

Usher's New Look Embarks on AI-Focused Collaboration with IBM to Set Students up for Career Success

Collaboration through IBM SkillsBuild will create access to technology training for thousands of young people from communities historically underrepresented in technology



AUSTIN, Texas, March 7, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- SXSW EDU -- [Usher's New Look](#) (UNL) and IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) today announced a collaboration to provide free career readiness training through [IBM SkillsBuild](#). With a focus on [artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#) and professional workplace skills, IBM will provide UNL with training and customized learning plans for student learners. This effort aims to benefit thousands of UNL's young learners nationwide, including high school and college-age youth from communities traditionally underrepresented in technology.

It's increasingly important for students to be equipped with a fundamental understanding of AI and how this technology will shape the workforce of the future. In a recent U.S. [YouGov survey](#) on AI in Education, 61% of respondents reported it is very or somewhat necessary for K-12 students to learn AI-related skills for their future careers.

"It's a privilege for IBM to join forces with Usher's New Look in making a real difference for promising young learners from communities that have been historically underrepresented in technology," said Justina Nixon-Saintil, IBM Vice President & Chief Impact Officer. "As AI continues to be a driving force in the workplace, we believe that IBM SkillsBuild is well-positioned to help students develop the technology skills they'll need to succeed."

Careshia Moore, President and CEO of Usher's New Look, added, "Usher's New Look is dedicated to providing opportunities for young people to expand their way of thinking, and to discover pathways to success. Access to AI and other innovative technological advances will help our students become productive members of today's competitive workforce. We are thrilled to embark on such a dynamic and timely partnership with IBM to help ensure the future of our students."

UNL, a leading nonprofit organization that transforms the lives of under-resourced youth through education, public service, and leadership development, will offer learners enhanced IBM SkillsBuild coursework. This technology training is an important addition to UNL's existing curriculum across leadership, financial literacy, and career-readiness, with IBM as its first education technology partner.

UNL and IBM's education experts are developing customized learning plans for student learners to match their learning levels, providing a simple and enriching experience, which will include AI courses such as:

- Resume-writing with [generative AI](#);
- Build your own AI chatbot; and
- Mastering the art of AI prompting.

Together with professional coursework on skills like public speaking and job interview readiness, these customized learning plans will provide students with a foundational understanding of AI and prepare them for their career searches.

In addition, students will have access to more than 1,000 free courses in IBM SkillsBuild as well as digital credentials, including coursework in AI fundamentals, generative AI, AI ethics, prompt writing, machine learning, AI to help the environment, and improving customer service with AI.

Communities helped by UNL span the United States including Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and New York City. Across these cities and through online learning, UNL will integrate IBM SkillsBuild into its Disruptivator Clubs, Leadership Academy Initiatives, Moguls in Training Program, and the 2024 UNL Disruptivator Summit to be held in Atlanta this July as the largest youth conference in the nation.

The news was announced at [SXSW EDU](#), where Lydia Logan, IBM's VP of Global Education and Workforce Development, participated in a [panel discussion](#) on skills-first practices as a catalyst for inclusive socioeconomic mobility.

The collaboration will emphasize IBM SkillsBuild courses and credentials focused on AI and professional, durable workplace skills. As such, the effort with UNL is part of IBM's [commitment](#) to train two million in AI through 2026.

About Usher's New Look

Usher's New Look is a 501c3 organization founded by Usher Raymond IV in 1999. For 25 years, Usher's New Look has supported a vision that all youth should be afforded the chance to unlock their full potential. Since its founding, Usher's New Look has touched the lives of more than 55,000 young people of all backgrounds from more than 25 countries. While UNL's programming year consists of regional events such as its Leadership Academy, *Disruptivator Clubs* at high schools and organizations across the country and Financial Literacy workshops, the *Disruptivator Summit* is where UNL has the opportunity to dedicate two solid days to working with the attending students, parents, educators and sponsors, and in so doing, provide the youth with the tools they need to ultimately make a difference in their lives and in their communities.

About IBM SkillsBuild

[IBM SkillsBuild](#) is a free education program focused on underrepresented communities in tech. It helps adult learners, and high school and university students and faculty, develop valuable new skills and access career opportunities. The program includes an online platform that is complemented by customized practical learning experiences delivered in collaboration with a global network of partners.

The open version of IBM SkillsBuild is an online platform offering over 1,000 courses in 20 languages on AI, sustainability, cybersecurity, data analysis, cloud computing, and many other technical disciplines — as well as in workplace skills such as

design thinking. Participants can earn IBM-branded digital credentials that are recognized by the market.



The enhanced, partner version of IBM SkillsBuild may also include workshops, expert conversations with IBM coaches and mentors, project-based learning, access to IBM software, specialized support from partners through the learning process, and connection to career opportunities. Visit skillsbuild.org to learn more.

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