JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND FINANCE

The CSU Artificial Intelligence Strategy: Progress Report

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Summary

This is an information item to update the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees on the status of the CSU's artificial intelligence strategy. This committee last presented to the board on the topic of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in January 2025 to: 1) outline support for systemwide AI program developments to be launched in the 2025 calendar year; and 2) propose the establishment of a systemwide AI strategy that equips the CSU to lead California in:

- promoting equitable access to state-of-the-art AI tools;
- creating key partnerships to incentivize change; and
- leveraging emerging AI technologies for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The CSU system is taking a bold—and necessary—step forward with an innovative AI strategy designed to enhance student success and transform the educational experience. This forward-thinking plan of action leverages AI-powered, personalized learning tools across all disciplines, ensuring that our students are well prepared to become part of an AI-driven workforce. The CSU AI Strategy not only empowers students, but also supports faculty in their teaching and research, as well as addressing critical topics such as academic integrity and the seamless integration of AI in both the systemwide and university contexts. These efforts also align with multiple emergent elements of the CSU Strategic Plan.

A key highlight of the CSU AI Strategy is systemwide collaboration with leading AI organizations, including OpenAI and other major industry partners. Through these partnerships, every CSU student, faculty member and staff member will have equitable access to cutting-edge AI tools, accompanied by comprehensive training to maximize their benefits.

The CSU has pledged to lead the way in the ethical and responsible use of AI, and the system continues to explore tactics for incorporating sustainability and environmental stewardship into the broader AI strategy. The CSU is committed to raising awareness of the environmental impact of AI utilization by embedding sustainability goals into systemwide AI literacy projects and professional development frameworks.

The AI industry recognizes the CSU's leadership. Experts confirm that no other university system—domestically or internationally—is implementing AI programs at this scale. The CSU is setting a new standard for AI integration in higher education, reinforcing our commitment to innovation, accessibility and academic excellence.

This agenda item provides information on the California State University Artificial Intelligence Strategy: "The AI-Empowered CSU." The CSU is embarking on this critical and innovative strategy to ensure that:

1) the system remains at the forefront of technological innovations in education;
2) our students have access to the tools and resources they need to be successful; and
3) workforce development for the State of California continues to be driven by the CSU.

The presentation will cover our emerging CSU AI Strategy and key program developments, which are informed by recommendations from the CSU Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Committee and many other CSU stakeholders, as well as from our industry partners.

Background

Co-sponsored by the Information Technology Services Department and the Division of Academic and Student Affairs in the Chancellor's Office, the CSU's Systemwide Generative AI Advisory Committee was established in 2023 to advise the system on operationalizing guidelines and policy recommendations for generative AI, with a focus on:

- teaching, learning and scholarship;
- applications for enhanced productivity;
- information technology, security and privacy;
- procurement and AI-enabled features in enterprise systems; and
- implications for copyright and intellectual property.

The charge of this cross-functional advisory committee is to:

- update guidance and policy recommendations to reflect the continually evolving AI landscape;
- assess progress on the recommendations of the initial June 2024 CSU Generative AI Committee Report and identify new recommendations as needed;

- support the creation and refinement of shared frameworks for the evaluation and adoption of AI tools;
- support the enhancement of faculty and staff AI capabilities;
- use data and community input to guide AI recommendations, frameworks and efforts; and
- develop recommendations for 2026 and beyond.

Generative AI is a broad-reaching, transformative force in U.S. higher education, with implications for all facets of its institutions. Generative AI requires a dramatic shift in pedagogical practice—one that existing policies, norms and tools may struggle to accommodate effectively. However, generative AI also presents opportunities to enhance the student experience, support student success and improve productivity.

Within the CSU, there is high-level expertise among both faculty members and internal information technology professionals to be leveraged. Simultaneously, students, faculty and staff are discovering together how to learn and create in conjunction with AI tools.

The CSU Generative AI Committee created a report of findings and recommendations in summer 2024, which has informed the current and ever-evolving CSU AI Strategy and the resulting actions.

The CSU AI Strategy outlines a vision and a roadmap that will enable our system to produce the best-prepared, most diverse graduates for an AI-enabled workforce, at an unprecedented scale, and in an optimized and cost-efficient way. This strategy has a four-faceted approach:

1) providing equitable access to cutting-edge tools and training for students;
2) supporting faculty and incentivizing instructional innovation;
3) establishing the CSU–Industry AI Workforce Acceleration Board; and
4) leveraging AI tools to improve administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

The AI Commons Hub

The CSU has created a dedicated online platform that offers AI tools, training programs and certification opportunities, as well as CSU-developed AI solutions, to all students, faculty and staff at no cost. The centralization provided by the AI Commons ensures a broad and inclusive approach to AI skill-building across the system.

Through the AI Commons, CSU students and employees have access to informational resources about AI tools such as OpenAI's ChatGPT Edu, Zoom AI Companion, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, LumenGPT and NRP Nautilus. AI training opportunities and resources are available via the systemwide Canvas system, the OpenAI Academy, CSU Learn and Microsoft Learn. The Introduction to Teaching and Learning with AI for Faculty course has received positive feedback from many faculty members who have completed it.

Adoption and utilization of these AI resources is already promising. Several campuses—including San Diego State, Cal State Monterey Bay and Fresno State—have shared their online AI training courses so that they are now freely available to faculty, staff and students across the CSU, thanks to coordination from the Chancellor's Office.

At this time, systemwide:

- 2,880 faculty members have completed the AAAI Microcredential for Faculty;
- approximately 1,500 faculty have completed the Introduction to Teaching and Learning with AI for Faculty course; and
- more than 300 staff members have completed the AI Tools for Higher Ed Staff and Professionals course, made available just last month, with more sections scheduled for the summer.

Additional AI courses for CSU alumni are planned for the near future.

The AI Commons also provides links to CSU degree and certificate programs that prominently feature AI, campus-specific AI resources, and AI research and grant initiatives, as well as guidance for the ethical and responsible use of AI-based technologies.

Leveraging its scale, the CSU will ensure equitable access to tools, development platforms and training—empowering students with AI learning experiences that prepare them to lead in California's AI-enabled workforce.

AI Educational Innovations

The CSU is supporting faculty to enhance teaching, learning and research by empowering them with AI tools, resources and training. This strategy will enable transformative teaching methods, foster groundbreaking research and address key concerns about AI adoption within the academic environment. Focusing on the needs of faculty and in consultation with key stakeholders, the CSU will support the integration of AI into teaching and learning by providing key resources, as well as incentivizing faculty development and innovations in teaching with AI.

Examples of recent educational innovations utilizing AI include:

ChatGPT Edu: In February 2025, the Chancellor's Office announced the CSU's landmark decision to become the nation's first and largest AI-empowered university system, via a partnership with OpenAI, by deploying ChatGPT Edu, a specialized version of ChatGPT that offers advanced AI tools, security and controls specifically designed for educational institutions. This endeavor is enabling students, faculty and staff across the CSU to use AI to accelerate learning, optimize workflow efficiency, and foster cross-departmental and systemwide collaborations.

Each CSU has developed a roll-out plan tailored to its campus community. As of June 2025, more than 93,000 ChatGPT Edu accounts had been activated systemwide—more than twice the number initially projected for the launch period.

CSU Artificial Intelligence Educational Innovations Challenge: In June 2025, the Chancellor's Office awarded a total of $3 million to 63 faculty-led projects—selected from more than 400 submissions representing 750 faculty members systemwide—in the inaugural CSU Artificial Intelligence Educational Innovations Challenge (AIEIC).

This challenge invited CSU faculty to develop innovative instructional strategies that leverage AI tools, with the goals of integrating AI fluency into curricula, enhancing critical thinking skills and promoting ethical AI use. Projects were evaluated for their potential for systemwide impact, with an emphasis on approaches that could benefit diverse learners across disciplines. The CSU is currently the national leader in exploring and supporting faculty research and in curriculum transformation through AI.

The guiding principles of the AIEIC were:

1) AI Literacy: Teach foundational skills and conceptual understandings of AI in context.
2) Critical Engagement: Encourage questioning, analysis and co-creation with AI.
3) Empowered Ethics: Promote equity, academic integrity and responsible innovation.

Every CSU campus is represented among the winners of the challenge—with a few campuses submitting as many as 40 proposals each—and at least two projects per university were chosen to receive funding to explore creative, scalable and impactful ways of integrating AI into teaching and learning for the benefit of students. Awarded projects span a broad range of academic areas, including engineering, history, ethnic studies, health sciences, teacher preparation, scholarly writing and journalism.

The first goal of the AIEIC—defining AI literacies and competencies—is addressed across disciplines with striking creativity. Faculty aren't simply teaching students to "use" AI tools. Instead, they are helping students to develop a fluent, critical relationship with AI technologies.

As part of the "Utilizing the Information Literacy Framework for the Computer Networks Course at CSUB" project at CSU Bakersfield, for example, faculty will design a generative AI assistant tailored to the university's computer networks coursework, which will merge AI literacy with established information literacy frameworks, such as the standards set by the Association of College and Research Libraries. Students won't just prompt ChatGPT; they will reflect on its outputs, debug inaccuracies and compare the results against established knowledge.

The second goal—critical engagement—speaks to a growing challenge in higher education: how to encourage students to engage in deep learning and critical thinking in the use of AI rather than simply using AI to do the work for them. Many of the funded projects reimagine the student's relationship to the technology. The idea isn't to eliminate AI from the classroom, but to position

it as a thinking partner—one that sharpens reflection, rather than bypassing it. The CSU approach is one of agency. Students are not passive consumers of machine outputs. They are interrogators, editors, partners and even adversaries of AI; students are learning not just *from* AI, but through active engagement *with* AI.
As one example, in selected communication courses at CSU Channel Islands, the "Redesigning Critical Thinking in Communication: Integrating AI as Text, Tool and Topic" project will ask students to analyze AI-generated messages, reflect on media bias and use AI to draft—but not complete—assignments. Generative AI will be a mirror held up to human reasoning, not a replacement for human judgment.

The third goal—redesigning curricula to prepare ethical and empowered AI users and developers—is where the CSU vision takes on its most ambitious form. The projects that focus on these ethical aspects recognize that AI is not a value-neutral technology. Its development and deployment are shaped by cultural values, social dynamics and inequities, and political power structures. Therefore, education that utilizes AI must center equity, access and critical consciousness.

For instance, at CSU Dominguez Hills, the "Revamp Your Course with AI" project will provide professional development for faculty to rework assignments, assessments and syllabi, enabling them to embed ethics, academic integrity and inclusiveness into every aspect of course design.

Additional examples of funded projects include:

- "Artificial Intelligence for Responsible, Ethical and Faculty-Informed Next-Gen Education (AI-REFINE): An AI Course Redesign Institute at Fresno State" (Fresno)
- "Teaching Beyond the Classroom: AI-Supported Retention for Teacher Education" (Long Beach)
- "Redesigning the Psychology Capstone for AI Literacy and Workforce Readiness" (Monterey Bay)
- "Clinical Reasoning in Practice: AI Patient Scenarios for Enhanced Critical Thinking" (San Bernardino)
- "Critical Futures: Bridging Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation to Transform Teaching and Student Learning with AI in American Indian Studies" (San Marcos)
- "Defense Against the Dark Algorithms: A Modular Framework for AI and Critical Thinking Across Area 1B GE Courses" (Sonoma)

Many projects take interdisciplinary approaches or focus on faculty development, equipping instructors with the tools to navigate course design, policy development and classroom practices in an AI-enabled environment. The majority of the funded proposals will conduct extensive research on best-use cases of transformative student learning experiences. These research showcases will be shared among the faculty in order to have the greatest possible impact on future student learning experiences. Faculty will then be able to build upon that research to enhance their students' preparation for the workforce.

The AIEIC projects tell a story of transformation—not of technological disruption for its own sake, but of a deliberate, values-driven redesign of teaching and learning. Funded projects will launch in summer 2025 and will conclude by spring 2026. A complete list of the funded projects is available in the Faculty section of the AI Commons.

The CSU–Industry AI Workforce Acceleration Board

Leaders from the AI technology sector have joined with California government agencies and the CSU system in a groundbreaking effort to collaborate on and to advance workforce development strategies that align with the state's higher education mission of equitable access and to ensure that AI-related opportunities are available to all Californians.

This group, the CSU–Industry AI Workforce Acceleration Board—which includes members of Governor Newsom's cabinet, key CSU stakeholders and representatives from technology industry partners (such as Adobe, Amazon Web Services [AWS], Google, IBM, Instructure, Intel, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Nvidia and OpenAI)—has been created to:

- partner to identify and advocate for the AI skills needed in California's workforce and beyond;
- host a series of challenges for CSU students to address key issues in using AI technology; and
- provide guidance and opportunities by way of internships, apprenticeships and employment for students.

The board has met twice and is currently developing ideas and recommendations to support the CSU's goals of ensuring that its students are well-equipped with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly AI-driven world and enabling them to continue to be strong contributors to California's workforce.

Improved Administrative Efficiency and Effectiveness

The CSU AI Strategy prioritizes students and actively includes faculty, but we are also innovating on the administrative front to enable our institutions to become more efficient. We are currently piloting several system-developed AI tools that will address important administrative needs such as remediating documentation to improve accessibility, more quickly connecting prospective or current students to relevant campus resources, making policies easier to search, and streamlining processes and workflows.

The efficiencies we gain by using AI-enabled techniques such as these will allow our staff to serve students even more effectively in the years to come.

Conclusion

AI has already proven to be a broad-reaching, transformative force in U.S. higher education and in the workforce, and it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. This AI renaissance presents us with unique opportunities to enhance the experiences of teaching and learning; to support student success; and to improve productivity for our system.

The CSU has embraced a range of impressive educational innovations made possible by AI. As we continue to refine the CSU AI Strategy in the coming months, we are confident that we will harness even more important affordances of AI—some of which may be beyond our current imagination.

The CSU AI Strategy represents a coordinated transformation in teaching and learning toward an AI-informed education that is inclusive and future-ready. Students will emerge not just as AI users, but as thoughtful, ethical contributors to the AI-enhanced workplace and to society. CSU faculty and staff are not simply adopting AI tools; they are reimagining what it means to teach, learn and prepare students for an AI-driven world.