GABELLI CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

Presidential Fellows Report

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inaugural cohort of Presidential Fellows of the Gabelli Center for Teaching & Learning (GCTL) was charged with developing a framework for an institutional approach to AI that advances President Carey's vision of Iona as a premier teaching institution and extends Iona University's reputation as a leader in Catholic education. This report, prepared by the Fellows and collaborators from the library and the offices of the Provost and the President, represents the fruits of a year's deliberations. It consists of two substantive parts.

The first, "Toward an Institutional Approach to AI," describes the context for the group's work, discussing both salient aspects of the AI landscape and enduring elements of Iona's tradition of transformative education. Its intent is to create a colloquy between past and future that can inform our present work of teaching and learning. The second part, "Thinking Pragmatically About AI-Aware Education," enumerates strategic commitments that can help map our path forward, followed by specific strategies to guide students as they navigate the AI world and to support faculty as they attune their practice and methods to new demands.

An important emphasis is the need for instructors to consider shifting their focus from a product-oriented approach to a process-oriented one. The easy access to AI outputs, combined with the broad marketing and cultural pressures to take advantage of it, is tempting to students; to ensure their success in developing the skills necessary for academic and professional success, we need to ensure they know how to use AI both responsibly and well. One way is to reconfigure our practice with the understanding that, although AI can be used to cut corners, interactions with the technology can also be used to *create* corners in which thinking and other capacities can be cultivated.

Part two continues with ideas for building on the first-year success of the GCTL to ensure its permanence as a faculty-led resource. It concludes with additional strategic considerations we believe the institution needs to keep top of mind in the immediate term.

A listing of initiatives underway or directional objectives under study follows parts one and two (see page 48-50); while these might be seen as an extension of this Executive Summary, they are best understood within the contexts presented in the intervening material. Appendices, artifacts, and references follow this listing.

Based on the work the institution has already put in motion, Iona is well-positioned to use the AI moment as a catalyst to reinvigorate essential components of its foundational tradition, even as the technology's rapid evolution demands that we be nimble, imaginative, and intentional in considering how we address its potential impact in classrooms and workplaces, and for students and faculty. We should not view AI as an existential threat, but as an inspiration to renew our calling.

AI Usage Disclosure: This document was created with assistance from Claude 3.7 Sonnet, which provided feedback on a complete draft and provided some organizational suggestions that were helpful in tuning further drafts and final revisions.

1: TOWARD AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO AI

INTRODUCTION

Vision

The Gabelli Center for Teaching & Learning (GCTL) has been created to extend Iona University's reputation as a leader in Catholic education and advance President Carey's vision of Iona as a premier teaching institution. A primary objective of the inaugural cohort of Presidential Fellows has been establishing the faculty leadership required to support that vision and give the GCTL a firm footing in the present and a sustainable model for the future. While our work has been in large degree focused on articulating an institutional approach to the challenges and opportunities posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), we trust it will suggest and even provide insight into broader institutional and educational questions.

Collaborative Inquiry and Thought Leadership are core pillars of the GCTL's foundational culture, and both have informed our thinking as we considered teaching and learning in the age of AI. The first requires programs that encourage faculty engagement and experimentation toward the goal of building a shared institutional knowledge base; the second demands external outreach to share what we learn and thereby raise Iona's profile among educators and in the broader community. Our AI@Iona initiative has found success on both scores, creating a framework for similar progress on other educational themes and issues as Iona moves into the future.

2024-2025 Focus: Teaching and Learning in the Age of AI

The specific charge for the work of the initial set of Presidential Fellows has been to propose a strategic framework for an institutional response to AI that will build upon the momentum begun in the past year and more (for a detailed account of institutional AI efforts to date, see Appendix A, pages 51-57).

The advent of generative AI in November 2022, and its subsequent and ongoing infiltration of all sectors of commerce and culture, poses profound questions for education—indeed,

for our understanding of knowledge itself—and in so doing provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to refresh and extend core elements of our practice.

The sense of urgency has only increased in the past three years as new models have extended the capacity of generative AI tools—not a month goes by without announcement of new models with increased capabilities. In this environment, it is imperative that Iona become and remain nimble, imaginative, and collaborative as we consider the effect AI will have not only in the classroom but also in the workplaces our students will enter as they embark upon their careers.

While proactive engagement with emerging technologies is critical, Iona's mission-driven dedication to teaching and learning and their transformative powers must remain paramount. To ensure this priority, an ongoing commitment to innovation in teaching and learning has been established in the GCTL, which will serve faculty as a vibrant hub for experimentation, inquiry, and professional development, and serve Iona broadly as conduit to community engagement. At the same time, the GCTL can create frameworks to foster the student skills and dispositions needed for navigating the AI landscape in both school and work settings.

We do not look at AI as an existential threat, but rather as a welcome challenge to reinvigorate fundamental components of our work. As President Carey has written:

The rise of AI challenges us to recognize the core motives of our mission as a university and our vocations as educators. More importantly, it gives us the opportunity to reaffirm both. I can think of nothing more exciting—albeit sometimes worrying—for Iona to be grappling with now and in the years ahead. . . . Students are moving into a world where their relation to knowledge will be fundamentally different. This new world does not change Iona's mission, or its need, to prepare students to make a living and to create a life of meaning. It does, however, force us to reflect on how we can most effectively meet those goals going forward. As we continue and even grow our leadership in Catholic education, our shared purpose assumes more significance each year.

THE AI MOMENT

Generative AI

AI represents both a technological revolution and a cultural phenomenon that is already reshaping how knowledge is created, accessed, and deployed across society. In common usage, it is an umbrella term applied to software systems that can perform tasks that have traditionally required human intelligence; in shorthand: machines that think and learn, or mimic these functions well enough that they appear to do so.

Reliance on the umbrella term, however, masks complexities important to our discussion of AI at Iona. The term "AI" is applied to both advanced scientific research for the development of frontier models and the integration of the technology into everyday tools like word processing software, spreadsheets, search engines, study aids, and educational platforms such as Blackboard. When we use "AI" in this report, we will mean primarily the kind of generative AI accessible through a wide variety of tools, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, and Google's Gemini. Generative AI has already seen considerable wide adoption by the population at large, especially among students.* It is distinguished by its ability to generate sophisticated outputs from natural language prompts—everything from emails and essays to research reports, detailed business plans, and interpretations of intricate material for specified audiences (e.g., explain the theory of relativity to sophomores in high school).

Hype versus Hope

Given the enormous investments made by the companies developing generative AI, a consequent "AI arms race" is underway as new models are released on a regular cadence. The technology industry's need to productize their advances has fueled massive public relations and marketing efforts that have significantly shaped public perceptions of AI, often creating unrealistic expectations about its capabilities. AI products are frequently positioned as revolutionary solutions that will fundamentally transform how we work, learn, and live—sometimes obscuring the more incremental nature of technological

change and the continuing need for human judgment, creativity, and ethical decision-making.

This aggressive productization of AI has led to several common misconceptions:

- Overestimation of AI's current capabilities and autonomy
- Underestimation of the human input still required for effective AI use
- Exaggeration of the "plug-and-play" nature of AI solutions
- Minimization of the learning curve involved in becoming an effective AI user

For educators, this means we must distinguish between the marketing hype and the pragmatic reality in order to help students develop a nuanced understanding of AI as a powerful—but not all-powerful—tool that amplifies human capabilities rather than replacing them.

We must also be alert to ways in which the technology industry's productization choices shape our understanding of AI's applications and purposes. These choices often privilege the "magic" of AI and focus on the speed and efficiency of machine outputs. But these outputs are not always reliable. More importantly, there is nothing inherent in the technology that precludes different uses for generative AI in pedagogy or in intellectual endeavor, uses focused not on the machine outputs but on the processes of inquiry and expression that can be complemented by interactions with AI.

Education and Technology

The educational technology sector has long promised revolutionary changes through technological innovation, yet many of these promises have gone unfulfilled. Too often, EdTech solutions have prioritized technology for technology's sake rather than focusing on meaningful educational outcomes. This product-centered rather than people-centered approach has frequently resulted in expensive investments that fail to improve teaching and learning in sustainable ways.

The current AI moment presents a similar risk: that institutions will invest heavily in AI platforms, or in targeted AI curriculum, while neglecting the human infrastructure and educational awareness—faculty development, pedagogical innovation, and student support—needed to make AI technology genuinely and broadly useful. Specific courses in AI, or programs of study like the interdisciplinary AI minor Iona has launched, are welcome and even critical to institutional relevance. But they will not reach the vast majority of students, all of whom require guidance. Similarly, generic trainings for faculty such as the Auburn course, while again both welcome and necessary, are first steps rather than enduring contributions to advancing the University's future. Just as there is danger in the offloading that can occur when students outsource assignments to AI, there is a similar peril for institutions if they "offload" their approach to AI to static program and training choices rather than the dynamic, ongoing, and distributed engagement the technology affords to faculty, students, and disciplines alike.

How well Iona models this engagement for our students will be the most important factor in our institutional success as AI shapes our common future. Discourse around AI in education often frames the technology as either an existential threat to traditional educational structures or as a simple fix for longstanding educational failures. Neither position captures the more nuanced and profound reality: AI represents a significant epistemic opportunity—a chance to reconsider what we teach, how we teach it, and why these choices matter. By focusing on these deeper questions rather than merely adopting new technological tools, Iona can leverage the AI moment to strengthen its educational mission rather than dilute it.

That said, it would be foolish to ignore the pressures the AI industry will bring to bear on education. The recent provisioning by Google and OpenAI of free access to advanced models for college students, in the attempt to build market share and lock users into proprietary environments, foregrounds problems that will only grow in years ahead as institutions attempt to keep teachers on the same technological playing field as their students, and as economic licensing considerations compete with educational priorities. While we focus in this report on AI through the lens of teaching and learning, we recognize

the institutional need to consider this broader view as we move ahead (see “Additional Strategic Considerations, pages 45-47).

THE IONA TRADITION

Transformative Learning

At Iona, we are grounded in the transformational power of education. We know that education can not only develop the intellectual life of the mind, but can also give students access to the tools, skills, and opportunities that can change the trajectory of their lives. This is why Blessed Edmund Rice sought to serve disenfranchised Irish youth through education, and why Iona remains committed to serving students of a wide range of skills and abilities, including first-generation college students new to the academic arena.

In this tradition, we can encourage informed and intentional use of AI in classrooms and coursework as a means to close the "digital divide" that often disenfranchises youth today. We know that technological fluency is a foundation for many professions, but students come to college with extremely varying proficiency. By creating opportunities for students to explore, innovate, and learn with AI technology, we can open doors into future careers even as we supplement any skills that remain to be developed. In other words, we can use AI to keep our tradition of transformative learning vital.

One of the main thrusts of the Holy See's 2024 letter on artificial intelligence, *Antiqua et Nova*, is its emphasis on the idea that AI should be developed to enhance authentic human development, strengthen communities, and advance human flourishing rather than to pursue technological advancement for its own sake. Such objectives have been Iona's for eighty-five years, and it is incumbent upon us to be resourceful in continuing that legacy into the future as we discover how the technology can help us to refresh, rethink, and reinvigorate our educational practice.

Purpose and Presence

During previous technological advances, we were warned that students would forego traditional college experiences due to the emergence of massive open online courses

(MOOCs), Wikipedia, and the internet broadly. If the sum of human knowledge exists at our fingertips, what need is there for an institution?

As it turns out, a great need. Students by and large do not simply log on to large anonymous courses to learn or spend hours trawling the internet to master academic subjects. Having easy access to the world's information does not equate to gaining understanding; that can only be earned, most often with informed guidance, through application and determination. But hard work is hard, and hard to do alone. What a university provides is, first, an intellectual and spiritual framework to order and make sense of the vast amounts of knowledge available, and, second, the structure and human community needed to help students develop sustained attention in the present as they prepare for the future. In short, the value of a university during this age of decentralized and commoditized information is to provide structure, support, and human connection.

For all its power as a revolutionary technology, AI will not replace a fundamental value of the Irish Christian Brothers and Iona University: *presence*. One of the highest goals of teaching is to make students present in their own learning, empowering them at the same time to build fully engaged relationships with others to cultivate the human connections with which we make our way in the world. The faith of the Iona educational tradition teaches that such presence offers longer term rewards, both in learning and in life, than mere performance. Education does not flourish if it is conducted through a glass darkly; its best features are revealed face to face.

EDUCATION IN THE AI AGE

AI in Education versus AI in Professional Settings

The use of AI in educational settings presents fundamentally different considerations than its use in professional environments. In professional contexts, AI often serves as a productivity tool—helping experienced practitioners work more efficiently by automating routine tasks, providing quick information access, or enhancing existing skills.

In education, however, students are still developing the foundational skills (reading, writing, information consumption, text generation, content production) that AI can readily subsume. When students use AI to generate essays, solve complex problems, or conduct research without developing these underlying capabilities themselves, they risk bypassing the essential learning that education is designed to facilitate.

The key distinction is that professionals are using AI to enhance skills they've already developed, while students might use AI to avoid developing skills they don't yet possess. This creates a significant challenge for educators as they consider if, when, and how to incorporate AI in assignments and curricula: we must find applications of AI that enhance learning rather than circumvent it, ensuring that students develop both the foundational skills they need and the dispositions required to make the most out of their learning—including the reflective and critical thinking required for effective use of AI and evaluation of its outputs. Outsourcing the work needed to develop these skills and dispositions can shortchange both education and the personal development that education fosters. We need to be careful that AI is used to assist such learning and development, not preclude it.

At the same time, AI can be a powerful and accessible tool for helping students shape and build upon existing skills to meet the demands of the University. For example, it can allow for multiple modes of representation and instruction by easily converting written text to aural, creating instant visuals to depict abstract concepts, and constructing interactive study aids that serve students with a variety of needs. It can also create a space for students to explore more broadly and deeply into topics or problems as they develop and

stress test their learning and ideas, using AI to nourish inquiry rather than as a means to forego it.

Present Dangers

Contrasting AI in education with AI in professional settings helps identify significant concerns about unguided student use of the technology, among them offloading of the developmental steps necessary for mastery of fundamental skills, loss of agency over decision-making, plagiarism and other forms of cheating, and decreased capacity to express or present oneself with authenticity.

At Iona, per the current policy adopted in June 2024, it is up to professors on a course-by-course basis to specify whether AI is allowed to complete assignments, which tools can be used, and how their outputs should be assessed and reported. Students are responsible for following these guidelines as a matter of both personal and academic integrity. Within the broad purview afforded by the policy, many professors are building active engagement with AI into their instruction, reflecting the technology's increasing prevalence in nearly every field of commercial enterprise as well as in most forms of intellectual and creative endeavor.

At the same time, the embedding of AI features in the devices and software we all use every day makes it increasingly difficult to avoid AI use entirely. The sophistication and evolving capabilities of even the free, entry-level versions of generative chat tools make detection of use difficult except in egregious cases of misuse. While it is incumbent upon students, as stewards of their own education, to take responsibility for informed use of AI tools and to employ them judiciously and transparently, it is also incumbent on faculty to face the reality that new tools of engagement and assessment will likely need be developed to ensure learning objectives are met.

On both the student and the faculty side, campus-wide alertness and institutional commitment and support will be required to map successful paths forward. The AI orientation program we have developed with Iona's first-year experience librarian is meant to give all incoming students a common, high-level introduction to how AI works in practice and to explain the potential for misuse. This program as well as an additional four-year framework for student AI education are discussed later in this report, as is our suggestion for GCTL supported faculty inquiry into modes of assessment.

Ongoing attention on both fronts is required if we are to meet the needs of our students for educational and professional advancement as well as the demands of the disciplines that fuel both. The growing ubiquity and facility of AI tools, combined with the decreasing ability to identify their use with either consistency or confidence, means a focus on detection is not a long-term solution: it will be both exhausting and fruitless, turning the relationship of teacher and learner into a game of cat and mouse from which no one benefits.

Some institutions have adopted either a blanket ban on AI use or a non-policy premised on the hope it will go away. As D. Graham Burnett wrote recently, "Everyone seems intent on pretending that the most significant revolution in the world of thought in the past century *isn't happening*. The approach appears to be: 'We'll just tell the kids they can't use these tools and carry on as before.' This is, simply, madness. And it won't hold for long."

Beyond a willful obliviousness to unfolding realities in business, research, and most forms of knowledge work, institutional prohibitions on AI ignore the benefits that can accrue to an intentional and imaginative exploration of its potential in teaching and learning. Once past the industry-driven focus on outputs and ease of use, it is not only possible but exciting to see that the platforms, prudently and imaginatively incorporated into courses and curricula, have considerable potential for nourishing attributes that we have always defined as broader objectives of an Iona education, among them the impetus to take agency in pursuit of one's learning, the ability to express oneself with confidence and authenticity, and the probity to take responsibility for what one learns and how one uses it—what one takes in and what one, in turn, puts out.

Future Prospects

What we are suggesting is that the key to a successful *institutional* AI strategy will best be found not through focus at the assignment or even the syllabus level—those choices are rightly the domain of individual instructors and domain experts—but through a collective consideration of higher order outcomes that are both core to our mission and within the broader purview of teaching and learning across disciplines.

If, for example, agency, expression, and responsibility are qualities of both mind and character we have faith an Iona education will instill, can AI help or hinder our objective? Poorly used—which will likely be the case for many students if they are left to their own devices—AI will encourage avoidance of the friction and metacognition which shape and reward such outcomes. But smartly used, as part of educational friction and an impetus to metacognition, AI can help promote them.

In some ways, the generative AI interface, used with appropriate awareness of the tools' strengths and limitations, can be a laboratory for the development of the dispositions we have highlighted. When discussed openly in the classroom, AI interactions invoke ethical questions and reasoning with immediacy, both as pertains to personal academic integrity and to larger social issues of technological dominance and environmental impact. The crafting of prompts and their elaboration in colloquy with AI offers an unparalleled opportunity for students to observe their own thinking as the conversations renders abstract processes visible, with immediate feedback. As Terry Underwood has written, "Students crafting effective prompts must analyze communication at its foundations—understanding implied knowledge, recognizing ambiguity, specifying constraints, and articulating goals with precision." And also, importantly, with a sense of play that can be both alluring and surprising—and therefore inspirational.

Analyzing outputs demands critical reading abilities and hones the skills that deliver it. In taking the actions required to verify facts presented, test the AI's chains of reasoning, and recognize gaps requiring additional research or entirely new angles of inquiry, students can actively acquire information literacy. As Underwood writes, "The startling reality: students working with AI tools engage more actively with information evaluation than in conventional research assignments where many simply parrot sources without genuine engagement."

Is this an optimistic vision? Yes, of course. But it's allied to the optimism inherent in teaching and learning that is at the root of all we do.

Teaching and Learning versus Machine Thinking

It's important to recognize that many of the questions AI poses for education existed long before its advent. On one hand, faculty have been adjusting their pedagogies for years in response to emergent challenges, including the rise of the internet, diminished student attention spans, increased rates of stress and anxiety, changing skill preparation needs, and educational orientation toward product rather than process in learning. Without ignoring AI's singularity, our approach should situate it within these broader and longstanding contexts rather than view it as an isolated phenomenon.

Nonetheless, AI itself is in many ways a natural, if potentially revolutionary, extension of broad trends that have been shaped both intellectual and commercial enterprise over the past century, in which the consistency of machine outputs has become a model for human behaviors. As Shannon Vallor has written: "We are caught in the grip of a gradual and accelerating mechanization of the human personality: the systematic replacement of reflective discernment with mindless prediction; the efficient sacrifice of shared flourishing to expected utility; the exchange of humane creativity and open-ended progress for local optimization of content delivery. In short, the surrender of humane wisdom to machine thinking."

One of the products of this mechanization has been a skewing of the value system that many students associate, by training and habit, with their education—a system that can emphasize grades over understanding, test-taking skills over fluency, performance over presence. The experience of college, from the admission process through graduation, often only expands the consequent disconnect between measurement and the thing measured, between the quantification of performance and the quality of learning. While grades and test scores can be apt and essential measures of student progress, they can also obscure for students the true learning objectives behind assignments or courses of study, leading them to undervalue the thinking and resourcefulness needed to drive their development both within their classrooms and out in the world; they can become uncomfortable with process, and with the learning process engenders.

Counterintuitively, we believe prudent and transparent use of AI can be a help to students in this regard, nourishing dispositions central to the transformative education that is Iona's mission and making the process of learning more active, visible, and deployable across academic domains and in professional settings. We believe we should frame the AI moment not as threat to our legacy, but as an opportunity to recenter in our enterprise the human and intellectual capacities, such as attention, reflection, and judgement, that are often distant in student minds from the demands of their classes.

When they leave Iona, current students will be expected to prompt, monitor, assess, adjust, and apply AI in myriad ways in the workplace; to distinguish themselves in this environment as their careers evolve, graduates will need the confidence to frame problems, contextualize outputs, and synthesize insights in concert with machines. To meet such demands, student familiarity with AI and the questions posed by its use is essential. This requires us to provide both permission and clarity for students to gain hands-on knowledge of the tools; a cultural infrastructure of support for such guidance and exploration; and continuous articulation of the need for transparency within the larger context of academic integrity and personal ownership of one's effort and work. To ensure that these requirements are not only met but embedded in student educational experience means they must be considered by departments and programs across all disciplines, even

if individual instructors decide against allowing AI use in particular assignments or even entire courses, as they deem fit.

Students need common guidance and understanding of the tools and their potential for helping or hindering their Iona education; they also need direction toward the verification, deliberation, and accountability that are essential to effective use. As many professors have already seen, discussion of the quandaries AI raises is avidly embraced by students and can serve important learning objectives that transcend AI usage. A similar dynamic has been observed among faculty members who have explored AI, be they early adopters or reluctant experimenters. The palpable excitement emanating from participants in the Auburn training as well as the GCTL Fellows gives every indication we are headed in the direction AI maven Ethan Mollick has described: “Success is going to come from getting experts to use these systems and share what they learn.”

FACING THE CHALLENGE

Dispositions for the AI Age

In a world in which knowledge (or the information that often passes for it) is being commodified in new and intensely scaled and leveraged ways, what is the value of education? What's worth knowing and how is it effectively transmitted? How do students develop the foundational skills and contextual understanding needed to make their education both relevant and applicable to changing workplace demands and emerging challenges whose exact character and dimension cannot be predicted?

If machines can master skills across disciplines and generate reconfigured outputs easily, what qualities of mind are critical to instill in students to nourish the resilience and resourcefulness needed to grow and thrive in the rapidly shifting intellectual and economic landscapes AI promises?

In this new world, even more than in the one AI is disrupting, transformative education will depend as much on dispositions to learning as on quantities of content. If we consider three principal dangers of AI in education, we can bring these dispositions into focus.

- Use of AI will turn students into passive vehicles in their learning.
- It will habituate students to offloading composition, thereby stunting the development of both basic communication skills and an authentic voice.
- It will encourage plagiarism and other forms of cheating, diminishing academic and personal integrity.

Turning these perspectives around—from worries seeking clear resolution or punitive responses into active definitions of what we hope to instill in students in the course of their Iona education—can provide a key to a robust and successful institutional approach to AI, one that is rooted in our legacy.

If we attend to *interactions* with the technology rather than the outputs these produce, we can see its affordances as creating learning spaces in which active student *agency* is

encouraged; *expression* can be fostered and allowed to find its voice; and taking *responsibility* for both the inputs and the outputs of one's work takes on new urgency. There is nothing inherent in the technology itself that prevents the creation of pedagogical laboratories in which each of these dispositions, discussed in turn below, is identified, cultivated, and explored as domain-specific learning objectives are joined to them.

Agency

AI promises more self-directed learning. For students, this can mean using AI to make connections, find applications, and identify new avenues of inquiry about subjects they love; for faculty, it provides useful tools for connecting course content with students' passions and curiosities.

Learners in the AI age need to recognize their own power to shape the path of their education. While faculty expertise remains essential for guiding students toward necessary competencies and important debates in each field, students have both the freedom and responsibility to develop their own relationship to their studies and to think critically about the content of those studies.

Actualized learning can leverage AI tools (an ever-present library, interlocutor, coach) to develop a unique journey through lines of inquiry. Learners must accept that agency is fundamental to their freedom and prosperity in a world where information can be easily accessed, and many traditional human tasks can be executed by computers. From this agency will spring the questions, perspectives, and connections that humans will be called upon to summon and share to make the most of AI outputs and their own advancement.

Expression

In a world where AI can generate many of our primary modes of expression (written word, oral presentation, artistic production), the capacity to present ideas and perspectives in a distinct way carries significant benefits. In a marketplace where AI outputs often flatten expression to a neutral, homogenized, and unobjectionable delivery, the ability to hone ideas, insights, and values in a distinctive and authentic voice will become a decided asset.

More importantly, the process of developing an individual communication style—written, oral, artistic—is both fundamental to the learning process and essential to defining one's presence in personal, social, and business interactions. Our voice reflects our orientation to the world—how we connect with ideas and each other—and it takes time to develop. Education in the AI age must remain vigilant in providing ample opportunity for students to develop their own forms of expression through experimentation, study of past practitioners, and careful attention to the power and influence of different forms of communication.

Responsibility

While AI raises many exciting possibilities, the most exciting may be the way it highlights the need for students to take active responsibility for their education. Every interaction with AI raises questions of the relevance of one's inputs and the reliability of the machine's outputs, the biases that may be embedded in probabilistic responses, the degree to which use of the output conveys one's own thinking and understanding rather than merely parroting the machine's responses. Transparent use of AI tools and engaged reflection on one's interaction with them can both make one's thinking visible and concentrate one's understanding of, and commitment to, academic integrity.

AI also prompts considerable ethical questions that individual users and institutions must navigate. Both quality of information and questions of intellectual property are key concerns, as many platforms make information sources opaque. Learners need guidance in developing the perspicacity to remain up-to-date and conscientious about acknowledging the sources that support the development of their ideas and in understanding attendant intellectual property issues. This may require new practices for documenting student process and progress.

Beyond intellectual property, we must also address broader ethical matters arising from AI use, including bias in data sets that are reflected in AI results; environmental concerns raised by AI's extravagant energy consumption; effects on employment and work conditions; privacy concerns, in terms of both exposing personal information and ideas and ceding rights to them to AI companies; social, political, and economic consequences of the concentration of informational and financial power in the hands of a few as of now unregulated companies.

This is not to say AI use should be endorsed in all assignments or indiscriminately; such decisions can and should be made by individual instructors by their own lights. But what we do mean to suggest is that thoughtful consideration of AI and what it can contribute to our enterprise can lead to rewarding outcomes, even—especially—with regard to the core values we hope to instill in students, not least their alertness to the processes that drive their learning and inform their habits of mind. We need to make it a priority of our practice to more intentionally foreground the thinking, and thinking about thinking (or metacognition), that helps students understand the value as well as the utility of their learning.

We can use machine thinking, and the product-oriented educational practice it often informs, to achieve many objectives, without conforming our minds entirely to it at the expense of deeper and more transferable human dispositions, such as those discussed above. While a good part of the transformative education Iona provides is an apprenticeship to the skill sets and domain expertise useful in professional life, the

marketability of those outcomes will be considerably altered by AI developments in coming years. Accordingly, and more fundamentally, we believe we can use the AI moment to become stronger, more pragmatic champions of the truth that a better part of Iona's transformative education has always—and will increasingly—come from those experiential encounters with faculty, content, and other students that can make the best education a surprising and exciting adventure, offering lessons that will be more useful because more enduring through all the changes in technologies and workplaces a twenty-first century career will surely confront.

Making Process Visible

At an institutional level, our goal should not be merely to teach students about AI, but to foster AI fluency so that students can use their interactions with the technology to become alert to the processes of their own learning, which all too often are opaque to them. As faculty and librarians report, students are uncomfortable with process. This makes them ripe to be lured by the ease of the technology and the tenor of the larger cultural conversation around it. As a result, they may well resort to AI to allay that discomfort, thereby bypassing the grappling with material and meaning that often results in learning. Encouraging informed and thoughtful use of AI tools can help them create a learning space in which they can test, reconfigure, and trace their own thinking; rethinking instructional strategies to obviate use of AI can produce the same beneficial results (for examples, see Appendix B, pages 58-61).

The most far-reaching pedagogical disruptions caused by AI may be in the area of assessment, since any work done outside of class can likely be substituted with AI-generated content. Gone are the days when one could expect that a take-home essay or exam assignment would be completed by students alone; AI's promise to create more than passable prose in seconds is too tempting in the face of a blank screen and a challenging assignment. Yet this, too, like the dangers of AI enumerated above, can be turned to advantage if viewed in a wider perspective. In many disciplines, to a considerable degree

out of habit and convention, education has been focused on assignment *products* for far too long, teaching students to worry most about whether their work contains the correct features (in English, for example, grammar, citation, topic sentences, etc.), rather than on the character of their learning as revealed by more careful consideration of the ideas or projects they are developing, evaluating, and communicating—the *processes* of learning. While AI can easily deliver corrections and add a professional sheen to any document (and it is likely that these tools will be readily used in the workplace), what has always been true of university education needs to be more intentionally pursued at the level of assignments and curricula to maintain, extend, and prove its value in the years ahead. That value stems from the intersection of faculty expertise with student processes that cannot be easily reproduced mechanically: the active work of developing, within relevant and often complex contexts, ideas, perspectives, and points of view that can be applied to illuminate the subject at hand or to provide insight into the problem or project under scrutiny, be it an essay, a problem set, or a business plan.

Educators have long known that knowledge comes from the fruitful friction that occurs from putting the time in to grapple with an assignment. Insight comes from trial and error and repetition; confidence comes from practice and starts with learning how to begin. Students often cheat, fail, or get stuck because of fear of being wrong (a concern built into them by the emphasis on standardized tests, grades, and status that has been a prominent feature of their educations); process-based learning demonstrates that thinking is (and should be) messy as well as providing the satisfaction of working toward clarity.

But students have not been oriented by their pre-college educational experience to recognize process as academic work, and institutions at every level, including universities, often do not have consistent or effective ways of fostering, tracking, assessing, or credentialing it. Add to this the reality that process can take many different forms across disciplines, and that the demands of different contexts—research, clinical, scholarly, creative—multiply necessary points of focus, and the dimensions of the problem increase. All the more reason for the GCTL, led by its Fellows, to marshal faculty leadership to address it, committing resources to the study of how the interactions, affordances, and

efficiencies of AI can be both deployed and managed in the service of teaching and learning.

EMBRACING THE OPPORTUNITY

There is no doubt that meeting the AI moment will be a big lift, requiring faculty, programs, and departments to reexamine and reconfigure both practice and process to keep Iona's tradition of transformative education vital—and to do it more quickly than the pace of existing academic structures generally allow. It will require an institutional commitment to significant investment in this renewal in order to create the time, means, and experimental culture needed to amplify the first-year efforts of the Gabelli Center. We believe Iona has already made significant progress toward this objective through the activities detailed herein.

If faculty view the AI disruption as a *teaching* opportunity—showing our own work to illustrate to students how AI is changing our approaches, being transparent about how we are experimenting and learning alongside them, revealing what our own learning processes look like, even explaining why we are opting not to use AI in a given case—we can turn its challenges into opportunities. Whether we're talking about low-touch AI engagements, as in reorienting assignments to mitigate or guide student use, or high-touch instances, as in building custom research and teaching tools, which the natural language interface makes possible for even non-technical instructors, our institutional commitment to student learning and the dispositions that underly it should remain the same. "Language models are a genuinely novel teaching tool," the historian Benjamin Breen recently wrote. "Their impact is still uncertain. What that means is that now is exactly the time when people who are genuinely passionate about teaching and learning for its own sake—not as a scorecard to judge politicians, not as a source of corporate profit—need to take an active role."

As mentioned above, how well Iona models engagement with AI for our students will be critical to our success going forward. What students need to learn is that, despite the hype of the tech sector and the very real (and potentially monumental) changes AI will bring to our lives, the nature of those changes, and their effect on our individual lives and common efforts, are by no means inevitable: our futures can be shaped *by* us rather than happening *to* us. What's true for students is true for the institution; as Thomas Merton wrote:

You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.

In the remaining sections of this report, we detail commitments, pragmatic approaches, strategic frameworks, and initiatives both underway and under study that will help Iona realize such an embrace.

2: THINKING PRAGMATICALLY ABOUT AI-AWARE EDUCATION

COMMITMENTS

AI-Aware Orienting Principles

- **Education is bigger than AI**: Iona believes that an education that informs and inspires students for a lifetime transcends technology. At the same time, we believe the advent of AI can better equip us to fulfill our educational mission of promoting student success in school and beyond.
- **AI is a general purpose and cultural technology**: Its effect will be felt across all knowledge domains, disciplines, and industries, in many transforming—even becoming—the medium of operative understanding. Because of this, it is imperative that schools see AI not only as an area for study in itself, but as a resource to inform courses of study across the curriculum.
- **We have a responsibility to students to foster their understanding of AI**: Instruction, guidance, and support and instruction as students explore and grow with AI is essential—both to inform their learning and prepare them for their work lives.
- **We have a similar responsibility to faculty**: Faculty need institutional support, including education, time, and resources, to facilitate their understanding and usage of AI in pursuit of pedagogical objectives and professional goals.

AI-Aware Direction

In addition to these principles, some important directions and principles for future work have become clear and bear recording:

- **Continue established momentum:** Iona has been proactive in addressing AI, and activity has been widespread across multiple dimensions of university life. By building on these existing initiatives, we can create a comprehensive and sustainable approach to AI integration. (See appendix A, Institutional Initiatives to Date, which details program enhancements, librarian initiatives, and the AI@Iona Outreach professional development program for educators.)
- **Invest in people before platforms**: Effective technology requires informed users. Our primary investment should be in faculty and student development rather than in specific tools that may quickly become outdated or one-size-fits-all solutions that can inhibit rather than encourage instructional experiment. Focus should remain on meaningful educational outcomes rather than technology for technology's sake.
- **View AI's potential and pitfalls through the lens of teaching and learning**: Decisions should be evaluated based on AI's impact on educational outcomes, not technological novelty or market trends.
- **Maintain both constancy and flexibility**: We must hold firm to our core educational values while remaining adaptable in how we implement them in a rapidly changing technological landscape.
- **Be pragmatic about faculty and student needs to pursue strategic ends**: Our approach should be grounded in the practical realities of teaching and learning, addressing concrete challenges rather than abstract technological possibilities.
- **Experiment with process-based pedagogy:** We should actively test and share applications of AI that enhance learning rather than circumvent it, ensuring students develop both foundational skills and the dispositions required for effective AI use.
- **Recognize and address common problems:** New tools of engagement and assessment may be required to ensure learning objectives are met, given the embedding of AI in everyday devices and software and the increasing difficulty of detecting AI use.

- **Encourage dialogue and collaborative inquiry:** Effort should be made to develop clear guidelines that encourage disclosure, transparency, and conversation concerning AI use by both faculty and students.

THINKING PRAGMATICALLY ABOUT STUDENTS

Contexts

All data point to the fact that students nationwide are currently using AI extensively, raising alarm in many quarters—and rightly so, for many students are not using it well. It is necessary for us to offer support and instruction for informed, responsible use, as well as clear, consistent expectations for its appropriate application to academic work at Iona.

On the surface, we can assign student reliance on AI to sheer convenience or to a preference for ease over rigor. But, on reflection, we can also see that there is a lack of alignment between student preparation and the demands of university level work. In such instances, AI can be used to leapfrog skills students may not come to college with, while building these skills (see Appendix B, page 58, for examples form ENG120). This requires intentional reappraisal of modes of instruction, as discussed earlier.

On a deeper level still, student reliance on AI brings into focus a more systemic issue, well described by Emily Pitts Donahoe in a discussion of AI and academic integrity:

Students have been conditioned to see education as a transaction, a series of tokens to be exchanged for a credential, which can then be exchanged for a high-paying job—in an economy where such jobs are harder and harder to come by.

Given this context, the easy off-ramp from the hard work of learning that AI promises can seem not only a convenient path to students, but the right one—it gets the job done efficiently, as they have been conditioned to do.

To think effectively about where students are, we need to engage rather than ignore their AI use, giving them guidance on how to direct it toward the higher goals of study, thereby fostering the dispositions towards learning discussed earlier: agency, expression, and responsibility. AI does not make this task simpler than it's ever been, but it does give us a new arena in which to work toward fulfilling it, and creative options for doing so.

To take advantage of the opportunity this affords, we need to develop a common framework of AI training that is delivered to *all* students—not just those who sign up for a dedicated AI course or program—independent of their school or major.

Below we offer two ideas to address the need: an **AI Orientation for Incoming Freshman** and a **Four-Year AI Fluency Framework for Students**. The first will be launched as a pilot as a component of the 2025-26 orientation experience planned by the Student Engagement team; the second is a proposal that extends the impetus of the pilot across all four years of a student's Iona experience.

Neither of these programs is meant to usurp the purview of faculty or departments in determining the parameters for AI use in specific courses and curricula, but rather to give every student the grounding required to pursue their learning effectively in the AI age. Within specific disciplines, students should learn the most effective applications of the technology for their field as determined by faculty domain experts.

AI Orientation for Incoming Freshman

Led by First Year Experience Librarian Sarah Barlow-Ochshorn, and in collaboration with the Presidential Fellows, librarians have developed a new orientation module that will introduce incoming Iona University students to AI. This module ensures students get consistent messaging on Iona's AI policies before arriving on campus in the fall. It also makes students aware of crucial AI resources at Iona, including library support and AI@Iona initiatives. The first-year programming also includes two brief in-person presentations by the librarians at summer orientation. The presentations will acquaint incoming students with Iona's approach to AI and place the technology within the context of the larger learning goals their university experience will empower them to realize.

The module, delivered via Vector Solutions, covers a range of topics, including:

- Agency, Expression, Responsibility
- Iona's AI Use Policy

- How Generative AI Works
- Ethics and Limitations of AI tools
- Avoiding Plagiarism in AI use
- Citing AI Use
- Choosing AI Tools
- Data and Privacy
- AI Prompting
- Evaluating Output from AI tools
- Iona Resources for Further Learning and Support

(For links to the individual video components of the training, see page 62).

Four-Year AI Fluency Framework for Students

The proposed four-level framework represents a strategic extension of existing activities. It has been created by Iona librarians, informed by learnings from the 200 classroom instruction sessions they led this past academic year (see Appendix A, pages 52-54). By aligning each level with identified findings from current work, the framework provides a coherent progression that addresses observed student needs and behaviors, while equipping them to us AI in the service of their learning at Iona and preparing them for AI-influenced futures.

Year 1: Awareness & Introduction (Freshman and Core)

- Introduce basic AI concepts, capabilities, and limitations
- Demonstrate fundamental AI tools relevant to academic work
- Address common misconceptions and ethical considerations

- Implementation: Freshman orientation and introductory courses
- Current Foundation: Pilot freshman AI orientation training, library instruction and research guide content developed by librarians

Year 2: Guided Exploration (Sophomore and Core)

- Develop critical evaluation skills for AI-generated content
- Facilitate hands-on experience with AI tools under structured guidance
- Explore discipline-specific AI applications
- Implementation: Core curriculum courses with librarian partnerships
- Current Foundation: Research instruction provided to CDS1201, COL150, ENG120 and other core courses

Year 3: Applied Integration (Upper level, discipline specific)

- Incorporate AI tools into research methodologies and academic workflows
- Analyze how AI intersects with intellectual property in academic contexts
- Evaluate AI integration in proprietary databases and research platforms
- Implementation: Upper-level courses and research-intensive classes, align AI with assignments
- Current Foundation: Librarians' expertise with evolving research resources and collaboration with faculty in upper-level and graduate courses

Year 4: Professional Preparation (Upper level, career and discipline specific)

- Connect academic AI skills to industry and professional applications
- Address ethical dilemmas and responsibilities in professional contexts
- Prepare students to adapt to evolving AI technologies in their fields

- Implementation: Capstone courses, senior seminars, and graduate programs. Create connections with alumni and company partners
- Current Foundation: Insights from faculty, administrative departments and academic support departments

While exact mechanisms of delivery merit further discussion, the framework provides a model for the baseline familiarity with AI capabilities all students will require—and should expect—from their Iona education.

Student-Faculty Conversation—and Play

It's unlikely we can overemphasize the importance of discussing AI with our students both in classrooms and in other venues. We are all figuring out its capabilities and applications in real time; sharing what we are learning, as well as what we are bewildered by, can be both instructive and fun. It can inspire the kind of curiosity and intellectual stimulation that will increase student engagement and achievement.

THINKING PRAGMATICALLY ABOUT FACULTY

Contexts

The threats posed by AI to student learning and pedagogical norms—to say nothing of foundational skill development and advanced scholarly research in many domains—will cause significant disruption across the academic landscape. It's clear that faculty seeking a comfortably unchanging environment will be unlikely to find it on college campuses; it's also clear that going on as before, pretending that AI is irrelevant to student success and the work of a university, is not tenable. Ready or not, here it comes.

Iona can rightly celebrate its proactive approach to the problem (see Appendix A). But we need to do more to prepare faculty and departments to serve both their students and their domains as AI affordances shine new light on both pedagogy and fields of study. We should continue to provide AI training across the spectrum of individual AI familiarity and comfort, but also bring AI awareness to how we structure syllabi and assess the scope and sequence of curricula. The training is about AI and how to use it; the awareness is about our disciplines and how the practical and epistemic questions AI poses might inspire us to bring their matter and meaning into sharper focus for ourselves and for our students.

This is not because AI's course and future character will be predictable—more likely, quite the opposite—nor because its hegemony is inevitable. Rather, it's because engaging with AI offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvigorate our practice, and in so doing, to confront head-on a problem AI did not cause, but will certainly exacerbate if we are not careful: a widespread devaluing of education itself. As threatening as AI may be, it also offers the prospect of finding new ways to get students interested in what we do, of sparking the curiosity and stimulating the resourcefulness that make learning self-propelling. As access to the capacities of AI expand, our disciplines will increasingly demand new approaches from us; our students need them now.

Trust

Among AI's real and perceived threats to education, its potential to undermine trust between teachers and students is the most dangerous. Personal and academic integrity are keystones of the learning process and the relationships that drive it; whatever weakens them should be confronted with candor and pragmatism. If that confrontation starts with a conception of AI as nothing more than a cheating tool, it has nowhere good to go; if it begins with the idea that AI-aware education has many reasons to view the technology as a means to better and more alert pedagogy, as we argued throughout part one of this report, certain dispositions toward AI use suggest themselves.

"We cannot continue to guess if the words we read come from a student or a bot," Marc Watkins has written. AI detection is unreliable, and reducing the colloquy between student and professor, and between learner and subject, to a "gotcha" game serves little enduring educational purpose. Watkins again: "As faculty members, we want our students to examine generative AI with a more critical eye—to question the reliability, value, and efficacy of its outputs. But to do that, we have to move beyond searching their papers for evidence of AI misuse and instead look for evidence of learning *with* this technology."

Within its broader policy of instructor discretion with regard to AI use in given courses and its campus-wide insistence on academic integrity, Iona should work to foster a culture of exchange on AI use, one that allows students to seek guidance and ask questions as they explore the evolving environment of knowledge work, and as faculty members themselves do the same. Inducements to transparency, including a clear and normalized AI disclosure policy for both faculty and students, would be a good start.

Faculty Readiness

To leverage AI-aware modes of teaching and learning, faculty should be familiar with the technology's features, capacities, limitations, and potential applications to their work, from time-saving help creating syllabi and assessment rubrics to creative stimulus in the building of custom research and instructional tools. Such familiarity yields benefits even

for instructors opting to not allow AI use in their classes, enabling informed discussion concerning the reason for their choice.

Many Iona faculty were early AI adopters. Over the past two academic years, many others have benefitted from the Auburn trainings sponsored by the Provost, with a good number of participants moving from reluctant to enthusiastic use of the technology. All faculty are now encountering generative tools that are built into Blackboard Ultra and other commonly used tools. The need for continued and ongoing training is apparent.

Still, it is our expectation that faculty knowledge of, and comfort with, AI will continue to exist on a spectrum from low to high for several years. The university should continue to provide support along this continuum, from those who have been hesitant to attend workshops because they are embarrassed at their lack of AI experience to those seeking guidance on how to adapt traditional student assignments in ways that promote genuine learning and fair assessment. This will require a tiered approach to offerings so we can meet individual instructors where they are and help them progress to where they want to be, while developing a collective sense of experiment and culture of collaborative inquiry.

Basic Training Sessions

To support the AI@Iona Outreach program (see pages 55-57), Fellows have developed an introductory course explaining what AI is and what teachers need to know to navigate the educational challenges and opportunities it presents. In the coming year, we should use this material to deliver basic training sessions for Iona faculty covering:

- *Non-technical explanation of what an LLM is, how LLMs are trained, and the current landscape of AI tools*
- *The complexity of the ethical, bias, and privacy issues associated with AI use*
- *Tool capabilities*

This “Starting from Zero” course, which can be tailored to fit one or two sessions, can be regularly offered by the GCTL for existing current faculty as well as be made part of the onboarding for new hires. Incentives might be aligned to encourage participation.

What we’ve learned in building the Vector Solutions AI training for incoming freshman will allow us to deliver online modules covering essential information that could be available conveniently for adjunct faculty.

Follow-up working sessions guiding attendees through hands-on tool use can be regularly offered as part of the regular AI Office Hours the GCTL will be sponsoring this Fall. In this same venue, sessions of outcome-based instruction—e.g., “How to Save Hours Building Your Syllabus” or “How to Create Assessment Rubrics with AI”—can be designed around Blackboard and other commonly used tools.

Advanced Symposia Series

Beyond basic training, we propose an ambitious effort: an active, regularly scheduled series of faculty symposia designed to engage participants in exploration of AI-aware pedagogy and adjacent topics. The concept will be piloted with the Summer Symposium scheduled for June 9, 10, and 11 of this year. Sessions for the opening and closing day of the symposium will be led by a team of Fellows and librarians and will include:

- Basic training
- AI resources currently available for faculty
- Teaching and learning workshops on AI feedback loops, writing, and new AI capabilities
- Guided discussions of responsibility and academic integrity, assessment, and other AI pain points

The second day of the symposium will be focused on attention, beginning with a talk by D. Graham Burnett, to be followed by workshops led by Dr. Burnett’s colleagues from the Strother School of Radical Attention.

We believe this inaugural symposium should herald a series of similar intensive and incentivized three-day faculty events to be held biannually at first, offered at the beginning of the major breaks between semesters (Summer and Winter). This timing allows participants to absorb the content and work it into syllabi for the new semester. Each three-day symposium can be followed by a mid-semester check-in for participants to discuss implementation successes and challenges. This structure emphasizes ongoing experimentation and revision rather than one-time training.

Rather than attempting to train all faculty simultaneously—which presents logistical challenges and doesn't address the evolving nature of AI—we can target different groups strategically (e.g., faculty working with first-year students, or in specific programs or disciplines with strategic AI imperatives). By announcing these regular symposia in advance, we establish an expectation that all full-time faculty will participate within a two-year time frame, while providing flexibility for individual planning. Contingent faculty can also be included, though complete participation may take longer if we maintain an optimal cohort size of less than thirty participants.

We also propose adding to these tentpole events motnthly one-day symposia—also intensive and incentivized—designed as structured sandboxes for immersive AI learning and experimentation (for a description of the structured sandbox approach, see Mike Kentz, "Why Faculty Aren't 'Playing' with AI (and What to Do About It)". As with the three-day sessions, a similar strategic approach to target audiences could be applied. Such hands-on sandboxes can empower teachers by showing them how much capacity AI, because of its natural language interface, can put within their reach, in the contexts of both their own research and their instructional ingenuity.

Once we build a habit of the collaborative learning the symposia will foster, we might imagine different cadences and structures for them. While initially focused on introducing AI and its pedagogical implications, these symposia can evolve as AI itself evolves, creating a sustainable model for ongoing faculty development in response to technological change and other forces.

THINKING PRAGMATICALLY ABOUT THE GCTL

A Faculty-Led Center for Teaching and Learning

In 2019, a Strategic Innovation Committee of faculty and staff was appointed by President Carey. Its assignment was to understand ongoing efforts at educational innovation on the Iona campus and to recommend steps to support and amplify them. One of the key recommendations in its final report, issued in September 2020, was the following:

A dedicated, faculty-led academic center for the advancement of innovative teaching and learning, both on campus and off, should be established as a hub for research, conversation, and resources. Its charge should be to become a catalyst for experimentation, collaboration, professional development, and community engagement.

After an interval that included a pandemic and the emergence of AI as a critical factor in the future of higher education, the launching of Iona's Gabelli Center for Teaching & Learning, made possible by the generosity of Marc Gabelli and the EMG Madonna Foundation, has provided the means to realize the expectations outlined in that counsel. Indeed, the first-year initiatives of the GCTL—from the work of its Fellows to the Presidential Speaker Series and the AI@Iona Outreach to local schools—have met the fledgling vision of the Strategic Innovation Committee in both spirit and action. To extend this momentum, it is essential that GCTL create mechanisms to further faculty leadership of its endeavors to support both AI-aware teaching and learning and other avenues of faculty development and pedagogical innovation.

Fellows Forward

To ensure continuity, grow faculty leadership, and focus the efforts of GCTL Fellows in 2025-26, we propose an enhanced fellowship structure. Key points of difference from our first-year program are the introduction of a stewardship tier (to be filled by the previous year's Presidential Fellows), more program deliverables for new Presidential Fellows, and targeted areas of inquiry for new Provost Fellows.

We envision the following high-level areas of responsibility:

GCTL Stewards

- Onboard new Presidential Fellows, including handoff program responsibilities in the course of the year
- Work with the Provost's office to
    - Plan and execute the Summer Symposium (June 9-11)
    - Develop components for ongoing symposia series
    - Program and organize the Fall GCTL conference on AI in Education (September 26)
- AI@Iona Outreach
    - Including solidifying business model, extending delivery model, and training instructors
- Participate in ongoing programs (faculty basic training, AI Office Hours, sandbox)

2025-26 Presidential Fellows

- Collaborate with Stewards to set GCTL agenda and increase internal outreach into departments and across divisions
- Assume responsibility for ongoing programming (to be handed off by Stewards through Fall term)
- Steer GCTL work on targeted areas of inquiry (see below)
- Work with the Provost's office to
    - Plan and execute the Winter Symposium (dates TBD)
    - Continue development of symposia series
    - Program and organize the Spring GCTL conference on The Future of Work (April 16, 2026)
- Participate in ongoing programs (faculty basic training, AI@Iona Outreach, AI Office Hours, sandbox)
- Develop report on The Future of Teaching and Learning at Iona for May 2026 delivery

2025-26 Provost Fellows

- While we support flexibility to accommodate individual and, especially, departmental proposals for areas of study, we think some portion of this group's effort should address areas of known common interest as we attempt to build an AI-aware pedagogical culture. Prime candidates for focus are:
    - Process in AI-ware pedagogy
    - Assessment
    - Responsibility, disclosure, and academic integrity
    - Attention

Thought Leadership

The targeted work streams described above represent examples of the collaborative inquiry that is a core value of the GCTL. We should build on the success of this year's efforts, particularly AI@Iona Outreach and the Presidential Speaker Series, to promote another: thought leadership. The two conferences in development, AI in Education (Fall 2025) and The Future of Work (2026) will be provide significant new opportunities in this regard. The keynote speakers for the Fall conference will be John Warner, author most recently of *More Than Words: How to Think About Writing in the Age of AI*. For the Spring conference, the keynote will be delivered by David Autor of MIT, co-author of *The Work of the Future: Building Better Jobs in the Age of Intelligent Machines*.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Additional areas of institutional concern that fall beyond our purview should be noted here:

- Success of student AI fluency work depends upon adequate librarian training and staffing.

- The consolidation, accessibility, and dissemination of learnings and artifacts from Fellow activities would benefit from a common, centrally managed asset base. This might be considered as part of a review of instructional technology capacity and staffing.
- The need for an institutional AI policy, complemented by dynamic usage guidelines for students, faculty, and staff, remains pressing. We know the CIO is currently advancing this.
- While we believe investment in people should take precedence over investment in platforms to effectuate campus-wise benefits, we also recognize that individual disciplines and program and departmental needs may benefit from access to specific toolsets and group licenses. Again, we are aware the CIO is alert to this and pursuing solutions.
- The need for deans and department chairs to exert their influence to stimulate broader faculty engagement with AI-aware pedagogy and GCTL programs is noted. One way to support their efforts might be the awarding of fellowships to departments or communities of learning. Another would be departmental funding earmarked for attendance at external conferences focused on AI pedagogy, with the goal of increasing institutional knowledge of innovation and best practice.
- On the same theme, being an AI-aware institution requires timely review, department by department and program by program, of courses of study and the scope and sequence of curricula in the context of the changes AI portends for both scholarly and professional landscapes. We know the Provost is advancing such work through the annual program review process.
- As we prioritize faculty development, and particularly, AI-aware teaching and learning, we recognize the learning curve and time demands entailed, as well as the possibility of new kinds of scholarly output. At some time, and as appropriate, our rank, tenure, and awards processes may need to take these new dimensions of faculty commitment into account.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The AI moment represents a significant opportunity for Iona University to strengthen its commitment to transformative education. By focusing on the human dimensions of education, rather than the alternately utopian and dystopian agendas of technological prophecy, we can ensure that the AI-aware strategies we advocate in this report sustain—and even enhance—the mission Iona University was founded to champion: teaching students to learn. Such work will always be work in progress.

"I'm getting tired of saying it," Emily Pitts Donahoe put it pithily in a piece we quoted earlier, "but: there is no way out of this that does not involve students understanding the value of the work we ask them to do and *actually wanting to do it*." That's the true and enduring struggle of education; AI is just its most recent, and urgent, field of engagement.

3: INITIATIVES & DIRECTIONAL OBJECTIVES

UNDERWAY & UNDER STUDY

Student Success

- Implement the AI Orientation for Incoming Freshman pilot as a component of the 2025-26 orientation experience, introducing students to AI concepts, Iona's policies, ethical considerations, and the ideas of agency, expression, and responsibility.
- Provide both permission and clarity for students to gain hands-on knowledge of AI tools; a cultural infrastructure of support for guidance and exploration; and continuous articulation of the need for transparency within the larger contexts of academic integrity.
- Operationalize a Four-Year AI Fluency Framework for Students that progresses from basic awareness (Year 1), to guided exploration (Year 2), applied integration (Year 3), and professional preparation (Year 4).
- Align each level of the framework with identified findings from current work to provide a coherent progression addressing observed student needs and behaviors.
- Create an AI Club hosted by the GCTL with a sandbox environment to encourage student-faculty conversation, sharing of learnings, and exploration of AI capabilities.

Faculty Development

- Building upon the excitement observed among GCTL Fellows and Auburn training participants, encourage domain experts (faculty) to use AI systems and share what they learn.

- Bring AI training in house and provide it across the spectrum of individual AI familiarity and comfort, while bringing AI awareness to curriculum structure and assessment.
- Encourage faculty to view the AI disruption as an opportunity to reinvigorate teaching practices and spark student curiosity, —showing their own work to illustrate how AI has influenced their approaches, being transparent about experimentation, and explaining decisions about AI use or non-use.
- Focus on interactions with AI technology rather than its outputs to create learning spaces where student agency is encouraged, expression can be fostered, and taking responsibility for both inputs and outputs takes on new urgency.
- Commit GCTL resources, through the Fellows program and increased interdisciplinary collaborative inquiry, to address how AI interactions can make learning processes visible in the service of teaching and learning.
- Launch an ambitious symposia series with regular three-day faculty events at the beginning of semester breaks, followed by mid-semester check-ins, to engage participants in exploration of AI-aware pedagogy. Add quarterly one-day symposia designed as structured sandboxes for immersive AI learning and experimentation.

GCTL

- Enhance the fellowship structure with a stewardship tier, populated by previous Presidential Fellows, to ensure continuity and grow faculty leadership of the GCTL.
- Task 2025-26 Presidential Fellows with assuming responsibility for ongoing programming, steering GCTL work on targeted areas, planning the Winter Symposium, and developing a report on The Future of Teaching and Learning at Iona.

- Focus 2025-26 Provost Fellows on areas of departmental importance or known common interest and shared concern, including process in AI-aware pedagogy, assessment, responsibility/disclosure/academic integrity, and attention.
- Build on the success of current initiatives to promote thought leadership through two conferences: AI in Education (Fall 2025) and The Future of Work (Spring 2026).
- Create a firm business footing for continuing the AI@Iona Outreach initiative.

Other Considerations

- Develop a fuller institutional AI policy, complemented by dynamic usage guidelines for students, faculty, and staff.
- Build a common, centrally managed asset base for consolidation, accessibility, and dissemination of learnings and artifacts from Fellow activities.
- Encourage deans and department chairs to exert their influence to stimulate broader faculty engagement with AI-aware pedagogy and GCTL programs.
- Recognize that individual disciplines and programs may benefit from access to specific toolsets and group licenses, balancing investment in these against priority of investing in people.
- Recognize the learning curve and time demands entailed in faculty development related to AI, potentially reviewing rank, tenure, and awards processes to account for these new dimensions of professional commitment.

4: APPENDICES

Appendix A: INSTITUTIONAL AI INITIATIVES TO DATE

General Initiatives

- Approximately 60 faculty members have participated in the Auburn AI course and workshops over two years
- The University adopted its first AI Use Policy
- Several new program offerings have been developed (detailed below)
- Librarians have built capacity to learn major AI tools and to share their knowledge with faculty and staff in workshops, and with students via library instruction
- Valuable Research Guides have been created for faculty and students

New Academic Programs

AI is increasingly featured in course offerings across the university:

- Our first non-computer science AI-focused course, AI in a Professional Setting, was launched last Spring
- An interdisciplinary minor, AI: Foundations and Applications, launched this fall
- The LaPenta School of Business and Hynes Institute have developed a Graduate Advanced Certificate in Artificial Intelligence in Business: Practical Applications and Strategic Implications, scheduled to launch Fall 2025
- The AI@Iona professional development program has demonstrated how we can use the tech to broaden and strengthen our K-12 community relationships (More on AI@Iona Outreach below).

Library Initiatives

During the 2024/2025 academic year, Iona University librarians made significant progress integrating AI fluency into the curriculum across all three schools and all academic levels. The past academic year has revealed both opportunities and challenges: students show curiosity but hesitation, faculty are increasingly testing and embedding AI into the curriculum and recognize librarians as AI fluency partners. Database vendors (e.g., JSTOR, Statista, ProQuest) are rapidly incorporating AI features, creating an urgent need for structured guidance and monitoring. The university has the opportunity to expand preliminary efforts into a comprehensive, institution-wide **Four-Year AI Fluency Framework** as presented on pages 35-37; this is particularly important as employers increasingly expect graduates to be confident and knowledgeable when using AI technology.

Findings from Current Librarian Initiatives

1. *Cross-curricular Integration*: Librarians have successfully integrated and delivered AI fluency content in undergraduate, graduate, core, and upper-level courses across all three schools. The coverage ranges from basic introduction to supporting specific assignments. During AY2425, the number of student contacts during 200 librarian-led research instruction sessions totaled approximately 5,000. A majority of the requests from professors for research instruction specifically sought AI coverage, and we anticipate these requests will increase in AY2526.

2. *Adaptable Approaches*: Our workshops, research instruction, and guides have served as a testing ground for different strategies to connect students with library AI resources and librarian expertise. There is interest in and demand for locally developed AI resources. Viewing statistics since their creation in Spring 2024 for the AI Guide for Students (5,515) and the AI Guide for Faculty (4,947) provide evidence of this demand.

3. *Student Observations*: Through contact in workshops and classes, librarians have observed that many students are:

- Curious but cautious about AI
- Interested but hesitant to fully engage
- Experimenting with AI but illustrating significant knowledge gaps
- Starting from varying levels of experience
- Needing guidance to approach technology with discipline and appreciation of process

4. *Resource Expertise*: Librarians are uniquely positioned to help faculty and students navigate the integration and relationship of AI with databases, licensed content, open educational resources, etc.
5. *Administrative Engagement*: Librarians have made connections between academic use of AI and administrative and academic success units, participating in the sharing of perspectives on AI applications in professional settings.

Workshops Conducted by Librarians in Academic Year 2024-25

The base material for all these workshops is prepared and can be customized and adapted to evolving needs, interests, and tools. Similar and additional workshops will be offered 2025-26 as part of the Gabelli Center during its newly planned AI Office Hours, with frequency dependent on librarian staffing.

Student Workshops

- *Images, AI, and Copyright*: Covered how to ethically use AI-generated videos, images, and other creative works and offered non-AI options such as Creative Commons.
- *Research and Citations*: While covering how to gather and organize research, also addressed how to create citations for AI-generated content.

- *Introduction to Doing Research at Iona Libraries*: Highlighted resources that help students navigate AI in addition to database and other academic sources.
- *Note-taking Tips*: Introduced students to different approaches to note-taking, including use of AI.
- *Introduction to Statista*: Offered tips and strategies for navigating the Statista platform with a focus on their AI tool.
- *Introduction to Company Research*: Showed students how to research a company or prepare for an interview using library database and AI tools.

AI-Focused Faculty Workshops

- AI Functionality in Blackboard Ultra
- Learning How to Use AI for Research
- Learning How to Use ChatGPT
- Shake Up Your Syllabus with AI Chatbots
- Learning How to Use Perplexity
- Empower Your Coursework with AI Chatbots
- Learning How to Write with AI
- Learning How to Create Images with AI

AI@Iona Outreach

Through the work of Presidential Fellows, Iona is collaboratively articulating a philosophy of how to navigate the educational challenges and opportunities presented by AI. The materials developed in this work represent an evolving knowledge base, one that has been shared with local educators in a successful series of professional development sessions with administrators and teachers in area public and private schools. Our engagement with local educators has revealed that, while there is conversation and concern around AI, there is a lack of pragmatic understanding of the technology coupled with some bewilderment with regard to how to attain it.

This work has positioned Iona as a thought leader on AI in the local education space, and suggests that, beyond education, there is an opportunity to support businesses, professionals, lifelong learners, and the greater community through continuing education on AI. At the same time, it affords us the opportunity to deepen our knowledge of the real-world state of AI, which will leave us better informed about the preparation of incoming students and what might be expected of our graduates.

During the 2024-25 academic year, Presidential Fellows Rob Kissner and Christine Hardigree, along with Provost Fellow Aakash Sapru, delivered our five-session micro-credential program to three audiences: principals and administrators of the Yonkers Public Schools, approximately twenty-five teachers from Cardinal Hayes, and a cohort of middle and high school faculty from Bronxville Union Free School District. Yonkers was our pilot program, and for it we created a five-part professional development program that we then customized for Hayes and Bronxville.

The Yonkers series was designed around a few major areas of focus:

- *Non-technical explanation of what an LLM is, how LLMs are trained, and the current landscape of AI tools*: If educators need to train students in how to use these technologies productively and ethically, or even just monitor use, they should themselves have a basic understanding of their facilities and limitations.

- *The depth and complexity of the ethical, bias, and privacy issues associated with AI use*: We know that our students are not aware of these issues without training, so it is essential that educators can knowledgably discuss them and offer appropriate guidance.
- *Tool capabilities*: AI ushers in vast possibilities for teaching and learning, so it is essential that educators realize the scope of this potential and build a practical understanding to fuel their own experimentation.
- *Developing a district playbook*: We know that a shared knowledge base of practical use is the best way to navigate the challenges posed by AI. With this in mind, a session is dedicated to building a "district playbook" of prompts.
- *Best practice*: A final session was designed to tie the series together around the sharing of best practices discovered in our Iona classrooms, highlighting the philosophy of process over product. This session also includes the awarding of Iona's AI micro-credential.

The Yonkers program was delivered to twenty-five principals and administrators over the course of the Fall and Spring semesters. It was extremely well-received by the cohort and the district superintendent. In the course of the program, we made the following key observations:

- While a handful of the cohort had some experience with AI use, the vast majority had very little experience beyond some minor experimentation. Some had never used AI at all prior to the first session.
- The majority of the cohort held negative associations with AI, notably associating the technology with cheating and threats to academic integrity.
- The cohort's AI use was mostly limited to ChatGPT with very few having heard of Claude, Perplexity, or other major general use tools.

- The first session completely changed the perspective of the attendees, building notable excitement about experimentation. The exposure to how these tools work and what they are capable of was an eye-opening experience for the group, inspiring a drive to explore.
- No one in the cohort was aware of the depth of ethical issues associated with AI use. This reinforces the importance of educating educators so that they can in turn foster ethical use by their students.
- By the final session, the entire cohort was regularly using AI for at least one professional task. Each has built their own personal playbook of use cases, and each was excited about ongoing learning and experimentation with AI. Many also expressed concerns about the future of education and AI, illustrating striking probity in their consideration of the opportunities and challenges of AI in education.

The Yonkers pilot allowed Iona to refine the program even as we commenced sessions with Bronxville and Hayes. News of AI@Iona outreach quickly spread, prompting interest from numerous other potential partners. It is clear the education community is now looking to Iona as a thought-leader on AI in education. The possibility of building on this reputation to engage faculty in meaningful ways and create new revenue streams for the university is both real and within reach.

APPENDIX B: PROCESS-ORIENTED LEARNING AND OTHER AI-AWARE PEDAGOGY

AI-Aware Writing Instruction (ENG120) — *Ivy Linton Stabell*

A re-orientation toward process over product offers many benefits for student learning. A process-based education means that students are self-aware about how they learn as well as what they learn. They attend to starting points, the moments of friction, error, and new directions as they move through their work, rather than just conclusions. Such metacognition fuels future cognitive effort.

In writing courses, for example, a tool like a writing journal:

- Helps students document a project or line of inquiry from start to finish, creating an artifact of their learning process (physical journals are particularly nice for this, as a digital education often makes learning opaque);
- Instills a transportable practice that can be used for puzzling out difficult questions across the curriculum;
- Borrows on the strengths of journaling in other nonacademic areas (such as the use of journaling for mental health benefits) to provide the same sense of release, routine, movement toward clarity.

Pedagogy in the AI era can make process visible to students in the following ways:

- Encouraging process records like a writing journal that illustrate intellectual development;
- Building process into grading criteria;
- Speaking regularly with students about what is expected in process assignments: evidence of engagement and transformation rather than polish and professionalism;
- Making visible our own process so that students become familiar with what learning looks like—acknowledging to students when we are experimenting with new

classroom practices, talking to them about our rationales, and asking for their input as we revise our ideas.

AI's disruption of education (and the way it will continue to transform what work and education mean) offers fruitful avenues for such discussions, which allow us to use the disruption itself as a teaching opportunity.

Nursing — *Christy Solorio*

In the Nursing department, students have been exposed to a structured teaching and learning curriculum that integrates generative AI throughout the semester. This approach has been piloted in four first-year courses, two junior-year courses, and one senior-year course.

An additional course-level student learning outcome was introduced: *Demonstrate proficiency in using generative AI tools to produce creative outputs while adhering to ethical guidelines regarding academic and professional integrity.*

Students developed a variety of skills, including generating outlines and topic ideas for papers, using AI tools for editing assistance, creating images for academic work, and producing podcasts from multiple sources. Throughout these activities, they maintained responsible ownership of their scholarly work, adhered to ethical standards, and practiced proper citation.

For all work using generative AI, students submitted a "Process Tracker" which showed the prompt provided to the AI tool, the output, revised prompt, revised output, and so on. This was followed by student explanation of what of the output was kept and what was further edited, and why. Together, these steps helped students see the value of using AI as a tool rather than as a replacement of their own thinking; they also helped the instructor understand what portions were AI-generated and what portions were student-created.

Image creation emerged as a particularly popular new skill, with students noting its usefulness for both academic and personal projects. They discovered that crafting

effective prompts takes practice to achieve the desired image output, and they enjoyed experimenting with wording to see what they could create.

Students also appeared more engaged in following ethical guidelines and instructor-provided rules for AI use when the topic was openly discussed in class. In contrast, in courses taught by the same instructor where generative AI is not addressed, inappropriate use seems to occur more frequently—though that remains anecdotal at this point.

In these courses, students were also provided with bluebooks and notebooks for in-class writing to encourage technology-free organization of thoughts and ideas.

Context Translation — *Rob Kissner*

AI presents an opportunity to engage students in new ways, such as Context Translation, that can facilitate agency in the pursuit of learning. Context Translation is the power to transform the context in which a topic is viewed. It allows educators to take any topic and translate it into a language relevant to students at the individual level. This is something that Iona has explored with other educators in the AI@Iona Outreach work. Examples include:

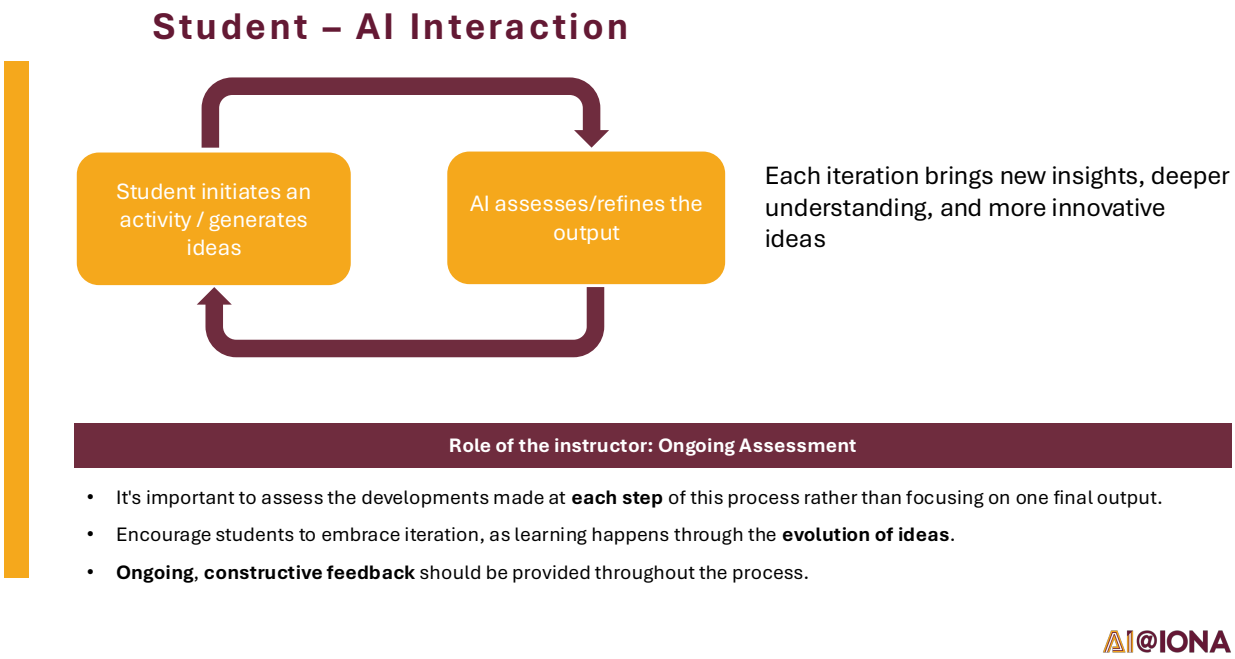
- Creating a lesson plan of Act 1 of *Hamlet* through the lens of professional basketball. Concepts from the text are connected to concepts from basketball, and discussion questions, activities, and homework is built to reinforce these connections.
- Building a detailed lesson on mitosis through the lens of Formula One racing. Scientific terms are related to key terms associated with professional racing, and discussions, in-class exercises, and homework assignments are built to reinforce these connections.

By creating contextual relevance around subjects that students are passionate about, engagement and agency are built naturally. This allows educators to build friction and process into their lessons without creating strain on students. Students will not “feel” the

friction and process because the exercises are connected to topics they enjoy exploring. There is tremendous power in these capabilities, not only to better engage students but also to reignite excitement in teachers—it makes teaching new and fun again.

Student-AI Interaction Feedback Loop

Developed by Aakash Sapru, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Design Thinking & Innovation in the Hynes Institute, the Student-AI interaction feedback loop offers further insight into AI pedagogical method.



5: ARTIFACTS

2025-26 AI@Iona Freshman Orientation

- **June Freshman Orientation Deck**
- *Freshman Orientation Vector Training Videos*
    - **Introduction to AI at Iona University**
    - **What is AI and How Does it Work?**
    - **Ethics and Limitations of Generative AI**
    - **Avoiding Plagiarism and Citing AI**
    - **Using AI Tools**
    - **Prompting: Engaging with AI**
    - **Evaluating AI Tools**
    - **Conclusion**

AI@Iona Outreach

- **AI@Iona Intro Deck**
- AI@Iona Outreach Yonkers decks
    - **Session 1**
    - **Session 2**
    - **Session 3**
    - **Session 4** (Playbook)
    - **Session 5**

6: FURTHER READING AND SOURCES CITED

Further Reading

A selection of writings providing broad and deep context on AI in, and beyond, education:

- Henry Farrell, Alison Gopnik, Cosma Shalizi, and James Evans: **Large AI models are cultural and social technologies**
- Arvind Narayanan & Sayash Kapoor: **AI as Normal Technology**
- The Holy See: **Antiqua et Nova**: Note of the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence
- Tom Chatfield: **Human Skills for an AI Age**

Sources Cited

Articles and books referenced in this report:

- D. Graham Burnett: **Will the Humanities Survive Artificial Intelligence?**
- Terry Underwood: **The Short But Happy Life of the Five-Paragraph Essay**
- Shannon Vallor: *The A.I. Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking,* Oxford University Press, 2024.
- Ethan Mollick: **Latent Expertise: Everyone is in R&D**
- Benjamin Breen: **AI makes the humanities more important, but also a lot weirder**
- Emily Pitts Donahoe: **More on AI and Academic Integrity**
- Marc Watkins: **Engaging with AI Isn't Adopting AI** and **Making AI Part of the Assignment**
- Mike Kentz: **Why Faculty Aren't "Playing" with AI (and What To Do About It)**