

At University of California, Riverside, Google AI accelerates experimentation, innovation, and practical solutions to everyday challenges

About University of California, Riverside

A member of the world's most prestigious public university system, University of California, Riverside serves over 26,000 students on a 1,200 acre campus in California's inland empire region.

With students facing the challenges of an AI-driven future and the need to learn how to use AI responsibly and effectively, UC Riverside added Gemini's AI capabilities to the Google ecosystem of solutions long in use by students and staff.

[University of California →](#)



Preparing students for the future of AI

As educators explore the value of artificial intelligence for research and learning, higher education institutions seek opportunities to be leaders in AI adoption. University of California, Riverside, longtime adopters of Google tools like Workspace and Drive, is now using Gemini for Google Workspace to make AI broadly available across its community—for students, faculty, and administration.

[Gemini for Google Workspace →](#)



“With the Gemini app, we've empowered the entire institution with private and secure generative AI at scale and, importantly, with appropriate safety protections, for our faculty, staff and administration who want it, we're supporting their research and helping them improve their productivity and creativity with Gemini for Workspace.”

Matthew Gunkel,
Chief Information Officer, UC Riverside

For the university's large student community, access to AI tools is necessary because campus leaders like Matthew Gunkel, UC Riverside's Chief Information Officer, want students to be skilled and prepared for an AI-driven world.

"UC Riverside is ranked first in the nation for social mobility for a reason. We would be remiss in our efforts to improve our students' socioeconomic outcomes if we didn't provide them access to AI. We need to prepare them for a future where they'll need to know how to leverage AI tools effectively in their work environments."

Matthew Gunkel,
Chief Information Officer, UC Riverside

Reshaping education around AI

UC Riverside is in an exploratory phase with AI for students, as educators and administrators research how AI supports existing teaching and learning principles.



"On the classroom side, educators are still exploring how they allow their students to interface with the tools. Students are going to use AI one way or another, and we should respond accordingly. It's incumbent upon us to reshape the educational experience around AI."

Matthew Gunkel,
Chief Information Officer, UC Riverside

By offering students access to Gemini as part of their Google Workspace accounts, the university encourages students to engage with AI within the school's academic framework. The University of California continues to evolve its system-wide AI use policies and guidance.

Students may discover that AI "is analogous to a calculator," says Gunkel. "We can do math, but math is just much faster and easier on a calculator. We can write, but it's faster and easier with help from Gemini. It's also faster to do multimodal development with AI—for example, slides that incorporate written copy, disparate data sets, and images from various sources."

Tapping the value of NotebookLM

On the faculty side, UC Riverside educators are experimenting with NotebookLM, Google's personalized AI research assistant that is grounded in sources users add themselves. For example, professors are asking students to use NotebookLM in their coursework.

"They've had their students working with controlled sets of literature in NotebookLM that students are then expected to query," Gunkel explains. "The students still have to synthesize their own thoughts, but they do so based on the responses from the AI, which cite the sources." NotebookLM's closed datasets provide easily controllable boundaries for using AI in the college setting.

NotebookLM →

Rich Yueh, Assistant Professor of Teaching in Information Systems, asked his class to use NotebookLM as a debate partner. Students upload their interpretations of readings and materials, along with a short position paper, to NotebookLM. "They can debate with this version of themselves on NotebookLM to find weaknesses in their original argument or to test their understanding of the material," Yueh says.

Being in the exploratory phase with AI means lots of “what if?” style of experimentation. “We come at the issue from a training perspective,” Gunkel explains. “Some of it is ethical training — helping them understand, ‘What’s an ethical use of the tool?’ And some of it is functional training that seeks to answer ‘What is it capable of, and where can we begin to leverage that in our teaching and learning?’”

Creating innovative applications that streamline admin

On the administrative side of campus, UC Riverside hopes to build what Gunkel calls “bespoke” productivity enhancements in the future, using Gemini. These might be simple automations that take advantage of Gemini’s ability to reach across apps, or more involved use cases developed with [Vertex AI](#), [Model Garden](#), or other tools in the [GCP AI toolkit](#).

“We’re excited to see the ability to reach across multiple Workspace applications with our requests,” says Gunkel. “Now I can actually make a request to Gemini from my email, and it will know to use a certain Google Doc in Drive to retrieve information. We’re starting to see those scenarios come to life, where Gemini has an understanding of the information within the user’s access.”

Gunkel’s team also plans to use Gemini enhancements to help with security, data visualization, and coding and development.

“We’re interested in how AI can streamline the work that people do by actually taking actions on their behalf,” he says. Programmers have already built automations that autofill fields in forms that students and others need to complete, including admissions forms. On the table for the future are Gemini-driven enhancements for use cases in advising, financial aid, and forecasting for class schedules.

Thanks to Google’s security safeguards, Gunkel and his team are confident their data is protected when using Gemini. “The safeguards Google has in place provide a space where we can work in the sandbox safely to test different concepts, which is really important for us,” he adds.

Next step innovation

By using Gemini, the university’s IT department is improving its abilities to write code for complex functions, and to manage quality assurance and testing. “We’re also seeing increased productivity in our ability to do analysis and understand complex documents,” Gunkel says. “We’re also on the edge of being able to use multimodal AI for classroom content creation at increasing scale.”

Looking past the near-term period of experimentation with AI and Gemini at UC Riverside, Gunkel says the next stage will arrive when the rules for AI are established by the University of California, and the university community can innovate — especially in the sciences.



I think we’ll see more situations where multimodal AI plays a role - for example, other Google tools and Gemini that can work together to pull out needed information and translate it into useful data. There are going to be game-changing opportunities in lab environments and experimental spaces.”

Matthew Gunkel,
Chief Information Officer, UC Riverside