

# Agentic AI Can Complete Whole Courses for Students. Now What?

A young tech entrepreneur launched the tool Einstein this week, marketing it as a way to free students from busywork—and triggering robust faculty debate. Einstein’s creator says that was the whole p

By [Kathryn Palmer](#)



Einstein’s creator said he’s troubled by the higher education’s sector focus on credentialism.

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*After this story was published, Paliwal said he received a cease-and-desist letter from Instructure, which owns Canvas, and has since taken down Einstein’s website.*

**T**hree-plus years after the debut of ChatGPT sparked new academic integrity fears, artificial intelligence–enabled tools can do far more than write a student’s research paper. These days, autonomous AI agents can complete entire online courses—and it’s raising questions about the future of teaching and learning.

Earlier this week, Advait Paliwal—a 22-year-old tech entrepreneur who dropped out of the computer science master’s program at Brown University in 2024—launched [Einstein](#), an agentic AI tool specifically designed to connect with the popular learning management system Canvas.

“Einstein is an AI with a computer,” [the product website explained](#) when it first went live a few days ago. “He logs into Canvas every day, watches lectures, reads essays, writes papers, participates in discussions, and submits your homework—automatically.”

# A Pedagogical Problem?

Einstein can help with any subject, including math, physics, computer science, history, literature and economics, and even keeps working when students are asleep.

While such promise may be alluring to some overwhelmed or unmotivated students, Einstein's release this week is intensifying discussion among faculty about policy, pedagogy and the purpose of higher education in the age of agentic AI.

"There have always been students who are there to learn and groups of students who are just there to get the credential. For the students who are there to check a box, [agentic AI] tools are really appealing," said Jonathan D. Becker, an associate professor of educational leadership who specializes in technology at Virginia Commonwealth University. "How do we make the learning experience one that students really want to engage in and not offload it to a machine?"

He added that the courses most at risk of getting offloaded to Einstein—or other agentic AI platforms—are the "transactional," content-based ones that use quizzes, asynchronous discussions and term papers to assess a student's understanding of the material.

That's not necessarily a bad thing, according to Becker.

"The most destructive educational technology we have is the large lecture hall. I would be happy if these technologies forced us to stop putting 400 students in a room," he said, noting that such a change would be costly for institutions. "But if we're really committed to teaching and learning, maybe we're starting to learn that the transactional model isn't going to work anymore."

# Undermining Value of Learning

Other education-technology experts say it will take more than faculty changing their pedagogical approach for the higher education sector to deal responsibly with the implications agentic AI poses for teaching and learning.

“This is an egregious example of how if we don’t design some guardrails or label what is AI-created and what is human-created, then we’re really creating a situation that is not good for human learning,” said Anna Mills, an AI faculty developer and English instructor at the College of Marin. “The temptation [to use agentic AI to cheat] is too intense and the sense of unfairness is too strong for students who are doing the work.”

But Mills and other educators have been raising concerns about agentic AI since before Einstein arrived on the scene.

“If we do not act, we risk seeing the development of a fully automated loop in which assignments are generated by AI with the support of a learning management system, AI-generated content is submitted by an agentic AI on behalf of the student, and AI-driven metrics evaluate the work on behalf of the instructor,” the Modern Language Association wrote in a statement last October.

Two months ago, Mills sent an open letter to OpenAI, Perplexity, Google and Anthropic, asking the companies to program their existing and future agentic browsers to refuse to complete assignments in learning management systems: “Unless you stop your systems from pretending to be students, educators and parents will have to conclude that you intend to profit by perpetrating academic fraud.”

In addition to tech companies, higher education institutions have a responsibility to administer secure assessments so they can both determine whether a student has met their learning objectives and maintain the quality of the course, credential or degree program, Mills said.

Without such protections in place, students who use agentic AI tools, such as Einstein, to fraudulently complete courses could undermine the perceived value of online credentials for every student—even those who are doing their own work.

“Their credits will be suspect and won’t count in the job market unless we can do something about this,” Mills said. “And if we have to move to in-person proctoring to accompany online courses, it will undermine access for a lot of people, including those living in rural areas, working long hours or raising families who can’t make it to a testing center but could do the learning.”

Einstein, which is owned by the tech start-up Companion, only works with Canvas for now, but experts believe it’s only a matter of time before it—or other AI agents—gain access to other learning management systems.

That’s all the more reason why higher education administrators, faculty and students can’t ignore the rapid advancements of AI-powered technology, said Michelle Kassorla, an associate professor of English at Georgia State University, Perimeter College who has written about AI literacy in teaching and learning.

“I’ve used agents in my classes and introduced my students to [them]. We’ve talked about how to use agents appropriately and responsibly. Our students need to have this information,” she said, adding that agentic AI may also require educators to reconsider how they assess learning. “We have to move quickly, because AI isn’t going to wait for us. If we’re not running to keep up with it, we’re going to lose the race.”

## Created to Spark Discussion

The urgent debate Einstein’s launch sparked among educators this week is precisely the kind of outcry Paliwal, its creator, says he wanted—and why he initially marketed it as an explicit cheating tool.

In an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*, Paliwal said he didn’t set out to create an AI agent that can complete a student’s coursework.

“The main goal was to build an agentic AI that has access to a computer, and giving AI access to computers means it can do a lot more than a single chatbot,” he said.

But when one of his student co-workers complained about having to finish an assignment, Paliwal suggested he try using the tool they’d built to run through Canvas and complete the work on his behalf.

“It did it, which was very unexpected for me. I started questioning more and more about what it means to be a student,” he said. “I understand and empathize with the importance of education and learning in society. However, the current version of learning—where education has become credentialism—is something I believe that must change.”



Advait Paliwal

[LinkedIn/ Advait Paliwal](#)

Paliwal wants to make the public aware of agentic AI’s potential to upend higher ed, and he saw creating Einstein and marketing it as a cheating tool as the best way to incite rage and focus attention on the issue. “My fear was that if no one realizes the capability of this project, then the right change won’t happen,” he said. “Or if it happens it’ll be too late.”

The plan worked.

Over the past few days, numerous news outlets and experts have written about Einstein and the implications of agentic AI. Over 124,000 people have visited the website over the past three days and an undisclosed number of them—mostly faculty, few students—have registered to use the product, according to Paliwal.

Paliwal has also received dozens of emails from people—mostly educators—upset or intrigued by Einstein. “I’ve managed to speak with many and we’re all trying to figure out how we can use [agentic AI] to help students,” he said. “I feel like the dialogue is happening, which is why the website has changed.”

Since Einstein’s launch, he’s softened the language of the product’s stated capabilities—though he admitted it has all of the same functions it did a few days ago.

“Stop stressing. Start acing. Einstein does the busywork so you don’t have to,” read the company’s original tag line, whose third sentence has now been changed to “Einstein is the personal tutor every student deserves.”

He’s also discontinued the free trial that accompanied the launch. Access to Einstein now costs anywhere from \$40 to \$200 a month, depending on which plan a customer chooses.

Although Paliwal declined to answer *Inside Higher Ed’s* questions about whether Companion has any private investors backing Einstein, he said he’s already achieved one of his primary goals for the product.

“The only way to make change is to create some sort of understanding of what’s at stake,” he said. “This was a way to create an understanding of what’s happening by showing what’s possible.”

*(This story has been updated to correct Advait Paliwal's age.)*