

AI in Higher Education — Weekly Brief

Vol. 36 • October 19, 2026

To: Management Department Faculty, Isenberg School of Management

From: Matthew D. Langenkamp / 雷邁德

Date: October 19, 2026

Re: REA and the Changing Economics of Software

Coverage: October 11–17, with earlier repositories identified as background.

Executive Summary

AI tools can help developers study existing programs and build alternatives. Last week's updates to **Reverse Engineer Anything (REA)** extend that ability. Separate projects are rebuilding familiar Adobe tools. Business schools may also be able to build and adapt their own teaching software. The cost of writing it, however, is only part of the cost of running it.

Reading List

- **Classroom choice.** [Inside Higher Ed's October 14 opinion essay](#) describes writing scholars' dispute over AI guidance and the right to opt out. This is a participant account, not a newly adopted university policy. [1]
- **Institutional accountability.** [The Stanford Daily's October 15 report](#) covers student demands for remedies after university use of AI-altered student imagery. Those demands are not an adopted university ban. [2]
- **Software reconstruction.** [InfoQ's October 17 REA report](#) explains the toolkit; [Fábio Akita's October 13 analysis](#) examines the related Adobe-alternative projects and their limitations. [3, 5]

REA: Studying Existing Software

REA gives AI agents access to software-analysis tools such as Ghidra, Hopper and IDA. An agent can inspect a program's functions, trace their connections and use the findings to write and test a new implementation. MCP, the interface connecting agent and tools, makes this work possible within a coding session. [3, 4]

A developer can therefore ask how a feature works, rather than ask the agent to guess from its appearance. REA's **6.5 release, published October 14**, expanded JavaScript analysis and added ways to inspect database snapshots and other program files. The project predates last week; the update extends its reach. [4]

Rebuilding Creative Tools

The ArtCraft team's separate [Crafting Apps](#) include:

- **PhotoCraft**: a self-described clean-room Photoshop reimplementation, with layers, masks, brushes and PSD-file support.
- **VectorCraft**: vector illustration targeting Illustrator-style work.
- **FilmCraft**: video editing targeting Premiere-style work.

Other projects cover photo development, motion graphics and page layout. Installers are available, though the developers label the programs early alpha or in development. File compatibility and dependable professional use still need testing. [5, 6]

These projects show two approaches to rebuilding software: REA helps an agent investigate a program; the ArtCraft team describes its work as clean-room reimplementation. We found no evidence that REA was used to build the Crafting Apps. [5, 6]

A School-Run Business Simulation

A school could use similar methods to build its own business simulation. We have already reproduced some **Capstone-style functions in a working prototype**, though substantial development and validation remain. [8] REA could help inspect available program files; it cannot recover a simulation engine held only on a vendor's server.

Building the simulation would leave the school with continuing responsibilities:

- **Maintenance**: host the system, fix faults, update software, support users and test backups and recovery.
- **Records**: preserve student decisions, results and assessment evidence across cohorts, with controlled access, reliable exports and a retention schedule consistent with university policy.
- **Accreditation evidence**: connect results to learning objectives and document how findings improve the curriculum. AACSB's assurance-of-learning standard calls for documented assessment and improvement; a collection of game scores alone would not meet that purpose. [7]

Student fees might fall, or part of the fee could support hosting, maintenance and record keeping. Savings would depend on the full operating cost, including staff time. A school-run system would need a budget and an owner, not just a developer.

Implications for Isenberg

Control over the simulation could be as useful as a lower price. Isenberg could add scenarios, decisions and assessments suited to its courses, connect the system to its teaching and record-keeping tools, and revise it as its pedagogy changes. The choice would be whether that flexibility justifies the work of maintaining a dependable service over time.

Notes and Sources

1. CCCC generative-AI committee members. [“How NCTE Effectively Shut Down AI Resistance, Before Shutting Down CCCC.”](#) *Inside Higher Ed*, opinion, October 14, 2026. Participant account; individual bylines unavailable in extracted text. 2. *The Stanford Daily*. [“UGS Passes Resolutions Supporting CareerEd Reform and Student Protections Amid AI Controversy.”](#) October 15, 2026. Article reviewed; resolution not separately reviewed; individual byline unavailable in extraction. 3. Losio, Renato. [“Reverse Engineer Anything Project Brings AI Agents to Binary Analysis.”](#) *InfoQ*, October 17, 2026. 4. morluto and contributors. [REA documentation](#) and [6.5 release notes](#). Notes dated October 13; GitHub publication timestamp October 14, 2026. MIT license. Documentation and release metadata reviewed October 18; no independent benchmark performed. 5. Akita, Fábio. [“AI Reverse Engineering: Is Adobe Dead?”](#) October 13, 2026. Technical commentary; distinguishes analysis tools from complete, dependable replacements. 6. ArtCraft contributors. [Crafting Apps directory](#) and [PhotoCraft README](#), reviewed October 18, 2026. Developer descriptions and current status, not independent benchmarks. The suite predates this reporting week; last week’s commentary is the news hook.

7. AACSB International. [Global Standards for Business Education, Standards 2 and 5](#), reviewed October 18, 2026. Standard 2 addresses sustainable resources; Standard 5 addresses documented assurance of learning and curricular improvement. The record-keeping arrangements above are proposed operating needs, not an AACSB-mandated platform or retention period.

8. Strategy Lab prototype. Our independent Footrace-style simulation currently runs locally on Maxwell, our development computer; it is not yet available to play online. We are happy to demonstrate it to interested colleagues. Substantial development and validation remain. See [Strategy Lab](#) or contact [Matthew Langenkamp](mailto:mlangenkamp@umass.edu).

[The Langenkamp Dictionary](#) · [On Beginning](#) · [Newsletter archive](#) Prepared in collaboration with Thea. Questions: mlangenkamp@umass.edu.