

Free AI Learning Has a Mentorship Tax

Why unstructured access to knowledge fails the next generation of researchers.

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THE DATA

20

Inaugural Cohort Size

The ARTEMIS program launched with 20 early-career researchers selected from across the U.S.

This cohort represents the first group of researchers to receive full, sustained mentorship and technical training in designing randomized evaluations—without which many would never attempt such rigorous research. The fact that only 20 were selected highlights the scarcity of structured support, even in elite academic pipelines.

Source: MIT News • Published November 01, 2026

<https://news.mit.edu/2026/j-pal-north-america-launches-artemis-train-early-career-researchers-1030>



01

Mentorship Is the Real AI Learning Infrastructure

The ARTEMIS program's value isn't just in its curriculum—it's in its sustained mentorship model, which includes proposal webinars, office hours with senior staff, and peer feedback workshops. This level of support is absent in most free AI learning environments, where learners are left to navigate complex research design alone. Without this scaffolding, even the most motivated learners fail to turn ideas into publishable, policy-relevant work.



02

The Real Barrier Isn't Access —It's Confidence

Participants in ARTEMIS initially believed randomized evaluations were 'out of reach.' Their transformation came not from more content, but from being guided through practical steps, receiving feedback, and seeing peers succeed. This reveals a deeper truth: the primary obstacle in AI learning isn't information scarcity, but the psychological and structural gap between idea and execution. Free learning platforms often lack the community and validation that turn potential into impact.

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