

13.0% Growth Gap in U.S. Colleges

The fastest vs. slowest university expansion — a hidden AI workforce imbalance

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THE DATA

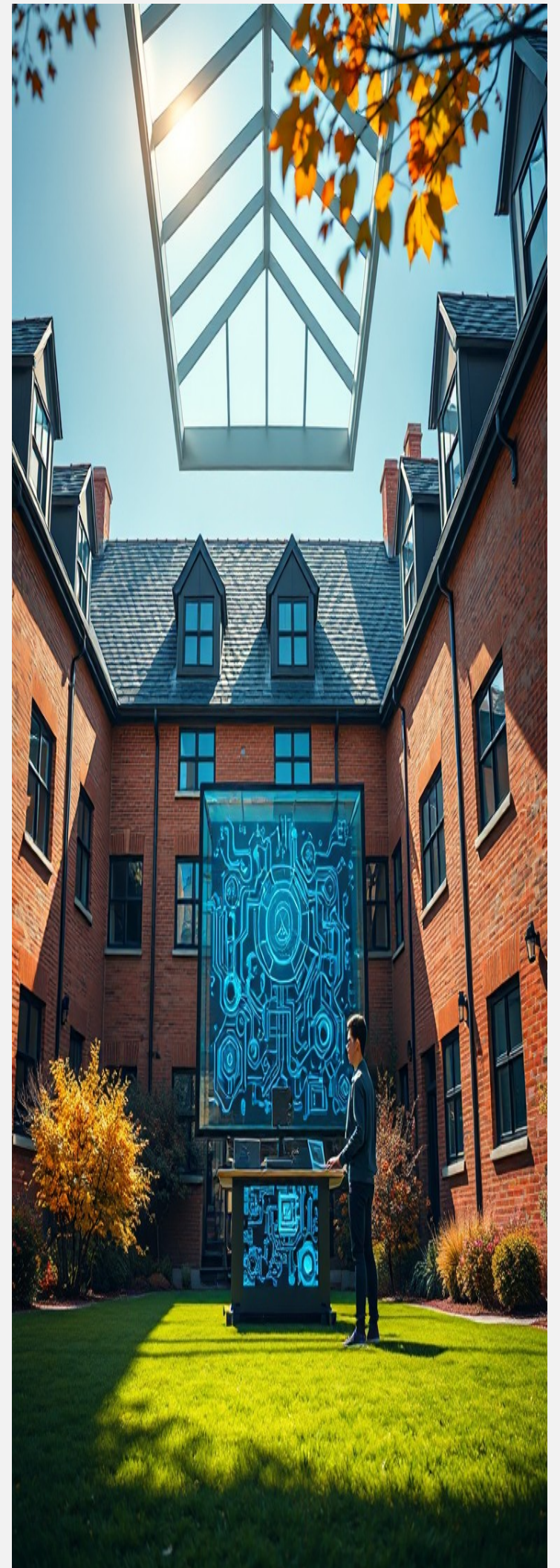
13.0%

Spread Between the Fastest and Slowest Growth in Colleges and Universities

The difference in college and university growth rates between Nevada and South Carolina across all 43 U.S. states.

This 13.0% spread — calculated as the difference between the top (Nevada at 38.1%) and bottom (South Carolina at 7.8%) growth rates — reveals a structural imbalance in higher education expansion. The gap is not random; it reflects divergent investment, demographic trends, and innovation infrastructure. States like Nevada, with strong tech and education incentives, are outpacing others, particularly in regions with less institutional capacity.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2019 and 2022, NAICS 6113 (Colleges, universities, and professional schools) · Published September 24, 2026
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-24-ai-higher-ed-dive-6113-state>





01

Growth Correlates With AI Readiness

The states with the highest university growth — Nevada, Utah, Indiana — are also those with aggressive AI and data science workforce development initiatives. These regions are not only expanding academic infrastructure but doing so with forward-looking curricula in machine learning, quantum computing, and AI ethics. The correlation suggests that universities are becoming primary nodes in national AI talent ecosystems, not just educational providers.



02

Stagnation Is a Strategic Risk

South Carolina's 7.8% growth rate, while modest, reflects deeper systemic challenges — underfunded public research institutions, limited private investment in STEM, and weak industry-academia linkages. For AI in higher education, this is not just a demographic issue; it's a national security and innovation risk. Regions with slow university growth will struggle to produce the next generation of AI researchers, engineers, and policy architects, creating a long-term deficit in intellectual infrastructure.

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