

Working Group Executive Summary: Academic Excellence

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1. Opportunity Statement

“How might the Alma Mater of the Nation define the best preparation for citizens and professionals in the age of AI?”

2. Community Engagement Summary

- Groups consulted:
 - All William & Mary Cabinet members (and members of the units that report to them);
 - Various faculty members within CDSP who work extensively on AI matters;
 - Student groups and club leaders associated with AI and related academic activities;
 - Members of relevant alumni advisory boards;
 - W&M community members who attended the first university-wide planning session
- Methods used:
 - Surveys (based on the Strategic Planning engagement report)
 - On-line focus groups
- Community presentations and structured feedback sessions

3. Environmental Scan

Over the next decade, the most successful universities will be evaluated based on whether their graduates can thrive in a changing world that demands that they know how to use AI responsibly and evaluate AI-generated work critically. At the same time, students must be able to contribute their own forms of judgment, creativity, research, communication, and ethical reasoning that AI cannot replace. For W&M, this means moving from today's scattered forms of faculty experimentation to a university-wide approach.

W&M can offer something that larger universities structurally cannot: (1) a size small enough to make close faculty-student mentorship and undergraduate research genuinely universal, and (2) shared values and institutional history that gives W&M unusual credibility to define what integrity means in an AI-assisted classroom.

Some universities may be able to outspend W&M on AI-focused faculty hires and computing infrastructure, and the pace of change means these investments risk becoming obsolete before they are fully deployed. Going forward, a focused set of high-impact investments, including faculty capacity, secure AI infrastructure, curricular redesign, experiential learning, and information literacy, will position W&M for success.

4. Key Themes

- **Theme 1: The cross-cutting disruption brought on by AI will continue to put a premium on adaptability.**
- **Theme 2: W&M's liberal arts and sciences foundation distinguishes the university's academic approach.**
- **Theme 3: Faculty readiness and staff capacity will determine whether ambition becomes execution.**
- **Theme 4: W&M needs a coordinated institutional AI strategy and secure infrastructure, including equitable access to accurate AI models for all faculty, students, and staff.**

5. Strategic Recommendations

Recommendation A: Invest in curricula and interdisciplinary pathways that expand hands-on learning

- William & Mary graduates will be prepared to use, evaluate, and govern AI responsibly within their professions and communities, rather than merely operating particular technological tools. Pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinary research, external partnerships, and distinctive academic programs strengthen the university's competitiveness.
- Resource implications (rated "H"= high; "M" = medium; "L" = low)
 - Financial (M). Moderate investment will be required for curriculum development, faculty incentives, student experiential opportunities, approved software, and selected external partnerships.
 - People (H). Substantial faculty and staff effort will be required to redesign curricula, supervise applied projects, develop interdisciplinary pathways, assess outcomes, and support responsible adoption.

- Infrastructure (H). The initiative will require reliable access to approved AI platforms, secure computing and data environments, instructional support, and specialized research infrastructure for selected programs.

Recommendation B: Expand infrastructure for Information Technology via a secure environment that supports education and research aligned with W&M AI governance policies

- William & Mary should have a scalable and trusted environment for AI-enabled education, research, and institutional operations, reducing fragmented purchasing and unsafe reliance on unmanaged public tools. Faculty, students, and staff will be able to innovate more effectively while protecting privacy, intellectual property, academic integrity, and human decision authority.
- Resource implications
 - Financial (H). Substantial initial and recurring investment will be required for campus-wide licensing, secure computing, cloud or on-premises capacity, integration, training, and technical support.
 - People (H). The initiative will require dedicated expertise in AI architecture, cybersecurity, data governance, instructional support, procurement, legal compliance, and user training, as well as sustained participation from faculty and administrative units.
 - Infrastructure (H). Significant infrastructure will be needed for identity and access management, secure data storage, model hosting, cloud connectivity, monitoring, institutional integrations, and potentially GPU-enabled on-premises computing.

Recommendation C: Make W&M Libraries a campus hub for AI literacy and emerging technologies

- The initiative will give all members of the William & Mary community equitable access to emerging technologies while strengthening their ability to evaluate AI-generated information, verify sources, and make ethical and responsible decisions about when and how to use these tools. It will also support curricular innovation, interdisciplinary research, and student preparation for AI-enabled workplaces and civic life. Expand information-literacy programming to address how AI systems generate information, how to assess their accuracy and biases, and how to use AI-generated content responsibly. Position the libraries as a campus-wide hub for experimentation, consultation, and critical engagement with rapidly evolving technologies.
- Resource implications
 - Financial (M). Moderate funding will be needed for adaptable lab spaces, equipment, software licenses, faculty, or student project support, and continuing professional development.
 - People (H). Significant staff time and specialized expertise will be required to design programming, provide consultations, support courses and research projects, and keep guidance current as technologies evolve.
 - Infrastructure (H). The initiative will require flexible physical spaces, secure access to approved AI and emerging technology platforms, appropriate computing equipment, and integration with university identity, data, and security systems.

Recommendation D: Integrate AI into student development and career readiness programming where appropriate

- Students will graduate better prepared to work effectively in AI-enabled organizations while demonstrating the judgment, adaptability, communication skills, and ethical awareness employers increasingly expect. The initiative will also help ensure that access to AI-related career preparation is available to all students rather than only to those in technically oriented majors.
- Resource implications
 - Financial (M). Moderate funding will be required for staff development, approved platforms, instructional resources, employer-engagement activities, and program assessment.
 - People (H). Significant staff effort will be needed to redesign programming, train advisers, develop discipline-specific materials, engage employers and alumni, and keep guidance current.
 - Infrastructure (M). The initiative will require secure access to approved AI tools, integration with existing career platforms, appropriate data protection, and support for workshops and virtual simulations.

6. Topics for Further Exploration

- **Topic 1: Define the general capabilities every William & Mary student should possess at graduation.** Identify which capabilities are universal, such as critical evaluation of content produced with or without AI, effective human-AI collaboration, source verification, privacy awareness, ethical judgment, and recognition of tasks that should remain primarily human, and which should vary by discipline.
- **Topic 2: Establish an AI governance and accountability operating model.** Further exploration is needed to establish a university-wide structure to support AI governance, security, procurement, and accepted works frameworks.
- **Topic 3: Determine the sustainable enterprise AI architecture and investment strategy.** Additional analysis is needed to determine the enterprise computing environment for AI applications.