

Purpose and institutional value

What should AI help your institution accomplish?

A useful strategy begins with the people and outcomes the institution exists to serve.

Recommended starting position

Authorize AI work against a stated institutional need. Define the benefit, the people affected and the human capability that must be preserved or developed. Judge success through learning, service quality, access or other mission outcomes.

A tool can save time while moving work or risk onto someone else. An automated response might reduce staff handling time yet leave a student unable to resolve a complex problem. Describe success from the affected person's perspective as well as the institution's.

What the evidence supports

North Shore explicitly connects AI to institutional mission. Northcentral connects its approach to community and employer needs. These precedents support a purpose-led starting point; they do not establish that every campus should choose the same priorities.

Establish these foundations

- State the institutional problem before choosing the tool.
- Identify affected people and the consequences of failure.
- Measure a benefit that matters beyond the number of people using AI.

The choices to make locally

Improve an existing service

Consider this when: A known service problem has a clear owner and a measurable outcome.

Tradeoff: A narrow scope is easier to evaluate, but should include the exceptions and difficult cases the service must handle.

Develop learning and workforce capability

Consider this when: A program can name the knowledge, judgment and AI-supported work students need to demonstrate.

Tradeoff: Faculty need time to redesign learning and assessment; tool access alone does not establish capability.

Explore a new possibility

Consider this when: The benefit is uncertain and a bounded pilot can answer a useful question.

Tradeoff: Set an end date and evidence threshold so exploration does not become an unreviewed permanent service.

Illustrative campus case

An evening student needs an answer.

A college proposes an AI support assistant because adult learners ask questions after offices close. The first proposal measures how many messages the assistant handles.

The leadership team changes the success question: can students resolve their needs accurately, including when the assistant cannot help?

1. Define the questions the assistant may answer and which must reach a person.
2. Test realistic questions about deadlines, costs and unusual circumstances.
3. Evaluate resolution, errors and access to human help alongside staff time.

What the team produces: A one-page purpose statement, named service owner and pilot success criteria.

Who is responsible

Board and trustees: Ask which mission outcomes the strategy is intended to improve and what evidence will demonstrate progress.

Institutional leaders: Select priorities, resource the work and make the tradeoffs explicit.

AI task force: Translate each priority into a bounded use, evaluation plan and accountable owner.

Illustrative language to adapt

Each institutional AI deployment must identify its intended purpose, affected people, accountable owner and measures of benefit and harm. Educational uses must address the learning and human capabilities students are expected to develop. Approval must be reconsidered when the purpose or affected population changes.

Read alongside model policy sections 1, 7, 10, 11. Reconcile local authority and requirements before adoption.

Evidence of implementation

- A purpose statement that explains the need in ordinary language.
- A baseline or reasoned comparison against current practice.
- Measures of benefit, error and effects on affected people.

Reconsider when: Reconsider the use when the intended benefit is not demonstrated, the population changes or improvement for one group produces material harm for another.

Supporting sources

[North Shore Community College / Artificial Intelligence Principles and Policies](#)

[Northcentral Technical College / Artificial Intelligence](#)