Approved by the Board of Trustees

January 23, 2025

**11**

Board Meeting

January 23, 2025

# ESTABLISH THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, URBANA

**Action:** Establish the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning, College of Education

**Funding:** No new funding required

The chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System, with the advice of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate, recommends approval of a proposal from the College of Education to establish the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning.

As a hub of research and innovation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign for investigating the multitude of ways new technologies impact learning and education, the College of Education aims to provide national, state, and local leadership through the establishment of the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning. Bringing together scholarly teams from across the university and drawing upon its deep faculty expertise in technology-enhanced learning across contexts and across the lifespan, the center will initiate and support transformative and scaled-up research initiatives entailing the development of new educational technologies and studies in authentic contexts in K-12, higher education classrooms, and beyond. The Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning builds on the resources and infrastructure of a College of Education initiative, Technology Innovations in Educational Research and Design (TIER-ED), that was funded by a university investment in 2018. Under the TIER-ED initiative, the college established a wide-reaching community of scholars with affiliates from 10 units across campus. The work of the interdisciplinary teams funded by TIER-ED will continue within the center’s new structure. Drawing from TIER-ED’s recent community building around educational technology innovation, the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning will harness the historical strengths of the university into a focused and high-profile effort to transform the landscape of technology-enhanced learning.

The center will be organized around four primary themes: Learning and Interactivity Research, Innovative Technology Design, Impact and Policy, and Digital Access and Equity. The Learning and Interactivity Research theme encompasses scientific investigations of how people learn in the context of interactive digital technologies, such as investigating the effects of interactivity in digital environments on learning, exploring learning contexts and curricular designs involving digital environments, supporting socio-emotional learning with technology, and discussing contexts and advancements in online learning environments. Cutting across these topics are the potential roles of generative artificial intelligence in shaping the kinds of interactions learners have with these technologies. The Innovative Technology Design theme entails developing new digital learning tools that push the frontiers of technology, such as building multi-device platforms for individual and group learning, developing tools for AI applications in education and cybersecurity, applying machine learning, video analysis, and sensor technologies to enhance educational experiences, creating gamified and immersive learning experiences, and developing novel assistive technologies for learning. The Impact and Policy theme involves working with community and industry partners to improve the policy and practice of digital technology use, such as developing research-practice partnerships to enhance teacher professional development, investigating the impact of technology programs in schools, and developing action research with justice-centered pedagogies. The final theme, Digital Access and Equity, addresses significantly pressing issues of access to and equitable design of digital learning technologies.

Finally, although the center is primarily a research unit and will not have a direct instructional component, it will be aligned with academic programs within the College of Education that seek to train and provide students exposure to technology design in educational contexts. The center will facilitate authentic research and development opportunities in these programs.

In terms of facilities, the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning will use the space of its predecessor initiative, TIER-ED, and other existing spaces in the College of Education that can support the center’s research and community-building activities. In terms of expenditures, a stipend for the center director and the four theme leads, as well as a part-time center coordinator and other costs, such as supplies, services, and equipment will come from three primary sources: indirect cost recovery return from sponsored research projects, including a recent $20.0 million National Science Foundation award; gifts and corporate contributions to the college for the explicit purpose of funding educational technology initiatives; and revenue from consulting services provided to other entities at the university. Additionally, given the strategic importance of the Center for Research and Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning to the mission of the college and the high potential of expanding the college’s impact via the center, the College of Education has agreed to commit up to $50,000 in the first year, up to $30,000 in the second year, and up to $20,000 in the third year, in addition to funding the annual cost of the director’s stipend.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further senate jurisdiction is involved.

The president of the University of Illinois System recommends approval. This action is subject to further review by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.