Digital Crossroads: What Today's CTOs Reveal About Tomorrow's Campus

6.18.2025, 2 p.m. Eastern

About the Survey

IHE's 4th annual survey of CTOs/CIOs

- Partnered with Hanover Research

- Fielded February-March

- 108 responses (2-yr/4-yr, public/nonprofit private)

2025 Survey of
**Campus Chief Technology/
Information Officers**

A SURVEY BY *INSIDE HIGHER ED* AND HANOVER RESEARCH

Sara Custer & Colleen Flaherty
Editors, *Inside Higher Ed*
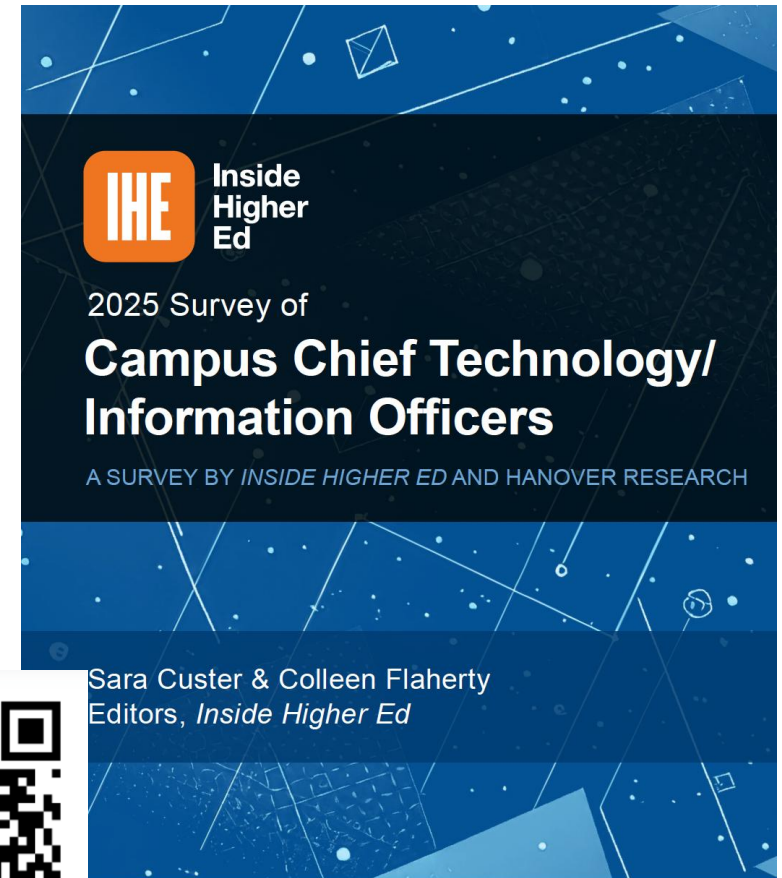
CTOs on: Influence, Budget + Being a CTO

CTOs who somewhat or strongly agree with the following statements about being a CTO:

87%
I enjoy being a CTO.

60%
Legacy infrastructure is hampering my institution's ability to be innovative when it comes to technology needs.

90%
Our central IT department has found effective ways to reach out and partner with other areas of the institution.

Collaboration but untapped potential:

59%: CTOs who sit on the president's council at their institution

53%: CTOs who say their institution "very much" leverages their knowledge and insights to inform strategic decisions about technology

33%: CTOs who say their institution's student success-related IT investments over past decade have been highly effective

IHE Inside Higher Ed

CTOs on: AI

CTOs indicate their level of agreement with the following statements about AI readiness in higher education generally and at their institution:

● Strongly disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat agree
● Strongly agree

Higher education is handling the rise of AI adeptly.

11%	32%	38%	17%	2%

My institution is handling the rise of AI adeptly.

13%	25%	27%	33%	2%

My institution is substantially more reliant on AI than it was a year ago.

17%	24%	27%	29%	3%

Senior leaders at my institution are engaged in discussions around AI and think it's important.

4%	19%	14%	37%	26%

Effective channels exist between IT and academic affairs to communicate and collaborate on AI policy, etc., at my institution.
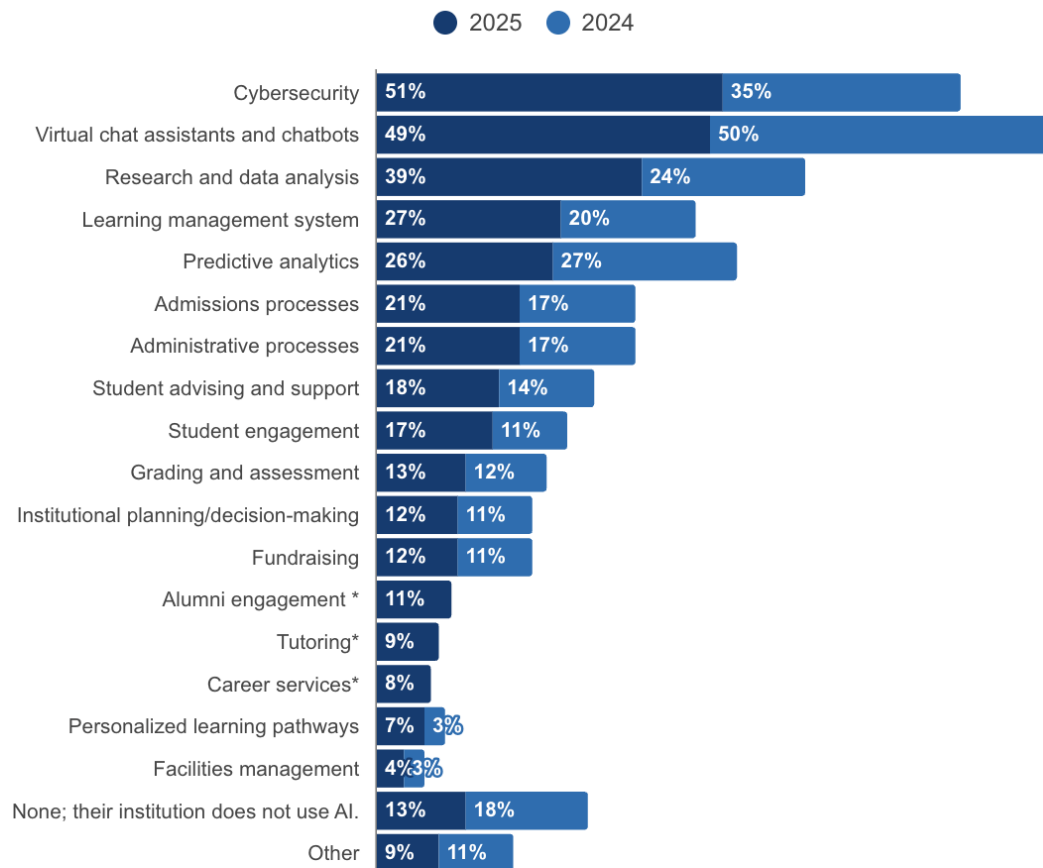
6%	12%	16%	35%	32%

Despite the AI buzz:

34%: CTOs who say investing in generative AI is a high or essential priority for their institution

54%: CTOs who say AI's overall impact on higher ed so far is positive or very positive

IHE Inside Higher Ed

CTOs on: AI (cont.)

CTOs who say their institution uses AI in the following areas or ways, with last year's survey results for comparison where possible:

● 2025 ● 2024

Area	2025	2024
Cybersecurity	51%	35%
Virtual chat assistants and chatbots	49%	50%
Research and data analysis	39%	24%
Learning management system	27%	20%
Predictive analytics	26%	27%
Admissions processes	21%	17%
Administrative processes	21%	17%
Student advising and support	18%	14%
Student engagement	17%	11%
Grading and assessment	13%	12%
Institutional planning/decision-making	12%	11%
Fundraising	12%	11%
Alumni engagement *	11%	
Tutoring*	9%	
Career services*	8%	
Personalized learning pathways	7%	3%
Facilities management	4%	3%
None; their institution does not use AI.	13%	18%
Other	9%	11%

*New category in 2025; no 2024 comparison available

Numbers to Know

66% vs. 36%
Public versus private nonprofit institution CTOs whose college has partnered or is considering partnering with a technology company to implement AI

26%
CTOs (all) whose institution has developed its own AI technology using open source tools or is considering doing so

53%
CTOs (all) who somewhat or strongly agree that their institution emphasizes thinking about AI for individual use cases than at enterprise scale
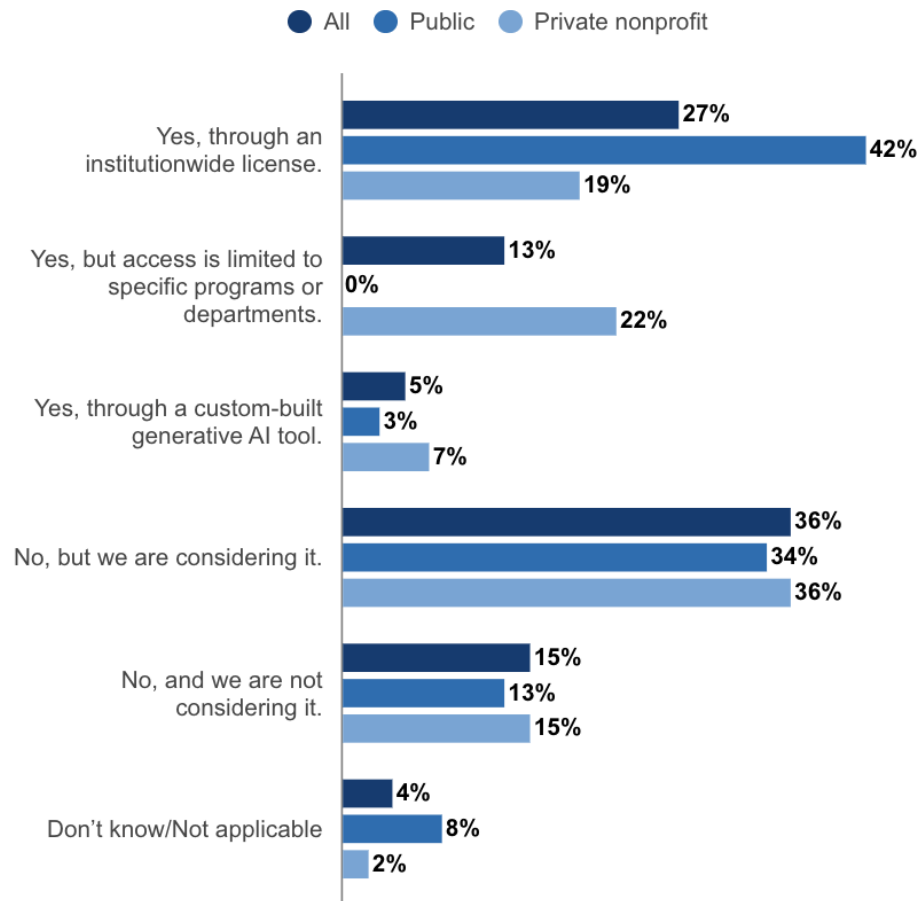
11%
CTOs (all) who say their institution has a comprehensive AI strategy

IHE Inside Higher Ed

6

CTOs on: AI (cont.)

CTOs on whether and how their institution provides students access to generative AI tools, all and by sector, selecting all that apply:

Legend: ● All ● Public ● Private nonprofit

Yes, through an institutionwide license.
- All: 27%
- Public: 42%
- Private nonprofit: 19%

Yes, but access is limited to specific programs or departments.
- All: 13%
- Public: 0%
- Private nonprofit: 22%

Yes, through a custom-built generative AI tool.
- All: 5%
- Public: 3%
- Private nonprofit: 7%

No, but we are considering it.
- All: 36%
- Public: 34%
- Private nonprofit: 36%

No, and we are not considering it.
- All: 15%
- Public: 13%
- Private nonprofit: 15%

Don't know/Not applicable
- All: 4%
- Public: 8%
- Private nonprofit: 2%

AI policies and student access vary:

42% vs. 39%: CTOs whose institution has adopted formal AI policies/guidelines regarding general use versus instruction

31%: CTOs who institution has not adopted any AI policies/guidelines for use in research, instruction, general use, administrative tasks, etc.

63% vs. 49%: CTOs whose institution is not providing student access to generative AI tools who blame associated costs versus those who blame concerns about ethics/potential misuse

Inside Higher Ed

Audience Poll

Q: How would you "grade" your institution's overall approach to the rise of generative AI in higher education?

- A/Excellent: The institution is navigating AI in a way I find thoughtful and appropriate.
- B/Good: The institution is making efforts that mostly align with what I think is needed.
- C/Fair: The approach is mixed or unclear, and more could be done.
- D/Poor: The institution's actions don't align with what I think is needed.
- F/Failing: There's been little to no meaningful response.
- Not sure/I don't have enough information.
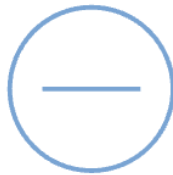
CTOs on: Sustainability

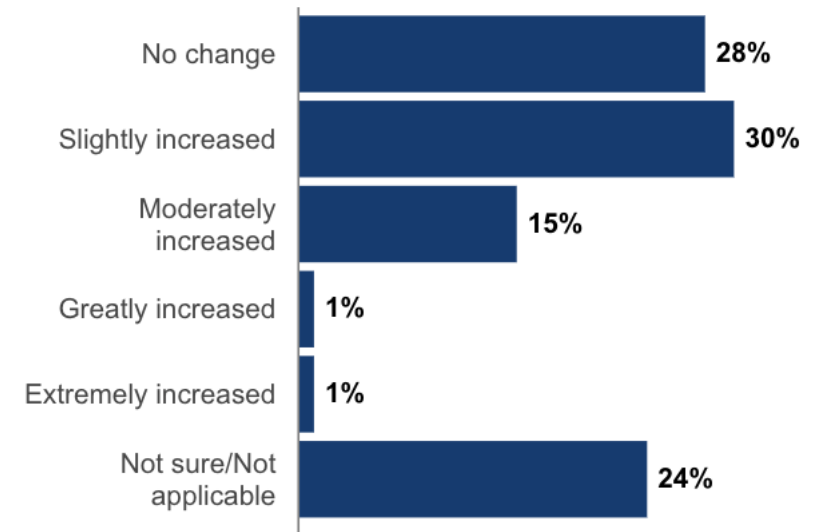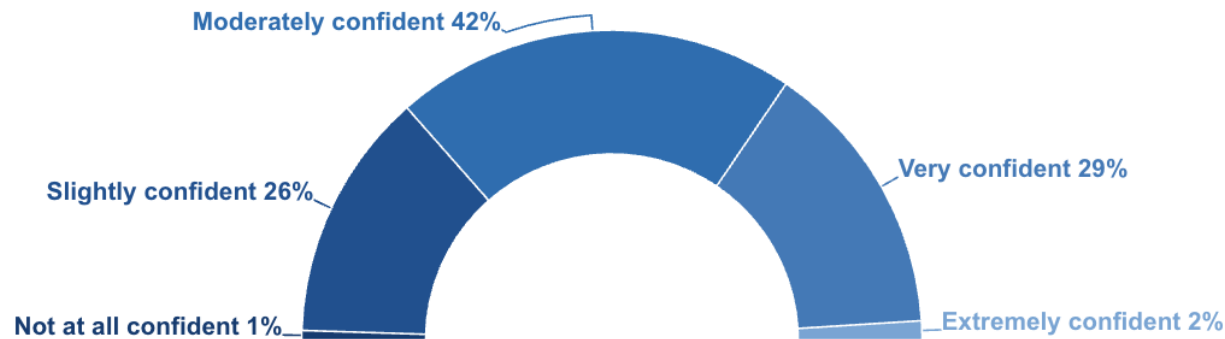CTOs who say the following about technology and environmental sustainability at their college or university:

- **We have sustainability goals related to technology use.** — 34%
- **Senior leaders consider environmental impact/energy use when making decisions about technology.** — 19%
- **We employ data-informed approaches to reduce/optimize technology-related energy use.** — 15%

CTOs on how their institution's use of AI has impacted its carbon footprint/electricity use:

Category	Percentage
No change	28%
Slightly increased	30%
Moderately increased	15%
Greatly increased	1%
Extremely increased	1%
Not sure/Not applicable	24%

Inside Higher Ed

CTOs on: Cybersecurity

CTOs' level of confidence that their institution's practices can prevent cyberattacks that could compromise data or intellectual property or lead to a ransomware event:

Moderately confident 42%

Slightly confident 26%

Very confident 29%

Not at all confident 1%

Extremely confident 2%

Questioning security:

90%: CTOs who say their institution requires multi-factor authentication for all employee accounts

26%: CTOs who say their institution requires cybersecurity training of all students

31%: CTOs who say their institution requires vendors who provide AI technology and services to have adequate cybersecurity insurance

CTOs on: Personnel Issues

CTOs indicate their level of agreement with the following statements about recruiting and retaining technology employees at their college or university:

- ● Strongly disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Neither agree nor disagree
- ● Somewhat agree ● Strongly agree

We are struggling to hire new technology employees.

| 6% | 10% | 14% | 42% | 28% |

We are struggling to retain current technology employees.

| 19% | 24% | 21% | 27% | 10% |

Recruitment of technology employees is harder now than it was a few years ago.

| 2% | 12% | 12% | 38% | 34% |

Staff recruitment and retention challenges:

13%: CTOs struggling with staff recruitment and/or retention who blame increased opportunities elsewhere for employees with AI skills

84%: CTOs struggling with staff recruitment and/or retention who blame better salaries and/or benefits at other organizations outside higher ed

IHE Inside Higher Ed

11

CTOs on: Digital Transformation + Emerging Tech

CTOs on how their institution prioritizes these areas in digital transformation efforts:

	Not a priority	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority	Essential
Administrative/business processes	2%	6%	40%	26%	26%
Artificial intelligence	9%	27%	28%	24%	13%
Data/student success	3%	7%	23%	32%	35%
Libraries	12%	35%	38%	9%	5%
Moving to the cloud	7%	12%	33%	27%	21%
Student services	1%	10%	35%	32%	22%
Teaching and learning	2%	8%	32%	33%	26%

Numbers to Know:

0%
CTOs with institutional transformation goals (n=41) who say their college has made a complete transformation

63%
CTOs with institutional transformation goals (n=41) who say insufficient number of IT personnel is a major hindrance to progress

14%
CTOs whose institution has made meaningful investments in virtual reality/immersive learning

12%
CTOs whose institution has made meaningful investments in quantum computing/high-performance computing

Inside Higher Ed

CTOs on: Digital Learning + Tech Infrastructure

Numbers to Know

59%

CTOs who express some or strong confidence in the quality of their institution's online and/or hybrid course and program offerings

49%

CTOs who somewhat or strongly agree that student demand for online and/or hybrid course options has substantially increased since last year at their institution
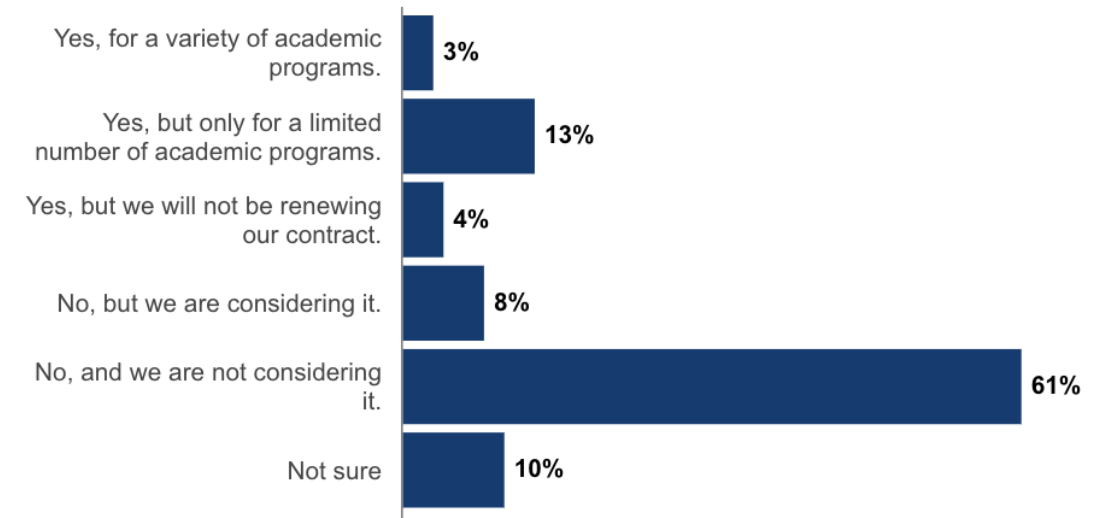
59% vs. 29%

Public versus private nonprofit college CTOs who somewhat or strongly agree their institution has substantially increased online and/or hybrid course options in the last year

83%

CTOs who rate the quality of their institution's IT and digital resources to support teaching and learning as good or excellent

CTOs on whether/how their institution has partnered with an OPM:

Response	Percent
Yes, for a variety of academic programs.	3%
Yes, but only for a limited number of academic programs.	13%
Yes, but we will not be renewing our contract.	4%
No, but we are considering it.	8%
No, and we are not considering it.	61%
Not sure	10%

Inside Higher Ed

CTOs on: Data + Analytics

CTOs who somewhat or strongly agree with the following statements on data analytics and data readiness. Their institution:

● All ● Public ○ Private nonprofit

Actively promotes a culture of data, such as by offering opportunities for faculty, staff and administrators to build data literacy.
36% | 48% | 27%

Effectively uses data as a means of improving internal processes.
47% | 59% | 37%

Effectively uses data to inform important decisions.
56% | 67% | 49%

Effectively uses data to support student success.
60% | 74% | 50%

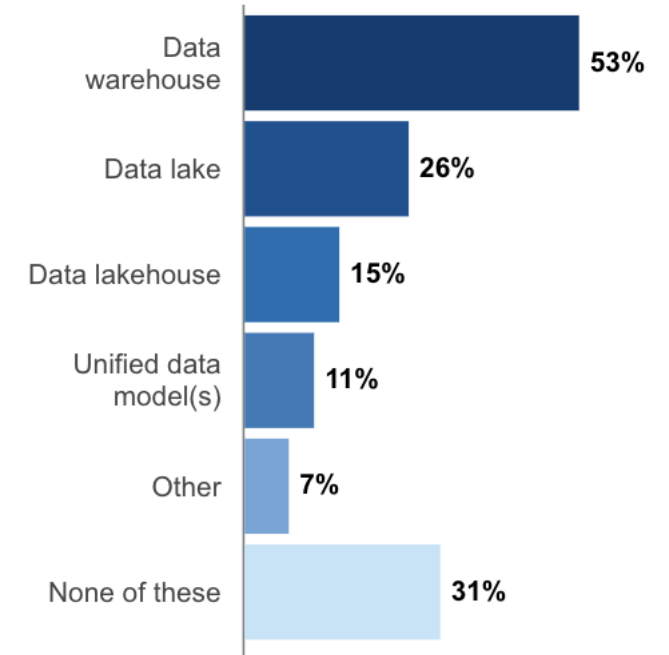Has a data function structure that supports analytics needs.
52% | 62% | 44%

Has the necessary tools for faculty, staff and administrators to access key institutional data.
48% | 59% | 39%

Makes data analytics a strategic priority.
52% | 53% | 52%

CTOs who indicate their institution has the following for storage and/or use of institutional data, selecting all that apply:

Data warehouse — 53%
Data lake — 26%
Data lakehouse — 15%
Unified data model(s) — 11%
Other — 7%
None of these — 31%

"Colleges and universities have to be in control of how AI is being used unless they want the private sector dictating how it will be used at their institutions."

—Chris van der Kaay,

Higher ed consultant specializing in AI policy/former college CIO

Source: "Agency at Stake: The Tech Leadership Imperative," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 1, 2025

Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A

Thank you!