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Case Study

UCLA Anderson School of Management deploys generative AI-powered chatbot to improve student outcomes with Cloudforce nebulaONE®

Key Takeaways

- Incorporated generative AI solutions in existing Microsoft Azure environment
- Deployed a generative AI chatbot for students in less than six weeks
- Designed AI chatbots to improve student outcomes and reduce staff burden
- Developing new solutions autonomously with Cloudforce training
- Preparing four additional new AI-powered chatbots for deployment
- Reduced time spent on a single assignment from six hours to 10–15 minutes

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Executive Summary

UCLA Anderson School of Management (UCLA Anderson) is pioneering generative AI applications in higher education with AI-powered chatbots designed to enhance learning in graduate programs. UCLA Anderson used Cloudforce's proprietary nebulaONE® platform to deploy a custom chatbot for its MBA program in just 45 business days. With training and support from Cloudforce, the school is building generative AI applications on demand to help students navigate large datasets, summarize course materials, and reduce the administrative burden on staff. UCLA Anderson's collaboration with Cloudforce has drawn attention from across UCLA as well as other universities, offering them a blueprint to elevate the learning experience.

Background

The University of California, Los Angeles, Anderson School of Management (UCLA Anderson) prepares business professionals to tackle the challenges of the modern workplace. The school offers graduate- and doctoral-level coursework in business management for about 2,500 students and employs approximately 500 faculty and staff. UCLA Anderson's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program is at the heart of the school, and its leadership is eager to harness the power of AI innovation and empower its students to understand the technology shaping the future of work.

Enhancing higher education with generative AI

With AI innovation and tools driving change in businesses worldwide, UCLA Anderson recognized an opportunity to enhance the academic experience. In 2022 and 2023, as AI tools such as ChatGPT became available, the school began considering how it could incorporate this technology. It established a task force with students, staff, and faculty to explore potential AI use cases and improve the learning experience. "We tried to take a holistic view of what might make sense, some quick wins that could get faculty excited about using AI and encourage students to be more proactive," says Howard Miller, Chief Information Officer at UCLA Anderson.

The school had already migrated its IT infrastructure to the cloud, an essential foundation for deploying AI capabilities. As longtime Microsoft users, UCLA Anderson and its technology teams wanted to incorporate AI tools into the school's existing Microsoft Azure environment. UCLA Anderson asked its Microsoft contacts about the

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best way to turn its vision into reality, and Microsoft recommended Cloudforce to help develop and implement the ideas from UCLA Anderson's AI task force.

"Cloudforce helped us run sessions and zero in on the use cases that make the most sense for our environment," says Miller. "Cloudforce really helped us prioritize what was the art of the possible and what we could quickly do. And ultimately, they delivered, which is the best part of our success story."

Navigating datasets with AI-powered chatbots

As UCLA Anderson began collaborating with Cloudforce in early 2024, the company's proprietary nebulaONE® platform stood out as a practical approach. The nebulaONE® solution is a fully managed, private cloud system that helps UCLA Anderson design and deploy custom chatbots with generative AI.

"A big benefit of the nebulaONE® platform is that it is deployed within our existing Azure environment so that there's security and privacy," says Gabriel Ruiz, Chief Technology Officer at UCLA Anderson. "The nebulaONE® platform provides a rich set of scalable features that helps us quickly deploy an AI chatbot with knowledge of our data and data sources."

UCLA Anderson and Cloudforce conceptualized generative AI-driven chatbots that would help students navigate specific datasets. The school's first deployed chatbot assists students with their MBA capstone project. "We built an app that's meant to be a refresher for all the course material," says Miller. "The generative AI chatbot was designed not to give the student the answer, but to give the student a road map and hypotheses that they ultimately had to defend."

UCLA Anderson is also developing a generative AI chatbot that would help its alumni career coaching staff reduce administrative tasks, freeing them to work more closely with alumni seeking assistance. "We have one and a half full-time employees who serve an alumni community of 40,000 people," says Miller. "And unfortunately, the coaches spend more time on administrative tasks than on coaching, and we'd like to see some of the administrative lift done with AI."

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Gabriel Ruiz, Chief Technology Officer, University of California, Los Angeles, Anderson School of Management

Delivering a generative AI solution in 45 business days

UCLA Anderson was determined to deploy its generative AI chatbot for the MBA capstone project by the beginning of the 2024–2025 academic year, an ambitious completion timeline. Cloudforce delivered the capstone chatbot within an accelerated timeline of 45 business days beginning in April 2024, and the initial results are promising. "There is one assignment that used to take students six hours to complete, and now the generative AI solution can do it for them in 10 or 15 minutes," says Miller. "That allows students to go back and focus on what else is of value because they have those six hours back."

With training from Cloudforce, UCLA Anderson has assumed responsibility for developing AI-powered chatbots and has four others, including the alumni coaching chatbot. The school credits Cloudforce's training on nebulaONE® for empowering its staff to create custom AI solutions. "The thing we like most about Cloudforce is that while we can continue to go back to them for help, we also have the ability to be autonomous because they trained us on how to use their platform," says Miller.

As UCLA Anderson continues designing and deploying chatbots to enhance learning experiences, the technology staff is planning training events to help students and faculty understand AI capabilities. The school wants to inspire users to innovate and come up with new use cases for UCLA Anderson to develop in nebulaONE®. "It's been exciting to see how we are applying generative AI within the environment and how we can further expand on it in a secure and reliable way," says Ruiz.

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Embracing AI innovation to power the future

UCLA Anderson's collaboration with Cloudforce has drawn attention from across UCLA as well as other universities, positioning the school as a pioneer in AI innovation for higher education. As UCLA Anderson continues developing generative AI-powered chatbots for its academic environment, it offers a blueprint for other institutions to follow and better prepare their students for entering the workplace.

The school views its relationship with Cloudforce as a central part of its ongoing innovation with AI. "In this case, the sky is the limit," says Miller. "There is clearly an art of the possible here. I owe it to myself, I owe it to my team, I owe it to people that work for me and the people who trust technology to serve the school to see where we can go with this."

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