

February 17, 2026

Congresswoman Lee, thank you for raising this crucial question.

The decision to eliminate the Office of Educational Technology (OET) comes at a particularly critical juncture in our nation's educational journey. We are witnessing an unprecedented and irreversible expansion of technology in our schools, including artificial intelligence, digital tutoring platforms, virtual and augmented reality simulations, predictive analytics dashboards, tele-mental health tools, biometric attendance systems, immersive career exploration software, and AI-powered postsecondary advising platforms. Technology is not slowing down; it is accelerating. Thus, eliminating OET does not halt the growth of educational technology. Instead, it risks removing vital national leadership and guidance, which are essential in ensuring that this rapid expansion benefits all students and educators equitably.

Historically, the Office of Educational Technology has been a small yet strategically vital unit within the U.S. Department of Education. Its role has been to develop and update the National Educational Technology Plan, provide implementation guidance to states and districts, translate research into practical policies, advise on student data privacy and cybersecurity, support digital equity initiatives, and convene stakeholders around responsible technology use. The most recent *National Educational Technology Plan* underscores the urgent need to close digital access, design, and use divides while ensuring that technology is implemented to advance equity and learningⁱ. Despite its modest size, OET has served as a vital coordinating hub, providing coherence, synthesizing research, and establishing guardrails in a rapidly evolving landscape.

In my opinion and in accordance with AACTE's vision for the future of education and educator preparation, we should expand OET's scope and capacity rather than dismantle it. Here's why. First, there is a pressing need for rigorous federal research to identify which technologies truly enhance student learning. For instance, evidence shows that high-impact tutoring supported by digital platforms can produce substantial gains in achievementⁱⁱ, and adaptive learning systems demonstrate positive effects when implemented with strong instructional designⁱⁱⁱ. However, technology alone does not improve learning; its effectiveness is amplified when combined with effective teaching. OET has been instrumental in translating this nuanced understanding to states, and rather than dismantling this function, we should enhance it to include rapid evaluations of AI tools, digital tutoring, simulations, and early warning analytics.

Second, technology is transforming how teachers prepare and develop professionally. Classroom simulation platforms enable candidates to rehearse instructional strategies and classroom management in low-risk settings, improving their readiness and confidence^{iv}. Sustained, technology-supported professional development further enhances teacher effectiveness and retention. Strengthening OET could involve developing standards for simulation use, supporting AI literacy among educators, and funding research on technology's role in elevating teaching quality, areas where federal coordination can significantly guide district and educator efforts.

Third, concerns around digital well-being and mental health are valid. Excessive screen time raises legitimate issues, but technology can also support students' mental health in schools, if used responsibly. Tele-mental health services, anonymous reporting systems, AI-enabled check-ins, and early warning systems are examples of how technology can promote safety and well-being. OET has played a role in synthesizing research on responsible use, helping states differentiate between harmful and beneficial applications. Eliminating this office would weaken our capacity to scale evidence-based practices that support students' mental health.

Finally, the role of technology in postsecondary access and success is expanding. AI-driven advising tools, digital nudges, scholarship platforms, and interactive career exploration are helping students navigate complex pathways more effectively. Studies show that these digital interventions can significantly boost college enrollment and persistence, especially among first-generation students^v. Yet these innovations require ongoing research, ethical oversight, and equitable implementation, all of which are ideally suited to OET.

In summary, educational technology represents the future of learning. It is no longer a temporary trend but a foundational element of education and workforce readiness. Research shows that digital competency and fluency are now central to economic participation and to ensuring educational equity. And during the pandemic, we learned that districts with stronger digital infrastructure experienced fewer disruptions, underscoring technology's vital role^{vi}.

The question before us is not whether technology will influence education but how we choose to guide it. Without OET, state and local efforts would lack coherent guidance, resources for translation and implementation, and protection against vendor influence and data privacy risks. As technology platforms grow exponentially, the absence of federal leadership leaves us with no guardrails. Therefore, in my opinion, instead of dismantling OET, Congress should expand the office's role. The path forward requires us to broaden OET's scope and capacity to ensure that educational technology continues to serve educators and students.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, PhD
President & CEO, AACTE

ⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. *National Educational Technology Plan 2024: A Call to Action for Closing the Digital Access, Design, and Use Divides*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2024. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED641164.pdf>

ⁱⁱ **Bhatt, Monica P., et al.** *Can Technology Facilitate Scale? Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation of High Dosage Tutoring*. NBER Working Paper No. 32510, National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w32510>

ⁱⁱⁱ Dahlmann, Jennifer C., "Guidelines for Effective Adaptive Learning: A Meta-Analysis" (2021). *Instructional Design Capstones Collection*. 73.

^{iv} CIDDLE. "Introducing Simulations into Teacher Preparation Programs." Center for Innovative Development of Educational Leaders and Learners, <https://ciddl.org/introducing-simulations-into-teacher-preparation-programs/#:~:text=Connect%20with%20Pedagogy&text=Simulation%20provides%20candidates%20an%20opportunity.about%20themselves%20and%20their%20students>

^v Avery, Christopher, Joshua S. Goodman, and Sarah Turner. "The Effects of Nudging for College: Evidence from a National Texting Campaign." *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2021, pp. 699–734. <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.56.3.0418-9413R1>

^{vi} Goldhaber, Dan, Thomas J. Kane, Andrew McEachin, Emily Morton, Tyler Patterson, and Douglas O. Staiger. "The Consequences of Remote and Hybrid Instruction during the Pandemic." *CALDER Working Paper* No. 267-0922, 2022, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, <https://caldercenter.org/publications/consequences-remote-and-hybrid-instruction-during-pandemic>

