AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

NAME: Joint Meeting: Board of Trustees and Leadership Council   **DATE:** January 28, 2025

TITLE: Application of Artificial Intelligence at Minnesota State

☐ Action   ☒ Review and Discussion

☐ *This item is required by policy*

PRESENTERS
Stephen Kelly, Project Manager, Educational Development and Technology
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Kathleen Coate, Instructional Designer, Normandale Community College
Jason Bruns, Director, Minnesota State Engineering Center of Excellence
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PURPOSE
Artificial intelligence (AI) technology is evolving quickly and impacting teaching, learning, and operations within Minnesota State in unprecedented ways. Minnesota State is responding through a combination of professional development opportunities, experimental projects, research initiatives, and governance supports.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
AI has been part of our lives since the internet's emergence in the 1990s, powering internet search, social media algorithms, digital advertising, data systems, and more. However, emergent generative AI is more intensely impacting higher education than the AI of yesterday.

On November 30, 2022, OpenAI released ChatGPT, a generative AI service that combines a large language model (LLM) with a chat interface. Within months, similar generative AI services emerged, including Copilot from Microsoft, Bard/Gemini from Google, and Claude from Anthropic. Employees and students within Minnesota State quickly began experimenting with these technologies, leveraging them in teaching, learning, and work contexts.

Generative AI significantly impacts teaching and learning. Shortly after OpenAI's 2022 release, many in higher education expressed concerns about academic integrity and AI-induced skill deficits. These concerns continue to influence student conduct policies and procedures.

Many faculty have adapted their assessment practices in response to AI, focusing on reflection, iterative improvement, and authentic assessments. Some are incorporating AI tools into administrative work, communication, course design, feedback, and research. Others are exploring AI with their students to enhance learning. Intellectual property, compliance with regulations (such as *regular and substantive interaction)*, and assessment of learning/accreditation are important considerations in this new AI context.

AI will become integral to careers in nearly all economic sectors, making AI literacy and skills essential for students. Faculty professional development is crucial in preparing faculty to integrate AI into their classrooms. Further, all employees will need ongoing training to effectively leverage AI tools in their work.

The Minnesota State Office of General Counsel has also offered webinars on AI topics: *AI, the Law, and You* and *Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property*

The following information is a high-level overview of efforts currently underway at the system level. Numerous campus specific initiatives are not included in the information below.

Minnesota State Generative AI Guidance
In September 2023, system office representatives discussed the impact of generative AI on higher education and the acceptable use of generative AI services. The guidance document is the product of their work: *Minnesota State Generative AI Guidance*. The system office created this guidance document to:

- Clarify the applicability of existing Board policies, system procedures, and operating instructions to the adoption and use of artificial intelligence.

- Provide a foundation upon which campuses might develop local policies and procedures governing the use of artificial intelligence.

- Share best practices and research from elsewhere in higher education.

Network for Educational Development
The *Network for Educational Development (NED)* provides a framework to communicate development opportunities, offer resources, facilitate networking and conversations, and connect to Academic and Student Affairs initiatives and priorities. Since 2023, the NED has regularly offered AI professional development created by Minnesota State faculty and staff for their colleagues.

Artificial Intelligence Committee
This advisory group operates under the oversight of the Academic and Student Affairs Tech Council. It reviews and provides recommendations on system guidance related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. The committee also addresses sensitive AI topics with significant implications for the academic community.

Microsoft Copilot Evaluation Program
The Copilot Evaluation Program plans, develops, deploys, and evaluates the effectiveness of generative AI in instructional and non-instructional settings. We'll hear updates from three of these projects:

- **AI-Powered Administrative Tasks for Enhanced Productivity at the Engineering Center of Excellence:** This project aims to enhance productivity by automating time-consuming administrative tasks with Microsoft Copilot. By automating routine activities such as scheduling meetings, drafting emails, developing marketing materials, writing grants, and generating reports, time can be freed up to focus on more strategic initiatives.

  Jason Bruns, Engineering Center of Excellence; Minnesota State University, Mankato

- **Using Copilot for Instructional Design and Assessment**: This project aims to address the growing challenge of creating authentic and high-impact assessments in the wake of generative AI tools. It also focuses on meeting the needs of underserved students and maintaining manageable instructor workflows. This project will evaluate the efficacy of Microsoft Copilot in designing instructional activities and assessment tools. The project stands out for being highly interdisciplinary. Project members include 8 faculty and 2 instructional designers representing 7 different programs of study in both 2-year and 4-year institutions.

  Kathleen Coate, Normandale Community College

- **Copilot Chatbot Assistant for minnstate.edu:** The system office is piloting three versions of Microsoft Copilot Studio-generated chatbot agents as potential replacements for the Ocelot chatbot assistant on MinnState.edu. The Ocelot chatbot answers common questions from prospective students and other website users, but it is limited to specific keyword prompts and manually curated answers provided by system office Marketing and Communications staff. It does not use generative AI or automated knowledge from the MinnState.edu website.

  In contrast, the Microsoft Copilot chatbot uses a broader and less curated knowledge base with generative AI, in addition to specific knowledge sources we provide. This expands the possibility for relevant answers to all possible questions at a lower cost and with less future maintenance. However, this expanded knowledge base also comes with drawbacks, including the potential for off-brand conversations with users. The pilot assesses the balance between these trade-offs and whether the potential risks outweigh the benefits of using this service on our public websites.

  Jeff Crandall, Minnesota State IT

Artificial Intelligence Workstations
Three institutions within Minnesota State are currently exploring the use of locally hosted large language models (LLMs) in research using high-powered computers. These institutions include St. Cloud State University, Southwest Minnesota State University, and Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Additional Professional Development Opportunities
In partnership with Microsoft, the system office sponsors professional development opportunities for employees who are licensed users of Microsoft 365 Copilot and Copilot Studio (a software used for the creation of chatbots).

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