



AI Computing Access Program

Information Session & Applicant Orientation

Award Period: Summer – Fall 2026 | **Funded by:** Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE)

hpc@ctaialliance.org | <https://www.theccic.org/collaborations/caia/hpc>

About the Connecticut AI Alliance



A statewide consortium of 21 Connecticut higher education institutions - united around a common purpose.

Who We Are

The Connecticut AI Alliance (CAIA) is dedicated to fostering collaboration across academic institutions, industry stakeholders, and government bodies to advance AI innovation, research, education, and workforce development. Through a network of partnerships, CAIA drives Connecticut's leadership in AI by supporting groundbreaking research, fostering entrepreneurship, and creating a skilled AI workforce.



Our Mission

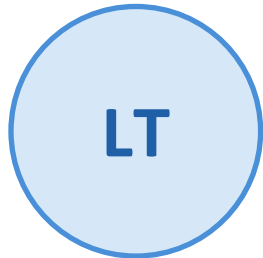
To foster collaboration across academic institutions, industry, and government to advance AI innovation, research, education, and workforce development - driving Connecticut's leadership in AI.



Our Vision

To establish Connecticut as a premier hub for AI innovation, where academic excellence meets industry innovation, driving economic growth and ensuring equitable access to AI resources through responsible and impactful AI development.

Your points of contact for the AI Computing Access Program:

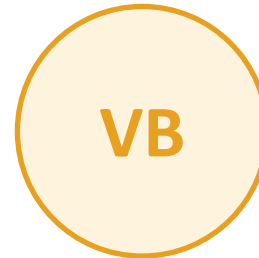


Lauren Thompson

Program Manager

CAIA AI Computing Access Program

- Day-to-day program operations & applicant support
- Application processing & award administration
- Primary contact for eligibility & process questions



Vahid Behzadan, Ph.D.

Technical Lead

Associate Professor & SAIL Lab Director, UNH

- Technical guidance on computing platforms & workloads
- Systems, solutions, and program architecture

Questions? Reach us at hpc@ctaialliance.org

Today's Agenda



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Program Overview



What is this program?

- A statewide initiative funded by the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE)
- Distributes \$275,200 in cloud computing credits across 4 tracks
- Supports faculty and students at all 21 CAIA member institutions
- Covers Summer & Fall 2026 activities
- Administered by the Connecticut AI Alliance (CAIA)

Why does it exist?

Democratize access: AI computing should be available regardless of institution size or budget

Accelerate research: Give faculty & grad students the GPU power for competitive work

Transform education: Enable hands-on, industry-relevant learning experiences

Build community: Foster cross-institutional collaboration statewide

Promote responsible AI: Require attention to ethics, safety, and social impact

Program Tracks



01

Capstone / Senior Design

Award: \$1,000 – \$10,000

Who: Faculty sponsors of undergraduate capstone & senior design teams

Teams working on AI/ML projects; industry partnerships encouraged

02

Faculty & Graduate Research

Award: \$2,000 – \$25,000

Who: Faculty PIs + graduate student researchers

Thesis/dissertation work, model training, grant preliminary data

03

General Education Integration

Award: \$200 – \$3,000

Who: Faculty in ANY discipline — no CS/AI expertise required

AI literacy, LLM interaction, critical evaluation in non-CS courses

04

AI Course Delivery Support

Award: \$500 – \$5,000

Who: Instructors of dedicated AI / ML / data science courses

Hands-on labs, model training assignments, per-student compute

* Total track allocations may be adjusted based on application volume and program balance

Available Computing Services



GPU Computing

Google Colab Pro / Pro+

T4 (16 GB) or A100 (40/80 GB) · Individual/shared Jupyter notebooks

Best for: Model training, fine-tuning, inference, coursework

Unity HPC Cluster (UMass)

- L4, L40s, A100, H100 tiers · Sustained & compute-intensive work
 - Best for: Smaller model sizes, Multi-GPU, batch jobs, long training runs
- JupyterHub (via managed Open OnDemand)
 - Shared persistent environment · Multi-user for classes or research groups
 - Best for: Consistent, repeatable workloads



LLM API Access

Google Vertex AI

Access to Gemini Pro, Gemini Ultra, PaLM 2, and other models.

Prompt engineering & RAG: Build retrieval-augmented generation pipelines

Chatbot development: Custom chatbots for coursework or research

Text classification: Classify documents, labels, or student work

Synthetic data generation: Create training data at scale

AI-assisted analysis: Analyze text, images, or domain-specific content

No-code interfaces available: For non-programming courses — no coding required



Onboarding, Training & Technical Support

CAIA: documentation, webinars & training materials for all awardees **Google Cloud & Unity:** direct technical support & assistance throughout the award period

Eligibility — Who Can Apply?



✓ Eligible to Apply (as PI)

- Full-time tenure-track or non-tenure-track faculty at a CAIA member institution
- Part-time faculty, adjuncts & lecturers who are instructor of record (Course Delivery & Gen Ed tracks)
- Research faculty/scientists with a faculty appointment (Research Support track)

Track-Specific Requirements:

Capstone: Must sponsor at least one team; dept. chair acknowledgment required

Research: At least one graduate student actively involved

Gen Ed: Must be instructor of record; no prior AI expertise required

Course Delivery: Must be instructor of record for an AI/ML/DS course in Summer or Fall 2026

✗ Cannot Serve as PI

- Graduate students (can be co-investigators on Research track)
- Undergraduate students (can be team members on Capstone track)
- Staff without a faculty appointment
- Faculty at non-CAIA institutions (can be collaborators if CAIA PI leads)

i Multiple Applications

Faculty may apply to multiple tracks — provided each application describes a distinct, separate activity. You cannot submit the same project or course to more than one track.

How to Apply



Step 1 Select Your Track

Choose the track that best fits your activity. Review the award ranges and eligibility requirements.

Step 2 Access the Form

Each track has a separate Google Form at <https://www.theccic.org/collaborations/caia/hpc/>

Step 3 Complete the Application

All apps include: instructor info, project/course description, computing requirements, impact statement, responsible use plan, and certification.

Step 4 Submit Before the Deadline

Priority deadline: April 21, 2026. Rolling review thereafter until funds are exhausted.

Step 5 Peer Review

Applications are reviewed by a committee of CAIA faculty for merit, feasibility, and impact.

Step 6 Award Notification

Decisions communicated by May 15, 2026 for the first cycle. Awards are credit allocations in CAIA's cloud accounts.

What Makes a Strong Application?

Be Specific

Describe concrete activities, not general aspirations. What will students or researchers actually DO with the computing resources? "Students will fine-tune a BERT model on historical texts" beats "students will use AI tools."

Justify Your Budget

Show you've thought about how much compute you need. A rough calculation (e.g., $N \text{ students} \times M \text{ GPU-hours} \times \text{cost per hour}$) is far more convincing than a round number.

Articulate Impact

Explain what becomes possible WITH these resources that is NOT possible without them. This is the single most important question reviewers are asking.

Address Responsible Use

Even a brief, thoughtful plan for ethical AI use strengthens your application. Think about data privacy, bias, appropriate use policies, and student safeguards.

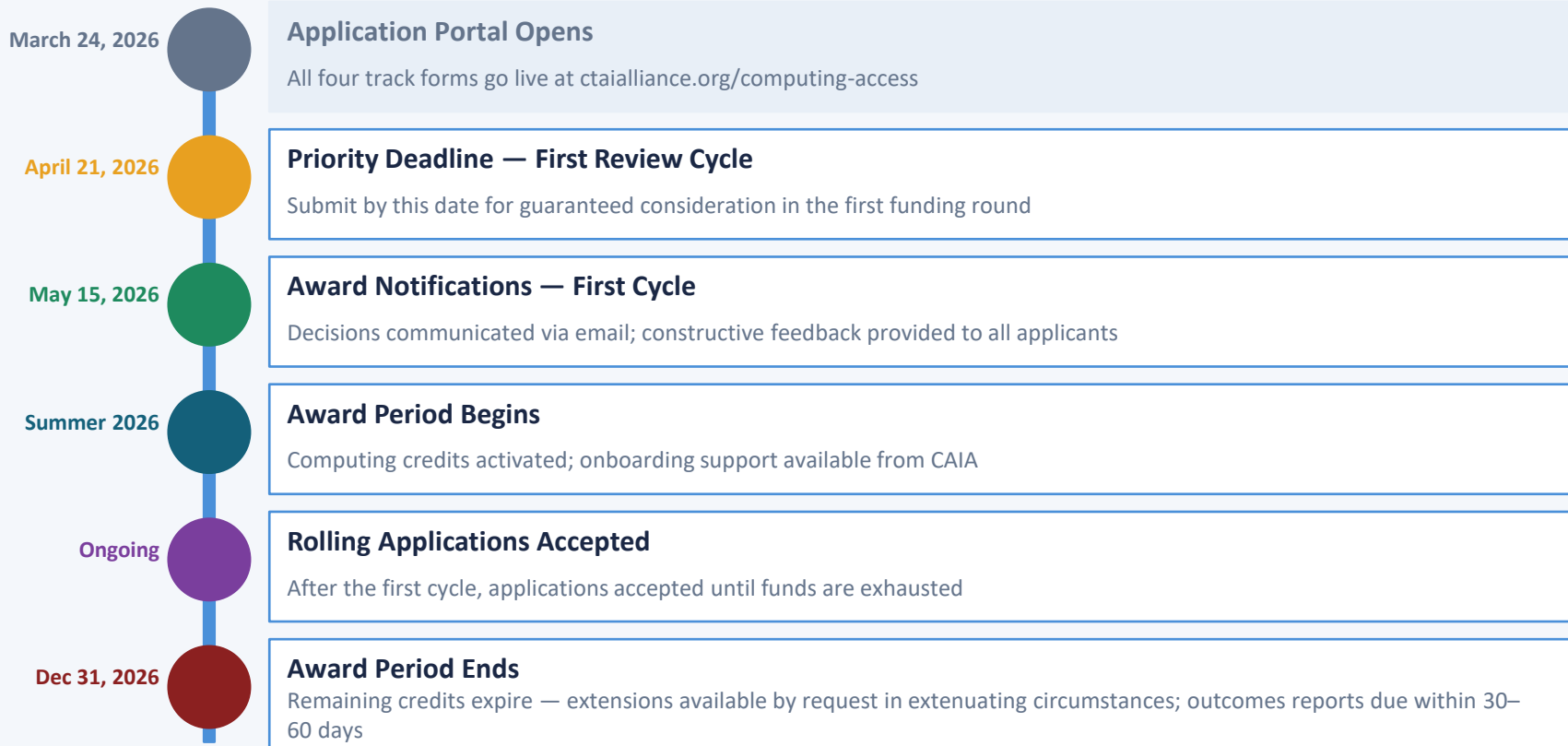
Highlight Collaboration

Cross-institutional partnerships and plans to share deliverables earn bonus points in all tracks. Even a plan to share your materials earns credit.

Don't Oversell Technical Expertise

Especially for the Gen Ed track — reviewers value creative, thoughtful pedagogy over technical sophistication. Apply from where you are.

Key Dates & Deadlines



Award Policies & Reporting



Acceptable Use

- Credits must be used only for the approved activity described in your application
- No commercial use, cryptocurrency mining, or unauthorized transfer
- Credits expire Dec 31, 2026 — written extension requests considered on a case-by-case basis for extenuating circumstances (e.g., ongoing research projects); request before expiration
- Violations may result in suspension and ineligibility for future awards

Reporting Requirements

- Capstone: within 30 days of project completion
- Research: within 60 days of award period end
- Gen Ed & Course Delivery: end of semester
- Failure to report may affect future award eligibility

Acknowledgment

- Acknowledge CAIA and OHE in any publications, presentations, or course materials
- Recommended language: "This work was supported by the CAIA AI Computing Access Program, funded by the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE)."

Data & IP

- All IP remains with the awardee and their institution
- CAIA does not claim ownership of research outputs or course materials
- You are responsible for FERPA, HIPAA, and IRB compliance as applicable
- Keep API keys and credentials secure — never post them publicly

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Can I apply to more than one track?

A: Yes — if each application describes a genuinely distinct activity. The same project or course cannot be submitted to multiple tracks.

Q: Can graduate students apply on their own?

A: No. Graduate students cannot serve as PI but can be listed as co-investigators on a Research Support application led by a faculty PI.

Q: Can unused credits be carried forward after December 31?

A: In general, no — credits expire at the end of the award period and cannot be refunded or converted to cash. However, awardees with extenuating circumstances (e.g., delayed IRB, expanded research scope) may submit a written extension request before the expiration date. Extensions are considered case-by-case and are not guaranteed.

Q: Who owns the IP from work done with these resources?

A: You and your institution do. CAIA does not claim ownership of any research outputs, course materials, software, or deliverables.

Q: I'm not a computer scientist. Can I still apply?

A: Absolutely. The General Education Integration track is specifically designed for faculty in any discipline with no prior AI expertise. CAIA provides onboarding support and no-code interfaces.

Q: What if I'm not sure which computing service I need?

A: Select "Not sure" or "Request CAIA guidance" on the form. The Program Office will recommend the best fit based on your described use case.

Q: Will applicants receive feedback even if not funded?

A: Yes. All applicants in the first review cycle will receive brief constructive feedback from the review committee along with their decision.

Q: What is CAIA and how do I know if my institution is a member?

A: CAIA is a consortium of 21 Connecticut higher education institutions. Check the current member list at ctaialliance.org or email us at hpc@ctaialliance.org.



Apply Today

Priority Deadline: April 21, 2026

Application Forms and Program Info:

<https://www.theccic.org/collaborations/caia/hpc/>

Email: hpc@ctaalliance.org

Connecticut AI Alliance — Smarter Together