I Learned

The implementation of Spark at LAPU provided several critical insights into the intersection of human pedagogy and artificial intelligence.

The following points summarize the major lessons learned by the team throughout the design and rollout process.

WHAT I LEARNED

INSIGHT	KEY INSIGHT	PRACTICAL APPLICATION
FACULTY BUY-IN	CULTURE OVER TECH	Involve faculty as "CO-DESIGNERS" to create advocates.
DATA INTEGRITY	POWER OF CONSTRAINTS	Limit AI to "DOCUMENTS ONLY" to prevent hallucinations.
AGILE DESIGN	"GOOD ENOUGH" STRATEGY	Launch quickly with a solid foundation & REFINE .
PEDAGOGY	AI AS A PARTNER	Use SOCRATIC METHODS for a "THINKING MIRROR" .
USER EXPERIENCE	FRICTION IS THE ENEMY	Embed AI DIRECTLY IN THE CLASSROOM (LMS) to remove barriers.
ENGAGEMENT	VISUAL PERSONAS	Use friendly avatars to lower "AI ANXIETY" .
SCALABILITY	STANDARDIZED SPRINTS	Use templated prompts & repeatable workflows to launch across 160+ courses.

Reference

Hanshaw, G., & Wilday, M. (2025). Implementing AI Course Assistants: A Rapid Design Case from Concept to Full Rollout at Los Angeles Pacific University. *International Journal of Designs for Learning*, 16(2), 222–235. <https://doi.org/10.14434/ijdl.v16i2.41926>

IMPLEMENTING AI COURSE ASSISTANTS: A RAPID DESIGN CASE FROM CONCEPT TO FULL ROLLOUT AT LOS ANGELES PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

George Hanshaw, & Mike Wilday, *Los Angeles Pacific University*

The rapid emergence of generative AI created both uncertainty and opportunity in higher education. This design case describes how Los Angeles Pacific University (LAPU), a fully online, student-centered institution, implemented Spark, an AI course assistant, across all courses within four weeks.

INTRODUCTION

On November 30, 2022, OpenAI released ChatGPT 3.5, a generative AI tool capable of producing human-like text in seconds. Its launch created a wave of concern and curiosity

AI Disclosure Statement

This presentation was developed in collaboration with Google's Gemini Guided Learning, which was used to support content curation and image creation. All AI-generated text and visuals were reviewed, edited, and verified by me to ensure accuracy, clarity, and alignment with the presentation's objectives. I used Narakeet for the video narration, subtitles, and MP4 output.