NACADA 2026 · VIRTUAL

ONE COORDINATOR, 9,000 STUDENTS

A Data-Driven Model for AI-Enhanced Career Coaching at Scale

Institutional Reach: 9,000 · Engaged Sample: 322 students across 556 appointments.



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All figures reflect a data cut through 4 August 2026 and supersede the figures in the accepted proposal abstract. Several measures were also recoded using a revised methodology; see the limitations slide.

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THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM

Career advising sits outside academic advising, while hiring becomes AI-mediated

67%

of HR professionals disagree that their organization has been proactive in training or upskilling employees to work alongside AI

Employers are deploying AI faster than they are preparing people to use it. The work has to start earlier.

SHRM, 2025 Talent Trends

19.3%

of career services respondents integrate career exploration with academic advising (Koc et al., 2018, as cited in Streufert, 2019).

43%

of organizations use AI in HR tasks, up from 26% in 2024 (SHRM, 2025).

51%

of AI-using organizations apply it to recruiting. Of those, 66% write job descriptions and 44% screen resumes (SHRM, 2025).

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WHY THIS IS AN ADVISING QUESTION

Not a career services question. A session design question

28%

of students said their advisor gave beneficial help on post-graduation career options.

Gallup, 2017, as cited in Streufert, 2019

1 in 3

advisors may not have career planning in their job description at all.

NACADA national survey, 2011, as cited in Streufert, 2019

THE GAP IS IN YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION, OR MISSING FROM IT

Gordon argued in 2006 that the term career advising should one day disappear, because it would be so ingrained in academic advising that a separate designation would be unnecessary. Twenty years on, that has not happened. Nothing in this session requires a career services title. It requires deciding how an advising hour gets spent.

The only thing this model asks of you: the technical portion of your hour can be compressed, and what you do with the recovered time is a design choice you already control.

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TWO FOUNDATIONS, ONE PRACTICE MODEL

Trauma-informed default plus AI as accelerator

FOUNDATION 1

Trauma-Informed Default

Every session opens with safety building, agenda setting, and student choice. Not because every student has disclosed trauma. Because the neurobiology of stress affects the cognitive functions students need to make career decisions.

Grounded In:

- SAMHSA six principles (2014)
- NACADA and Jana's Campaign framework (2025)
- Henshaw (2022) neurobiological evidence

FOUNDATION 2

AI as Accelerator

AI compresses the technical labor of career work: resume formatting, ATS scoring, Boolean search construction. The compressed time becomes bandwidth for the human work the neurobiology of trauma actually requires.

Grounded In:

- NACADA AI Foundations eTutorial (Human-In, Human-Out)
- Akiba and Fraboni (2023), AI for empowerment
- USI AI Advisory Committee policy

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INSIDE ONE 60-MINUTE SESSION

Where trauma-informed practice and AI-assisted technical work meet

MIN 1 – 10	MIN 10 – 25	MIN 25 – 40	MIN 40 – 55	MIN 55 – 60
Safety & Agenda	Resume & ATS	LinkedIn	Job Search	Next Steps
Trauma-informed opening, student sets the starting point	Student inputs their own document	Keywords, narrative voice, headline	Boolean strings, target companies, alerts	Written takeaways, return booking

2.69
topics named per documented note

67.4%
of documented notes name 2+ topics

1,030
median characters per session note

Topic counts are keyword-derived from session notes and describe documentation, not everything delivered.

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TRAUMA-INFORMED & AI, OPERATIONALLY

The mechanism, not the assertion

STEP 1

Technical labor consumes the hour

Resume formatting, ATS optimization, and Boolean search construction are time-expensive and cognitively low-value for the coach.

STEP 2

AI compresses that labor

A resume pass that consumed thirty minutes takes ten. An email response that took forty-five minutes takes twelve.

STEP 3

Compressed time becomes bandwidth

Safety building, emotional regulation, and cognitive scaffolding: the work the neurobiology of trauma actually requires.

THE NEUROBIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Henshaw (2022) reports evidence that trauma has neurobiological impacts on concentration, memory, executive functioning, and information processing. Those are precisely the cognitive functions a student needs to make a career decision, articulate a value proposition, or evaluate an offer. Opening a session with safety building is not softness. It creates the cognitive conditions under which the career work can be done at all.

JANUARY TO AUGUST · 2025 AND 2026

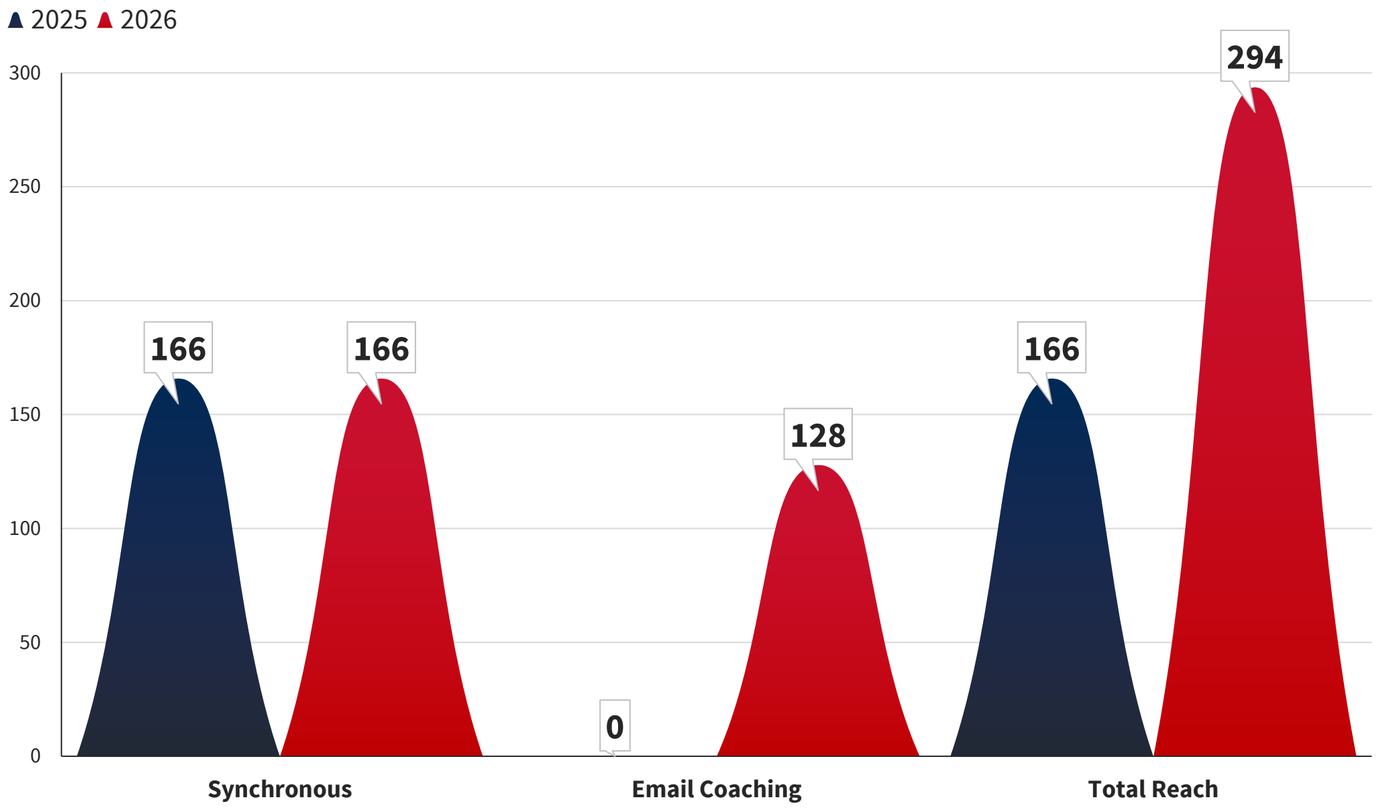
166 & 166

My synchronous capacity did not grow by a single appointment.
My total reach grew 77%.

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WHERE THE GROWTH HAPPENED

Identical calendar windows, 3 January to 4 August, my appointments only



KEY FINDING

Synchronous volume was identical. Total reach rose 77%.

166 synchronous appointments in each window. Every appointment of growth came from a channel that did not exist before Fall 2025.

Two Caveats.

The email channel became AI-assisted and logged in the same term; this data cannot separate the two. And synchronous counts include no-shows. Attended sessions ran 163 then 155, so attended volume fell slightly while reach rose.

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ONE DEPARTMENT, THREE PRACTICES

Synchronous coaching only, normalized per active week

	Coordinator A	Coordinator B	Coordinator C
Active window	**80 weeks**	82 weeks	59 weeks
Synchronous appointments	**426**	348	221
Appointments per week	**5.33**	4.25	3.72
Distinct students	**315**	287	170
Visits per student	**1.35**	1.21	1.30
Return rate	**21.9%**	13.9%	20.6%
Documentation rate	**95.0%**	95.6%	94.6%

WHAT VARIES IS CHANNEL DESIGN, NOT COACHING QUALITY. Synchronous rates sit within a narrow band across all three practices. The office difference is asynchronous: 130 of the department's 147 email coaching records belong to Coordinator A, in a channel that did not exist before Fall 2025. Reach expanded by adding a channel, not by out-working anyone.

Coordinators de-identified. Note-derived measures, including AI and topic rates, are excluded: median note length ranges from 156 to 1,030 characters across the team, so those rates reflect documentation practice as much as coaching practice.

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WHERE THE COMPRESSED TIME WENT

Capacity redirected to program building, and what that evidence settles

BUILT IN THE SAME WINDOW

GENS 401

A dormant course code rebuilt from nothing: new curriculum, no surviving content. One credit, eight weeks, asynchronous. Ran Fall 2025 and Spring 2026.

Career Excellence Series

Nine modules with the School of Graduate Studies, 6–10 April 2026. Video, guide, and slide deck each: 27 published artifacts.

Your AI Co-Pilot Career Toolkit

102 pages, published openly on the USI site, free to any student, alumnus, or visitor.

NACE Article

“The Ghostwritten Candidate,” published 17 June 2026. 17 sources.

Presented & Disseminated

Colloquium keynote and live workshop, April 2026. Solo session at CDPI, May 2026. Co-presented at NACE26 Denver, June 2026.

GENS 199 reverse-engineers the same frameworks for first- and second-year students. Launches Fall 2026. The two courses articulate but neither is a prerequisite.

WHAT THIS SETTLES, & WHAT IT DOES NOT

- **My caseload did not fall.** 166 synchronous appointments in each window, and still the highest volume in the office at 5.33 per week. Added staffing would show up as a lighter personal load. Mine did not move.
- **Staffing did change in the same period.** Two coordinators became three in June 2025. I cannot divide the freed capacity between that and AI compression, and I will not pretend the data can.
- **The redirection inside the session is not measured.** What happens to a recovered minute during an appointment is the half of my mechanism I cannot evidence.
- **The courses are small.** One credit, eight weeks, 15 students then 9. New teaching load, but modest. The build was the work, not the contact hours.

Series and toolkit are publicly hosted at usi.edu and independently verifiable.

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WHAT GETS DONE, & WHAT GETS WRITTEN DOWN

A correction, and what it taught me about measuring practice

AI NAMED IN NOTES, BY NOTE LENGTH (FALL 2025 ONWARD)

Shortest fifth	*604 chars*	**12.8%**
Second	*940 chars*	**20.5%**
Middle	*1,233 chars*	**24.7%**
Fourth	*1,531 chars*	**34.6%**
Longest fifth	*2,071 chars*	**56.4%**

The proposal for this session claimed AI in 73.3% of appointments. The current coding puts it at 38.6% of synchronous appointments in the fully documented period.

Both cannot be right. The gradient on the left is why I think the truth sits above the measured number: AI naming tracks how much I wrote, not whether AI happened. It does not reach 100% even in my longest notes.

So, I report the floor and name the gap. A practice that becomes routine stops getting written down. Our next appointment template adds an AI Tools Discussed field, so this becomes a measured variable rather than a keyword estimate.

*Every student I coach receives the Your AI Co-Pilot Career Toolkit. That distribution is verifiable. The **38.6%** is what my notes name, and it is a floor.*

THE FINDING I DID NOT EXPECT

I could not evidence the thing I do most.

The practice was real. The record was not.
That is a design problem, and it is fixable in advance.

I Believe It.
I Cannot Evidence It.

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LIMITATIONS

What I would want to know before adopting any of this

Single practitioner, single institution

External validity has not been independently established. Durability across four staffing configurations is suggestive, not proof.

Self-coded, no inter-rater audit

Topic coding was performed by the practitioner of record. Precision and recall are unmeasured. A human-coded sample of 30 to 50 appointments would establish an error rate.

A documentation change mid-window

Documentation rose from 83.6% to 99.7% in Fall 2025. Any measure derived from notes moves partly for that reason.

No outcome data of any kind

No placement, offer, salary, or satisfaction data exists in this record. This is a service delivery and relationship analysis, not an impact study.

Topic dictionary not externally validated

Sixteen keyword patterns built for this analysis and checked by sampling, not by systematic human coding. All topic rates are estimates.

Left censoring at the window start

Students whose first appointment predates 3 January 2025 are coded here as first visits when they were not.

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WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE MONDAY

A three-phase adoption path that needs no budget and no new system

PHASE 1 Months 1 – 2

Observe

Document what you already do. Track appointment types and note patterns. Add no tools yet.

Key Question

What am I already doing that I am not measuring?

PHASE 2 Months 3 – 6

Integrate

Introduce one tool, with the student population that benefits most. One tool, not a stack.

Key Question

Which students are most ready, and which tool serves them first?

PHASE 3 Months 7+

Evidence

Review your own data. Build a one-page impact brief for the person who controls your resourcing.

Key Question

What story does my data tell, & who needs to hear it?

START WITH PHASE 1, AND DO NOT SKIP IT. I ran phases two and three well and phase one badly, which is why I spent this summer reconstructing eighteen months of practice from note text instead of reading it off a field. Two months of documenting what you already do is the cheapest work in this entire model and the only part that cannot be added retroactively.

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AI USE, FERPA, & INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT

Three principles, institutionally backed, not improvised

01 No FERPA Data, Ever

No names, IDs, grades, or advising notes enter consumer AI tools from my side. The student inputs their own information in real time while I coach the interpretation.

02 AI Is Never The Decider

AI does not decide who is on probation, who receives an accommodation, or who gets recommended. Practitioner-side use is limited to de-identified resource development.

03 Institutional Alignment

USI's AI Advisory Committee sits under Data Governance. The Code of Student Behavior was updated in August 2023: unauthorized generative AI in submitted coursework is an integrity violation. Career coaching is not coursework, which is why this practice sits alongside the policy, not against it.

NACE TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCY: AI literacy operationalizes the Technology competency, understanding and leveraging technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. Students are graduating into hiring processes that are already AI-mediated. Advisors who engage with AI thoughtfully model ethical use; advisors who refuse leave students to encounter it unprepared.

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TAKEAWAYS & DISCUSSION

THREE TAKEAWAYS

1 Synchronous capacity is fixed. Channels are not.

166 appointments in each window. All growth came from adding a compressible channel.

2 AI compresses labor. What you do with the time is a choice.

The tool creates bandwidth. The practitioner decides whether it becomes depth or throughput.

3 Measure the practice you want to claim, before you claim it.

A practice that becomes routine stops being written down. Build the field first.

THREE PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION

Q1 Where in your current session structure does technical labor consume time that could be relational?

Q2 What institutional policy governs AI tool use with student data on your campus, and who owns it?

Q3 What do you already do well that your records cannot currently evidence?

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NINE THOUSAND IS OUR ENROLLMENT.

It was never going to be one person's reach.

NACADA 2026 · VIRTUAL

THANK YOU.



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