

**Friday, October 3 at 9:15 a.m.**

## **The Future is Now: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Workforce Development to Train Smarter, Not Scarier**

**Presenter:** Kollin Napier, PhD, Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN)



**Description:** In this spellbinding session, we'll lift the veil on Artificial Intelligence and reveal why it's no longer just a futuristic fantasy—but a powerful tool that smart employers are using today to enhance their workforce development strategies. We'll begin with an introduction to AI, demystifying the buzz and spotlighting its practical impact on training and staying competitive in a fast-moving labor market. Then we'll conjure up the resources of the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) - a growing force in Mississippi offering tools, talent, and tech to help employers transform their teams. Whether you're curious or committed to adoption of AI, you'll leave with concrete ideas, eerie-good insights, and a few tricks up your sleeve.

**Objective:** Participants will gain a foundational understanding of artificial intelligence (AI), its practical applications in workforce training and development, and the specific resources available through the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network to support employer-driven upskilling initiatives.

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**Kollin Napier, PhD**

**Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network**

Dr. Kollin Napier, an employee of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC), serves as the Director of the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN), the nation's first and only statewide artificial intelligence (AI) initiative. In this pioneering role, Dr. Napier engages with state government, community colleges, universities, K-12 schools, and industry partners to advance AI literacy, strengthen workforce development, drive innovation, and promote economic development.

Under his leadership, MAIN has become a driving force for statewide economic growth by providing free, cutting-edge AI training to thousands across education and industry, empowering individuals and businesses to compete in the evolving digital economy. To date, MAIN has delivered over 20,000 cumulative hours of AI awareness, education, and training and established MAIN AI Labs across higher education institutions, equipping communities across Mississippi with the skills and resources to thrive in a technology-driven future.

Dr. Napier's leadership in artificial intelligence, technology, and workforce development has earned him multiple prestigious honors. He was named 2024 Mississippian of the Year by Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) for driving AI innovation, strengthening industry-education partnerships, and fostering statewide collaboration. In 2025, he received national recognition from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) as the Rising Star Manager Award recipient. He was also recognized as a Reveille 25 honoree by

Mississippi State University for his transformative impact on education, workforce development, and economic growth. Additionally, he received the Hugh I. Peck Research Award from the Program of Research and Evaluation for Public Schools (PREPS) for advancing AI education and research, enhancing learning outcomes, and shaping the future of technology-driven education.

Dr. Napier holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Mississippi State University (MSU), where his research focused on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software engineering. He has contributed to peer-reviewed journals and conferences and holds a Master's and Bachelor's degree from MSU, along with an Associate of Applied Science in Information Systems Technology from Jones College.

Before assuming his current role, Dr. Napier worked as a software applications developer and later as a software architect for the MSU Extension Service. With a unique blend of academic expertise and industry experience, he is a driving force behind advancing computer science education, applied research, and workforce innovation in Mississippi. Through MAIN, Dr. Napier is shaping a technology-driven future—empowering communities across the state and fostering a national dialogue on the transformative potential of AI.