

Governance and institutional authority

Who recommends, who decides and who remains accountable?

A task force needs a clear mandate and a route to decisions the institution can implement.

Recommended starting position

Specify decision rights before assigning tasks. Distinguish board oversight, executive accountability, academic authority, specialist review and operational ownership. Give the task force a defined scope, deliverables, escalation route and completion or transition point.

A committee can become responsible for a subject while lacking the power to resolve it. Conversely, an enthusiastic unit can bypass academic, privacy or procurement authority. Governance works when people know both their responsibility and the limits of their authority.

What the evidence supports

Purdue assigns responsibilities across IT, a Data Ethics Committee and units. RPCC specifies an officer, committee and system connections. These structures illustrate different ways to make responsibility explicit.

Establish these foundations

- Identify the authority behind each type of decision.
- Name executive sponsorship and operational ownership.
- Document how unresolved issues reach a decision.

The choices to make locally

Central coordination

Consider this when: The institution needs consistent safeguards and shared review capacity.

Tradeoff: Keep academic and operational expertise involved and avoid an unmanageable approval queue.

Distributed decisions within common rules

Consider this when: Units have the expertise and capacity to apply institutional safeguards.

Tradeoff: Require visibility, consistent escalation and an accountable institutional owner.

System or shared-service arrangements

Consider this when: Authority, infrastructure or expertise sits across a district or system.

Tradeoff: Make the boundary between local and system decisions explicit, including incident and exception handling.

Illustrative campus case

The task force has recommendations but no approver.

The group has drafted classroom guidance and a vendor-review process. Members disagree about whether they can approve either.

The work needs an authority map before another round of drafting.

1. Identify which decisions belong to academic governance, executives, specialists or the governing board under local rules.
2. Assign each draft an owner, consultation route and approval destination.
3. Escalate conflicts with options and consequences rather than circulating another undifferentiated draft.

What the team produces: A task-force mandate and decision-rights map.

Who is responsible

Board and trustees: Confirm oversight expectations and receive assurance through the institution's governance structure.

Institutional leaders: Own the mandate, resources, decision route and implementation accountability.

AI task force: Prepare recommendations and evidence within its delegated authority; escalate unresolved decisions.

Illustrative language to adapt

The institution must assign an accountable executive for AI governance and define approval responsibilities across academic, operational and specialist functions. Advisory groups must operate under a documented mandate. Delegation must identify its scope, limits, reporting requirements and escalation route.

Read alongside model policy sections 3, 4, 12. Reconcile local authority and requirements before adoption.

Evidence of implementation

- A mandate with authority, deliverables and review dates.
- Named decision owners and approval routes.
- A record of resolved and escalated decisions.

Reconsider when: Revisit when the task force becomes a standing function, delegated authority changes or decisions repeatedly stall.

Supporting sources

[Purdue University / Artificial Intelligence Use](#)

[River Parishes Community College / Use of Artificial Intelligence](#)