



Written Statement for the Record of Emily M. Dickens, J.D.
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Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Committee on Education and Workforce

“Building an AI-Ready America: Higher Education in the Age of AI”

Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at 10:15 a.m.

Dear Chairman Owens, Ranking Member Adams, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for holding the hearing entitled “Building an AI-Ready America: Higher Education in the Age of AI” and for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record. This hearing comes at a critical moment for the American workforce and economy and marks an important step toward better alignment of the education-to-employment pipeline.

As Congress considers the future of higher education in the age of AI, SHRM encourages policymakers to prioritize:

- Stronger alignment between higher education, workforce development systems, and evolving labor market needs.
- Expanded work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships, to provide students with practical workforce experience.
- Investment in AI literacy, digital fluency, power skills, and lifelong upskilling and reskilling opportunities.
- Public-private collaboration enabling employers, educators, and policymakers to jointly shape workforce development strategies aligned with emerging technologies and economic competitiveness.

These recommendations are informed by SHRM’s research and our direct engagement with employers across industries who are navigating rapid technological change and evolving workforce needs.

As the trusted authority on the world of work, SHRM is the foremost expert, researcher, advocate, and thought leader on the issues and innovations shaping today’s evolving workplaces. Representing nearly 340,000 members, SHRM’s membership spans industries, regions, organizational sizes, and sectors across every Congressional district.



By engaging with professionals from HR teams to the C-suite, we see firsthand how talent acquisition and development intersect, providing a comprehensive view of workforce trends and challenges. With our robust Thought Leadership department, SHRM transforms these insights into actionable workplace strategies and public policy solutions. This positions SHRM as the workplace meteorologist, helping organizations and policymakers forecast workforce trends, navigate disruption, and turn insight into action to prepare for the future of work.

SHRM's [2026 Talent Trends](#) (Talent Trends) report found that nearly seven in ten HR professionals (68%) reported difficulty recruiting full-time employees, and over half of those HR professionals (53%) said recruiting has become more difficult compared with one year ago. The same report found that more than one-quarter of HR professionals (27%) said positions they hired for in the past year required new skills their organizations had not previously needed, and that, among those employers, 77% reported difficulty recruiting qualified candidates for those roles. A key theme is emerging: Skills supply is not meeting organizational demand, with employers reporting difficulty finding workers with the technical capabilities, power skills (e.g., communication, creativity, and critical thinking), and practical experience necessary to succeed in rapidly evolving workplaces. At the same time, among the HR professionals that reported new skills requirements, respondents most commonly cited technological change as the driver, and it demonstrated a 12% point increase from 2025 according to Talent Trends.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping workforce needs, job responsibilities, and hiring practices across the economy. SHRM's [State of AI in HR 2026](#) underscores the scale of this transformation, as 62% of organizations reported using AI within their organizations. While this widespread adoption signals significant change in the workplace, it does not necessarily always result in workforce displacement. In fact, the same report found that AI is reshaping work far more often than replacing workers and that organizations using AI were 5.7 times more likely to report shifts in job responsibilities than job displacement, while 57% reported creating new upskilling and reskilling opportunities for employees.

These findings reinforce the idea that the future of work will depend on workforce adaptability, continuous learning, and stronger alignment between higher education, employers, and workforce development systems. SHRM President and CEO Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, has stated, "AI + [Human Intelligence] = [Return on Investment]" to underscore that AI delivers its greatest value when paired with human intelligence, judgment, adaptability, creativity, and leadership.

That is why the conversation surrounding AI and higher education must extend beyond technology adoption alone. Institutions must prepare students to work alongside AI systems while strengthening essential human skills such as communication, creativity, critical thinking, and complex problem-solving. The United States has an opportunity to strengthen overall competitiveness by leading in the development of an AI-ready workforce, but doing so will require coordinated action between workers, employers, educators, and policymakers. SHRM stands ready to work with Congress and interested



stakeholders to strengthen education-to-employment pathways and help build a more agile, competitive, and future-ready workforce.