

The key Insights and major takeaways from the Future Summit Follow-Up survey reflect varying perspectives on artificial intelligence (AI), ethics, use in operations of the college, and implementation in academic contexts. This summary is based on the feedback of 20 attendees sponsored to attend the conference through the Office of the President.

Key Insight Themes

1. Ethical and Environmental Concerns

Many respondents expressed alarm about AI's environmental footprint, including water and energy consumption for data centers, including one that noted, "I was especially disturbed to hear about clean water being diverted from communities who need it for drinking water." Others stressed the need for ethical frameworks that safeguard against exploitation, bias, and inequity. Several highlighted the moral responsibility of educational institutions to examine the social costs associated with AI.

2. Corporate Influence and Data Privacy

A recurring concern was the dominance of capitalist narratives from tech companies. Participants warned about the commodification of data, the risk of privacy breaches, and the influence of for-profit motives shaping AI adoption in education. The need to protect student information and question "free" AI tools offered by corporations was emphasized. With that in mind, some attendees noted a lack of critical academic inquiry into AI at the summit, save for one panel, and urged colleges to make sure that critical and scholarly inquiry continue to be a leading influence.

3. Balance Between Innovation and Caution

Participants recognized AI's potential to enhance learning, accessibility, and efficiency but also warned against over-reliance or replacement of human critical thinking. Foster interdisciplinary exploration of AI's societal, ethical, and philosophical implications. There is acute concern that we are "giving over" our critical thinking skills to machines. One noted, "humans can offload critical thinking tasks to large and small language models. Offloading those tasks will have a cost, too, in terms of experiential learning. Students will focus on prompting then verifying the output. The impact of this shifted focus on critical thinking is not yet known." The need for balanced adoption—embracing innovation while acknowledging risks—was a consistent message.

4. Workforce Development, Regional Opportunities, and Sense of Urgency

Several insights focused on AI's transformative potential for workforce readiness. Emerging job markets in autonomous vehicles and aircraft, cybersecurity, and predictive analytics were identified

as significant opportunities for community colleges to lead in training programs. “Without embracing AI, schools risk limiting their growth, reducing their competitiveness, and diminishing their ability to attract and retain students,” noted one attendee.

5. AI as a Creative and Learning Partner

Respondents saw AI as a tool to amplify creativity and productivity, particularly in educational design, media production, and accessibility. Some connected AI experimentation with professional growth and staff development. “I realized that working with AI challenges me to think more critically, refine my prompts, expand my vocabulary, and play as an expert on design, video, and photography,” noted another employee.

Takeaway Themes

1 Need for Institutional Policy and Dialogue

Many attendees called for developing clear college-wide or district-wide AI policies to define ethical use, balance benefits against harms, and align adoption with institutional values and educational missions.

2 AI Literacy and Faculty Development

Respondents encouraged structured opportunities for faculty to engage with AI tools, noting disparities between technically confident and hesitant departments. Calls for workshops, skills development, training, and faculty “sandbox” spaces were frequent. Ideas included developing a Critical AI Institute.

3 Ethical Application and Privacy Stewardship

Participants emphasized responsible AI use, particularly in handling student data. Takeaways often cited the need for privacy-safe practices and transparent communication around how AI systems collect and use data.

4 Pedagogical Innovation and Student Learning

Colleagues proposed ways to integrate AI ethically into classrooms—through tutoring tools, innovative course design, and virtual environments—while maintaining focus on student agency and critical thinking. Ideas included embedding AI discussions into student learning outcomes.

5 Equity, Access, and Inclusion

Multiple takeaways reflected the need to ensure AI adoption does not exacerbate inequities or marginalize disciplines less represented in technological fields, such as the humanities. This theme linked AI education with civic responsibility and inclusion.

6 Collaboration and Cross-Campus Conversation

Faculty and leaders called for divisional and cross-disciplinary collaboration to refine AI strategies collectively. Some proposed ongoing discussion spaces to share practices, address challenges, and align institutional approaches.

Summary

Overall, the insights reveal a thoughtful tension between enthusiasm for AI's transformative potential and apprehension about its social, environmental, and ethical implications. The takeaways translate this tension into actionable institutional needs: developing policy, strengthening faculty and staff capacity, understanding the urgency of the moment, and maintaining critical awareness as Foothill College continues leading innovation grounded in equity and ethics.

1. Source document: Future-Summit-Follow-Up-1.xlsx