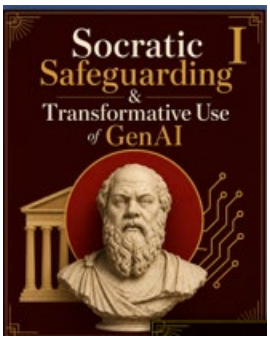
AI & the Academy

Humanity at the Horizon

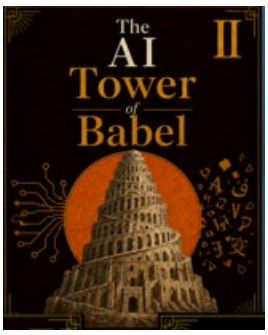
EXECUTIVE SPEAKING SERIES | MITCH COLVER, PHD



I

Socratic Safeguarding & Transformational Use of GenAI

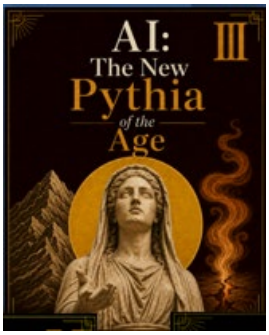
Cognitive debt names the quiet erosion of inquiry, knowledge-building, and metacognition when learners delegate too much intellectual work to AI. This session introduces Socratic Safeguarding, a learning-science framework for designing healthier collaboration with generative systems. Participants learn how cognitive ergonomics, transparent mental models of AI, and purposeful questioning can preserve productive struggle while turning AI into a catalyst for growth.



II

The AI Tower of Babel: Unifying the Conversation About the Human/AI Interface

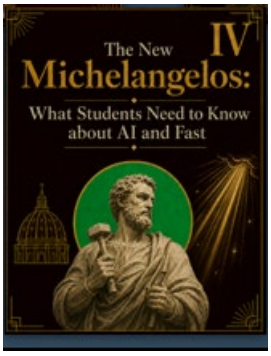
Higher education is discussing AI in several professional languages at once: capability, integrity, risk, strategy, access, and employability. The result is often fragmented policy and competing expectations. This keynote supplies a common conceptual architecture for the conversation. It distinguishes disruption from existential crisis and examines how the battle for the soul of higher education will be fought on both the individual and societal level.



III

AI: The New Pythia of the Age

Frontier models increasingly occupy the cultural role of an oracle: authoritative, inscrutable, and backed by institutions with powerful commercial incentives. This session examines the dialectic between higher education as customer and AI companies as providers. It asks what the industry promises, what it withholds, and whose interests shape the emerging interface. The goal is not technological suspicion, but mature procurement: stronger scrutiny, meaningful accountability, and institutional agency commensurate with what colleges pay.



IV

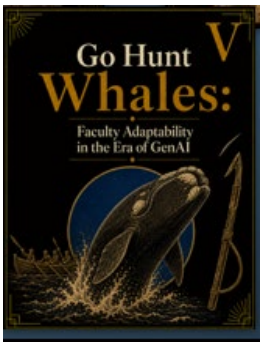
The New Michelangelos: What Students Need to Learn About AI and Fast

When credible prose, images, analyses, and code can be produced in seconds, education must become more exact about the human capabilities it develops. This session considers how curriculum and assessment can make thinking visible, retain productive struggle, and teach students to collaborate with AI without surrendering authorship or judgment. The central question is not whether students will use AI, but what kind of thinkers, creators, and professionals they must become in its presence.

AI & the Academy

Humanity at the Horizon

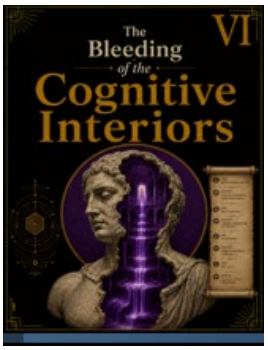
EXECUTIVE SPEAKING SERIES | MITCH COLVER, PHD



V

Go Hunt Whales: Faculty Adaptability in the Era of GenAI

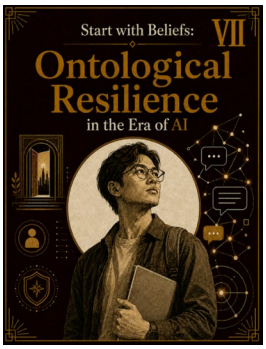
Rapid adoption of AI has left many institutions oscillating between isolated experimentation and reactive policymaking. Designed for academic and institutional leaders, this interactive session reframes AI adoption as a problem of culture and change leadership. Participants use the Beckhard-Harris Change Equation and Diffusion of Innovations to diagnose institutional posture, distinguish responsible experimentation from drift, and identify the leadership choices needed to move faculty communities toward a coherent academic vision.



VI

The Bleeding of the Cognitive Interiors

This session uses a visual metaphor of a *"Möbius Cloud"* to demystify AI, reframe prompt engineering as *context engineering,* and explore how our private *"cognitive interiors"* may increasingly bleed into AI-mediated outputs. With an eye toward bolstering the human/AI partnership, the session advocates for practical shifts toward *Socratic safeguarding, metacognitive hygiene, empowered partnership,* and *digital hygiene* for expanding human capability without surrendering durable skills.



VII

Start with Beliefs: Ontological Resilience in the Era of AI

AI's deepest challenge to the Academy is ontological: what is the nature and value of human existence when machines can imitate increasingly sophisticated intellectual products? Drawing on research about beliefs and educational outcomes, this session argues that institutions must do more than teach tool use. An AI-rich educational culture should cultivate identity, self-awareness, purpose, and intellectual sovereignty, which remain durable human foundations from which meaningful learning, ethical judgment, and resilience become possible.

THE CORE ARGUMENT

Humanity remains our most valuable enterprise.

Across seven distinct 90-minute sessions, "AI & the Academy: Humanity at the Horizon" advances one coherent proposition: institutions should neither resist AI nor submit to it. They should shape the human-AI interface around learning, judgment, privacy, adaptability, accountability, and purpose. Relying on the vast institutional and consulting experience of Dr. Mitch Colver, the sessions help academic communities move from tool-centered reaction to a durable educational vision: protecting what is human while still engaging what humans can become.

mcolver@apus.edu | *www.mitchellcolver.com*