Proposal: University Council Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Rationale
Michigan State University has taken a number of important steps related to artificial intelligence. However with the rapid influx and evolution of generative AI approaches over the past couple of years, the impact and potential impact across all areas of the university - including teaching, research, and administration – are substantial. While MSU efforts to date have generated insight, a mechanism for greater communication and coordination across the university is needed.

The University Council Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is proposed to **provide university-wide visibility and coordination of AI-related activity across all units**, while evaluating whether a permanent governance structure is needed. Its purpose is to:
- Make **AI initiatives, challenges, needs, and opportunities visible** across academic and administrative units;
- Serve as a **central forum** for cross-unit communication to reduce duplication and fragmentation;
- Identify opportunities for **alignment or institutional action**;
- Support **ethical, equitable, and responsible AI use** in teaching, research, and operations;
- Assess whether a **standing University AI Committee** is necessary for ongoing oversight and coordination.

The Task Force focuses on **coordination, communication,** and **visibility.**

Charge
The Task Force will perform the following functions, in priority order:
1. Visibility & Coordination (Primary)
- Map AI-related activity across all units, including teaching, research, administrative operations, and student support;
- Facilitate **cross-unit communication** to share lessons, challenges, and ongoing work;
- Reduce duplication and conflicting practices by creating a **shared understanding** of AI activity;
- Provide a **single point of reference** for leadership, faculty, and staff regarding AI engagement.

2. Triage & Escalation (Secondary)
- Identify issues that require **institutional alignment, governance, or policy intervention**;
- Route these issues to the appropriate bodies (University Council, Provost, CIO, compliance, etc.) for action.

3. Targeted Action (Optional / Tertiary)
- When urgent cross-unit issues cannot be resolved elsewhere, recommend **short-term guidance or pilot solutions**.

4. Assessment of Ongoing Governance
- Evaluate whether MSU requires a **standing University AI Committee** to provide permanent visibility, coordination, and oversight;
- If needed, provide a **concise recommendation** on the committee's scope, membership, and authority.

Emphasis remains on **visibility and coordination**, with other functions supporting this core mission.

Deliverables
- **Living inventory of AI activity and needs** across the university;
- **Regular summaries of cross-unit trends and challenges** for leadership awareness;
- **Issue briefs** for high-priority cross-unit issues requiring escalation;
- **Short guidance or pilot recommendations**, only when needed;
- **Recommendation regarding the need for a standing University AI Committee**.

Written outputs should be concise (generally no more than two pages per issue) and **action-oriented**.

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Composition

The Task Force will consist of **~20 members**, ensuring broad representation while remaining workable.

Membership will include:

- **Faculty (7-8 members)** from a range of disciplines, appointed through University Council or Faculty Senate processes
- **Academic staff (7-8 members)** with expertise in instructional support, libraries, research support, information technology
- **Administrative representatives (2–3 members)** from relevant offices (e.g., Provost, Research, IT, Compliance)
- **Students (2–3 members)** representing undergraduate and graduate/professional perspectives

Members will be selected to ensure diversity of expertise, perspectives, and campus roles. Members serve as **connectors**, bringing AI issues from their units and relaying Task Force guidance back.

Leadership and Support

- The Task Force will be **co-chaired by one faculty member, one academic staff member, and one administrator**, appointed by University Council in consultation with the Provost. All should have significant expertise/experience in AI.
- Administrative and logistical support will be provided by the Provost's Office or University Council.

Task Force Duration and Governance

To ensure effectiveness, the Task Force will:

- Work under a **clear, time-limited charge** of **12 months**;
- **Disband upon completion** unless the University Council authorizes a standing AI committee based on the Task Force's recommendation;
- Avoid duplicating existing studies or frameworks;
- Coordinate with relevant offices and governance bodies;
- **Submit a recommendation** on whether a permanent AI coordination structure is warranted and, if so, its proposed scope, governance, and authority.

Outcomes and Measures of Success

The Task Force will be considered successful if it:

- Makes AI activity and needs **visible across units**;
- Reduces duplication, fragmentation, and conflicting practices;
- Reduces uncertainty and inconsistency in AI practices across the university;
- Enables timely decision-making aligned with MSU's academic mission and values
- Enables leadership (including the CIO) to **coordinate AI efforts without repeated ad hoc consultations**;
- Provides a **clear recommendation on whether ongoing AI oversight requires a standing committee**.

Conclusion

Establishing this Task Force represents a shift from **studying AI** to **governing and managing it**. By focusing on concrete challenges, limited scope, and actionable outputs, the University Council can enable Michigan State University to respond effectively to rapid AI-driven changes and opportunities.