United Nations University
Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability

AI Learning Lab Webinar Series:

Smart Campuses, Heavy Footprints: The Environmental Contradictions of University AI

Date: 2 December 2026

Time: 18:00–19:00 JST

Modality: Virtual via Zoom

Registration link: Click here to register

Background

Universities are adopting generative AI faster than they can account for its environmental impact. Institutions that can report the energy and water used by their buildings to a recognised standard cannot yet say what their AI use costs are for different reasons. One is because suppliers do not disclose enough and another is because the sector has not agreed a consistent approach to measuring and reporting these impacts. At the same time, the same technologies are being used to monitor energy, manage estates and teach sustainability. This webinar examines that contradiction: how universities are using AI, what it is costing environmentally, how far that cost can currently be measured, and what universities, networks and suppliers would need to do to make it reportable.

This webinar is co-organized by the member universities from the Action Group of Futures of Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence (AI) under the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) framework, and the Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net).

18:00–18:03	**Welcome Remarks & Overview** *By: Jonghwi Park (Head of Research, UNU-IAS)*
18:03–18:08	**Context: "The University Footprint and the AI Contradiction"** *By: Usha Iyer-Raniga (Professor, Sustainable Built Environment, RMIT University, Australia)*
18:08–18:20	**Demonstration: "Estimating a University's Generative AI Footprint, and the Limits of What Can Be Known"** *By: Gunter Saunders (Director, Digital Capability Development & AI Leadership, University of Westminster)* *Doug Specht (Head, School of Media & Communication, University of Westminster)*
18:20–18:45	**Panel discussion (responding to the demonstration)** *Moderated by: Usha Iyer-Raniga* • **Teaching, learning and research** *By: Subarna Sivapalan (Associate Professor of Education, Associate Dean, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia)* • **Campus operations and procurement** *By: Ma. Margarita Christina A. Lacdao (Program Manager for Sustainable Development Goals, Ateneo Institute of Sustainability, Ateneo de Manila University)* • **Institutional governance and a regional perspective** *By: TBD*
18:45–19:00	**Open Q&A with audience** **Closing** *By: Jonghwi Park*

Target Audience

University leaders, institutional researchers, policymakers, higher education professionals, students and other education stakeholders interested in AI's role in sustainable university management.

Modality

The webinar will be held online via Zoom, combining live presentations, pre-recorded contributions, and an interactive session. Participants are kindly requested to join the Zoom meeting at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the webinar to ensure a timely and smooth commencement.

Language

This webinar will be conducted in English. Please note that interpretation services will not be available.

Contact Information

For any inquiries, please contact: hesi.unu@unu.edu