Get Certified! A USM Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon

USM faculty are invited to take part in a Fall 2026 "AI Learn-a-Thon" to earn the Google AI Professional Certificate via no-cost access. Faculty may register for the Learn-a-Thon on a rolling basis starting on Tuesday, October 27th through Friday, November 13th at 3:00 pm ET. Additional important dates and deadlines are included below.

This invitation contains important details about this program. Please review it carefully. Contact cai@usmd.edu with questions, referencing "Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon" in the subject line.

Eligibility

USM faculty of any rank or appointment type whose primary role at their institution is faculty, provided your institution has elected to participate. To find out if your institution is participating, please consult the registration form.

The Commitment

A learn-a-thon, like a telethon or a hack-a-thon, is characterized by a burst of activity over a discrete time period. The Google AI Professional Cert is an 8-course program designed to build practical generative AI skills through readings, videos, and hands-on labs and projects. The Certificate takes approximately **10 to 15 hours total** to complete, with participants engaging with text, videos, quizzes, labs, and projects. In a little more than 3 weeks, you can get certified!

How It Works

The Certificate is self-paced and asynchronous and is hosted on the Coursera learning platform. After completing the Kirwan Center registration form, you will be invited to enroll in the Certificate via your institutional email address, and you will be prompted to create a Coursera account if you do not already have one connected to your institutional email address. *Do not enroll in the Certificate yourself from the internet.*

Drop-In Hours

To help you maintain momentum, the Kirwan Center will be hosting optional **virtual work sessions on Monday, November 2nd, 9th, and 16th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm ET**. These will be unstructured sessions and are designed to help you make regular progress by building in mutual accountability with other participants. By registering, you will be invited to these optional drop-in hours.

Incentives to Complete by November 20th

USM faculty who have completed the AI Professional Certificate as indicated in Coursera by **12:00 pm ET on Friday, November 20, 2026** will have the option for their names to be included in a random drawing for **one of 10 virtual registrations for the 2026 AI In Education virtual conference** hosted by Magna Publications. The conference takes place live online on **December 1 & 2, 2026** with conference sessions available on demand through March 2, 2027. Please note:

- The drawing will take place no later than 5:00 pm ET on November 20th. Selected faculty will be notified of their registrations via their institutional email addresses. If you do not receive a selection email from USM by 6:00 pm ET on November 20th, your name was not selected.
- There are no substitutions for these complimentary registrations and registrations cannot be transferred. The pool will be USM faculty Google AI Professional Certificate completers who opted in to the incentives on their registration form + additional eligible USM faculty (detailed below).
- Faculty selected for the conference registrations will receive further information about the registration value as taxable income.
- USM faculty who are enrolled in the Google AI Professional Certificate by November 13th at 3:00 pm ET through their home institutions are also eligible for the drawing if they complete the Certificate by 12:00 pm ET on Friday, November 20th as indicated in their institution's Coursera admin account and opt in to the drawing.
- USM faculty enrolled in the Google AI Professional Certificate via USM prior to October 27th are also eligible for the drawing if they complete the Certificate by 12:00 pm ET on Friday, November 20th as indicated in the USM Coursera admin account and opt in to the drawing.
- Any USM faculty members who are enrolled in the Google AI Certificate by 3:00 pm ET on November 13th but have not completed by 12:00 pm ET on November 20th will automatically be granted a 3-week extension. The learning program will close down at 5 pm ET on Friday, December 11th. No further completion incentives will be provided.

To Register for the Learn-a-Thon

Faculty should register for the Learn-a-Thon via the USM Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon registration form using their institutional email address. Faculty may register for the Learn-a-Thon on a rolling basis starting on Tuesday, October 27th through Friday, November 13th at 3:00 pm ET. Registrants will be invited to join Coursera and enroll in the Certificate via their institutional email address within one business day barring any unforeseen delays.

About the Certificate

Visit the Google AI Professional Certificate page for detailed course descriptions. The Certificate is beginner level, and prior experience with AI is not necessary to complete it. Note that the topics are aimed at a general audience, and not faculty specifically.

Gemini Pro Three-Month Trial

Inside the Google AI Professional Certificate, learners will be periodically invited to sign up for 3 months of no-cost access to Gemini Pro to complete a subset of *optional* labs, and learners will be asked to submit a credit card for automatic billing to continue access to Gemini Pro. **FYI, you can complete the Certificate *without* completing these optional labs and without signing up for Gemini Pro.** You will need to skip the Google AI Pro offers when they pop up. If you reach a screen where you are prompted for a credit card, simply return to your previous pages until you

can locate a button, such as “go to next item” that allows you to continue with the Certificate without signing up for Gemini Pro.

Again, the labs requiring Gemini Pro to complete them *are themselves optional* – you do not need to complete them to successfully complete the AI Professional Certificate.

Key Dates

- **Tuesday, October 28, 9:00 am ET –** Registration opens for the Fall 2026 USM Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon
- **Friday, November 13, 3:00 pm ET –** Deadline for Registering for the Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon
- **Friday, November 20, 12:00 pm ET –** Deadline for completion of the AI Professional Certificate to be entered into the drawing for complementary virtual conference registrations, provided you have opted in to be part of the drawing in your registration form.
- **Friday, December 11, 5:00 pm ET –** the Learn-a-Thon Learning Program will be archived and learners removed. Learners will retain their Coursera accounts, any certificates they earned, and their enrollments in other learning programs, if applicable.

Reach out to the USM Kirwan Center staff at cai@usmd.edu if you have any questions, referencing “Faculty AI Learn-a-Thon” in the subject line.