Governing AI from Strength

AN ACTION GUIDE ON AI GOVERNANCE STRATEGY AND AI LITERACIES DEVELOPMENT FOR ACADEMIC LEADERS

WCET
WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES · 2026

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AUTHORS

Angela Gunder
Ph.D.

Nicole Johnson
Ph.D.

Joshua Herron
Ph.D.

Melissa Vito
Ed.D.

Joshua Steele
Ph.D.

Kim Scalzo

Van L. Davis
Ph.D.

Cristi Ford
Ph.D.

Emma Zone
Ed.D.

Megan Raymond

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Gunder, A., Johnson, N., Herron, J., Vito, M., Steele, J., Scalzo, K., Davis, V., Ford, C., Zone, E. & Raymond, M. (2026). *Governing AI from Strength: An Action Guide on AI Governance Strategy and AI Literacies Development for Academic Leaders*. WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies.

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Executive Summary

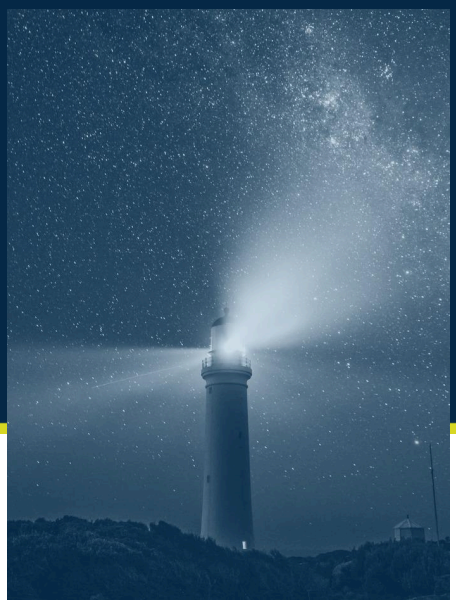


Photo. A lighthouse beam sweeps across a star-filled night sky above a low coastal headland.

How does governance become the difference between AI driving what happens to an organization versus AI that serves the organization's mission both ethically and impactfully?

Higher education institutions are already governing AI through decisions about acceptable use, tools, privacy, assessment, student access, procurement, and professional development. Yet governance is often fragmented across information technology, academic affairs, faculty governance, teaching and learning centers, and administrative offices.

This study examines how academic leaders navigate those decisions and how the development of AI literacies relates to AI governance decision-making. The central conclusion is that governance is a place where institutions grow their AI literacies. Through governance, leaders and institutions build shared understanding, examine risks, apply ethical commitments, and develop the confidence to make decisions as technologies and institutional needs continue to change. Most institutions in this study began from a similar position: AI use was already expanding, several groups were involved, ownership was unclear, and policies were still developing. The institutions making progress did not wait for certainty or replace every existing structure. They started from their own mission and values, extended the policies they already had, connected committees and decision-making processes, named an owner, established a standing body with a clear charge, set a baseline for supported tools and access even where a campus-wide license was out of reach, and scheduled review. These moves help institutions manage the tension between speed and care without treating current decisions as permanent. They also create opportunities for participants across institutional roles to develop AI literacies through the work of governance itself.

Institutions can begin with the policies, structures, relationships, and knowledge already in place. The immediate work is to clarify ownership, build shared understanding among the people who make decisions, determine which tools and uses the institution will support, and establish when those decisions will be reviewed. Governance becomes sustainable when it is incorporated into syllabi, assessment policy, procurement, contracts, budgeting, and other academic, administrative, and operational processes rather than treated as a short-term response.

Findings at a Glance

01 Most institutions are already governing AI, often without a name for the work or a clear owner (either an individual or a collective); naming the owner(s) is a foundational move that supports the rest.

02 Institutions making progress started with the mission, values, policies, and committees they already had rather than waiting to write a comprehensive AI policy.

03 A standing group with a clear charge and a renewal date sustains the work after a task force ends.

04 Leaders feel pulled between speed and care; institutions that moved forward chose their pace deliberately and scheduled review.

05 Governance draws on the AI literacies leaders already hold, above all Critical, Confident, and Cognitive, and builds new ones where governance bodies do hands-on work; Civic and Cultural AI Literacies come forward where institutions decide together.

06 Respondents emphasized the value of hands-on AI experience among the people who make governance decisions; a short training requirement establishes a shared baseline and gives informed skeptics their standing.

07 Deciding which tools everyone can use, who pays, and how access is maintained is a governance decision that should be revisited on a regular cycle.

08 Governance matures when it moves into syllabi, assessment policy, procurement, contracts, and other existing institutional processes.

This publication is designed for institutional leaders and governance partners and can be used in three ways: read the Executive Summary, the Key Takeaways that close each part of the guide, and the Leadership Roadmap for a ten-minute overview; explore Parts One through Four in full for a deeper understanding of the findings; or use the appendices to guide a working meeting or governance planning session.

Introduction

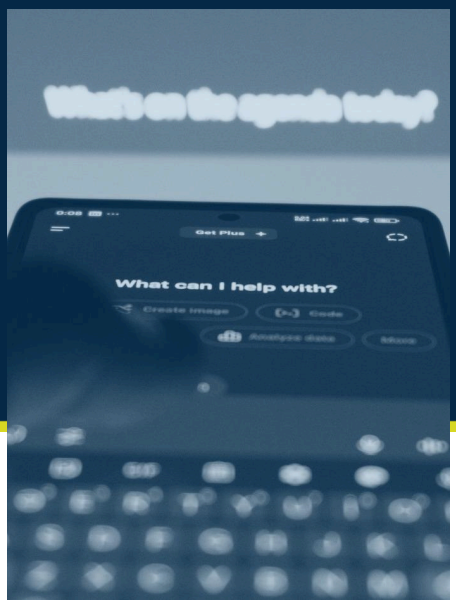


Photo. A hand holds a smartphone open to an AI assistant asking what it can help with, with a larger screen blurred behind it.

What becomes possible when institutions govern AI from their strengths rather than from a fear of being behind?

Every leader in higher education holds some responsibility for how artificial intelligence enters the life of their institution, whether that responsibility arrived by appointment or by circumstance, and few hold it in calm conditions. A persistent narrative surrounds the work. It says that the institution is behind, that meaningful progress belongs to the few with the largest budgets and the deepest technical expertise, and that the technology is changing too quickly for governance to matter. The narrative arrives from vendors, from the press, and at times from governing boards. And it persuades because it holds a grain of truth: the pace of change is real, as is the distance between what institutions are using and what they have decided. Yet it also rests on assumptions that deserve scrutiny. It frequently treats scale as the precondition for action, locates expertise outside the institution, and casts governance as a race already lost. Taken together, these claims settle over the work like fog, obscuring what an institution can already see of its own position and its own strengths. Seeing through the fog begins with a plain question: what do leaders across institutional types, sizes, and countries describe when asked how they navigate AI governance, and how closely does it match the narrative they are told?

Amidst the tension of volatility and innovation, standing still no longer serves as a neutral action.

Students arrive having already used generative AI, and many hold strong views about its place in their lives and their learning, from enthusiasm to outright hostility toward the technology and those who promote it. What they ask of their institutions, in either case, is a considered position, and their perspectives belong in the governance conversation as evidence rather than as a problem to be contained. Faculty and staff are using AI in teaching, in research, in student services, and in administrative work, often without a shared understanding of what is permitted or advisable. WCET's *AI Literacies in Practice: A Comprehensive Playbook for Higher Education* (Gunder et al., 2026), warned of two equally problematic paths, rejecting the technology outright and falling behind, or adopting it uncritically and eroding core educational values; the third path, thoughtful integration, requires governance. In its absence, the consequences follow a

predictable pattern. When an institution provides no sanctioned tool, use continues out of view, and students are sorted by their ability to pay for better ones. When nobody is charged with the question, contradictory practices harden into culture, with one office teaching responsible use while another penalizes it. Inaction, in other words, is a form of drift in which the institution's values are absent from decisions made in its name.

Photo. A lighthouse stands at the end of a stone breakwater on still water, beneath wind-streaked clouds at dusk.

Thankfully, a different approach is available to us to align AI governance to impact. Most of us already hold what we need to govern AI well. We have a mission and a set of values capable of anchoring decisions. We have policies on data, academic integrity, and procurement that can be extended to AI rather than written anew. We have senates, committees, teaching and learning centers, and technology governance groups whose members already bring AI literacies to the table. And we have people at every level who have taken on the work, formally or informally, because it needed doing. None of this requires a large budget or a large team. Agility matters more than scale, and the structures and relationships we already have are the material from which coherent governance is built. The task is to connect what exists, give it direction, and assign responsibility for keeping it in motion.

A lighthouse cannot lift the fog, but it gives those at sea a fixed point to steer by. For an institution navigating AI, that fixed point is its own mission and values, made visible in how decisions are reached and communicated. If that light cannot be seen by the people who need it, nothing else will matter, and keeping it visible is work that belongs to the whole institution. Presidents and provosts set direction and signal that the work is a priority. Deans, directors, and department chairs carry it into the units where AI is actually used. Faculty governance leaders, teaching center staff, librarians, technologists, and student leaders supply the expertise and the trust without which no policy takes hold. The waters are rough. Bringing an institution through them is a shared undertaking, and it is one that a leader at any level can begin from where they stand.

This is why AI governance is leadership and change management work rather than compliance work.

It is the means by which an institution decides what AI is for in its own context, who is accountable for those decisions, and when they will be revisited. It is also a site of growth: the work of governing AI draws on the AI literacies that leaders and institutions already hold, and it can develop new ones in the process. When leaders across the field are asked what success with AI would look like, they describe a destination rather than a technology: time returned to human connection, access for every student, AI literacies as a shared foundation, adoption anchored in institutional values, and governance that enables rather than polices. No institution begins that journey from nothing, and part of the way has already been charted.

Conceptual Lenses for This Guide

This guide reads the study's findings through two lenses. The first comes from WCET and describes where institutional AI decisions happen (WCET, 2023; WCET, 2025). The second comes from Opened Culture and describes the capacities people bring to those decisions (Gunder et al., 2024). Two definitions anchor the pair.

AI Governance

AI governance is the set of institutional structures, policies, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms that guide how AI is selected, used, evaluated, and communicated.

AI Literacies

AI literacies are the mindsets and skill sets that people and institutions need to understand, use, question, and engage with AI responsibly.

Where Governance sets the conditions for responsible AI use, the Dimensions of AI Literacies describe what people need to take part in that responsibility and carry it out.

Lens One: The WCET Framework

The *WCET AI Education Policy, Guideline, and Practice Ecosystem Framework*, created by Dr. Van Davis and Dr. Judith Sebesta in 2023 and expanded in 2025, organizes institutional AI readiness into three domains: Pedagogy, Operations, and Governance (WCET, 2023; WCET, 2025).

Pedagogy

How institutions and educators design learning environments, assess student progress, and support learners through the evolving demands of AI-enabled education

Operations

How institutions build the technological, procedural, and organizational capabilities that enable effective AI adoption. This dimension centers on the infrastructure and workflows needed to implement AI responsibly and sustainably

Governance

How institutions define their vision and values for AI use, establish policies and guidelines, make decisions about risk, and communicate shared responsibility across roles

Pedagogy and Operations cover how AI shows up in teaching and in the infrastructure behind it. This guide works in the third domain, Governance, which the framework defines as "how institutions define their vision and values for AI use, establish policies and guidelines, make decisions about risk, and communicate shared responsibility across roles."

WCET's *AI Literacies in Focus: From Frameworks to Action* (Gunder, 2025) described the Governance domain through three themes, which this guide carries forward as its governance categories and as the three sections of Part Two.

Policy and Ethics

Acceptable use, data privacy, transparency, and accountability grounded in institutional mission

Leadership and Culture

Leaders who model openness and continuous learning, and a culture that supports experimentation and trust

Institutional Accountability

The standing structures and processes that review and update policy and practice as the technology changes

Lens Two: The Dimensions of AI Literacies

The *Dimensions of AI Literacies* taxonomy (Gunder et al., 2024) adapts Dr. Doug Belshaw's *Essential Elements of Digital Literacies* (2014) for AI. It names eight literacies, defined in the table below. The eight dimensions work as a constellation, developing at their own rates and in relation to one another, and they take shape through the social and cultural settings where people use AI (Gunder, 2024).

AI literacies can also be held collectively. A committee, an institution, a region, or a group of people who share a role can each hold AI literacies of its own. This guide applies the taxonomy at that collective level. It asks which literacies an institution draws on when it governs AI, and which ones grow as it does that work.

The Dimensions of AI Literacies Taxonomy

Cultural AI Literacies
Recognizing the connections between people, AI-informed resources and tools, and points of engagement within AI tools and AI-enabled environments.

Cognitive AI Literacies
Expanding intellectual capabilities by engaging with AI-enabled processes and environments.

Constructive AI Literacies
Utilizing AI tools to build, remix, and generate new content, applying AI capabilities.

Communicative AI Literacies
Leveraging AI technologies to convey ideas effectively, recognizing the sociocultural practices and nuances that AI interprets and influences in different settings.

Confident AI Literacies
Developing the ability to solve problems and manage learning within AI-driven environments by understanding and harnessing their unique features and potentials.

Creative AI Literacies
Engaging in ideation and generative actions using AI, focusing on how AI can add value and introduce new possibilities within specific contexts.

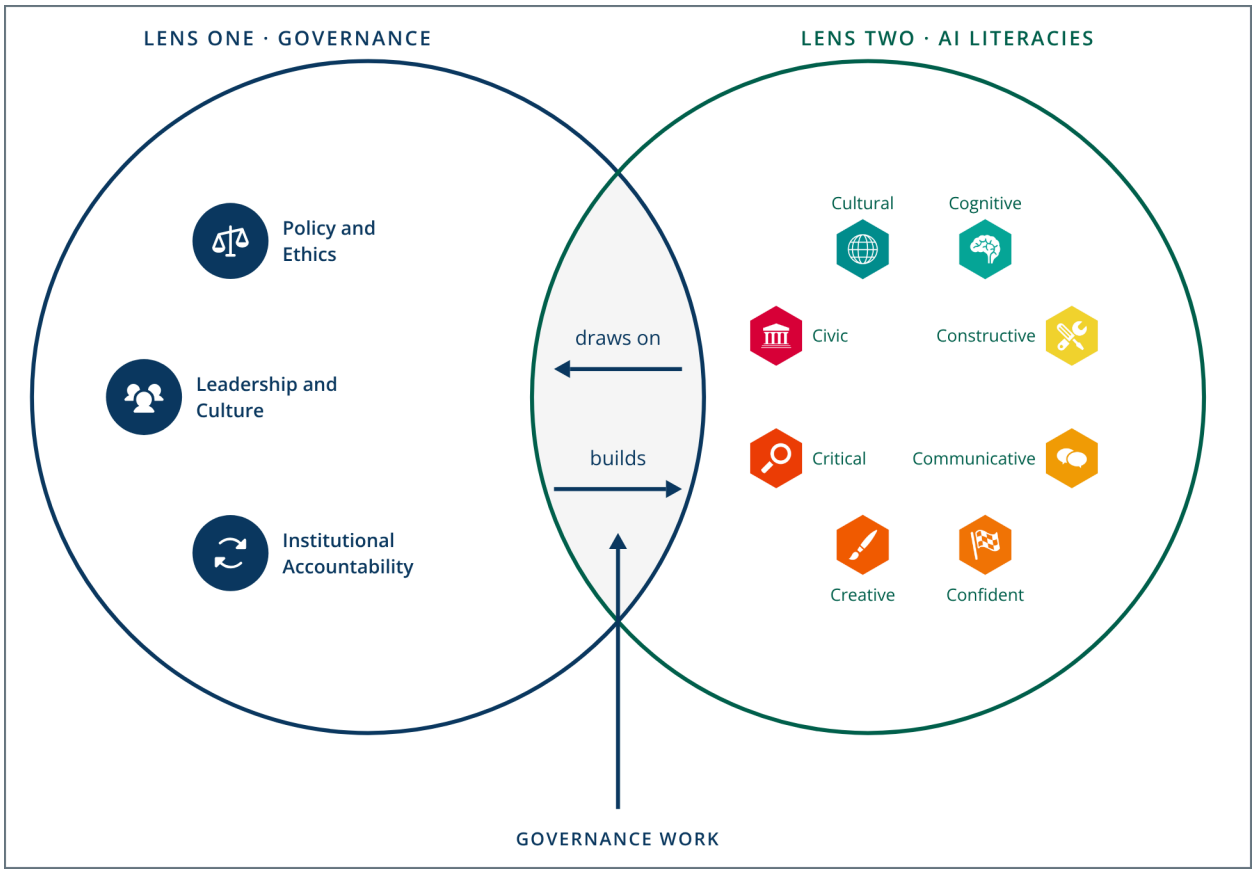
Critical AI Literacies
Examining the power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in AI practices, reflecting on the broader societal impacts of AI-driven decisions and actions.

Civic AI Literacies
Employing AI knowledge and skills to contribute positively to society, using AI to foster community empowerment, engagement, and societal progress.

The Lenses Together

Side by side, the two lenses frame the study's main finding. The figure below, *Two Lenses: Governance and AI Literacies*, shows that relationship. It returns in Part Three of this guide, which traces the literacies leaders use and gain within each governance theme.

Two Lenses: Governance and AI Literacies



This guide is the third in a sequence of WCET publications on AI literacies, and the study behind this guide grew out of what the two earlier publications found. *AI Literacies in Focus* responded to the rapid proliferation of AI literacy frameworks by reviewing more than fifty resources and examining nine in depth through the three domains. It advised institutions to remix openly licensed frameworks in keeping with their own mission, culture, and capacity rather than adopt any single model. Its comparative findings were uneven in an instructive way.

Governance was the least developed of the three domains, addressed most often through ethical considerations and institutional policy guidelines. It was thinnest where institutional accountability was concerned, an area the report identified as emergent across nearly every framework.

AI Literacies in Practice, grounded in the taxonomy and organized by the same three domains, resituated AI literacies development into role-based actions, examples from the field, design principles, and implementation toolkits, with the conviction that governance should enable rather than constrain. In doing so, it recorded a pattern the earlier *AI Literacies in Focus* report had anticipated: institutions recognized the importance of governance but struggled to implement it, and the guidance available to them rested on frameworks and selected examples rather than on evidence gathered from leaders about how governance decisions are actually made, what has helped, and what those decisions ask of the people who make them. Across two rounds of work, Governance had emerged as the domain where recognition most outran practice, and a research study was the next step.

That aforementioned study is the one behind this guide. Commissioned by WCET, it asked academic leaders two related questions: 1) how they navigate and make decisions about AI governance, and 2) how the development of AI literacies relates to that decision-making. It began with a survey of leaders, whose first round of findings was presented at the EDEN 2026 Annual Conference in Porto, Portugal in the paper *AI Governance and the Development of AI Literacies in Higher Education: A Thematic Analysis* (Johnson et al., 2026), and it continued with a wider survey and a series of in-depth interviews with leaders across institutional types and countries. Where the first round described where institutions stood, the full study shows how far they have moved and the specific moves that carried them. Alongside the survey and the interviews, the examples of practice in these pages come from the AI Literacies Case Example Database, the open repository through which institutions share their governance work while it is still in motion. The research study and the database continue together in that the domain of Governance stays attended to only as long as a community is willing to share practices in flight, with the closing appendices of this guide sharing how to do so. And while this guide stands on its own, it is also written to work alongside the playbook, so that leaders who have adopted the *AI Literacies in Practice* playbook's tools can extend them to the governance work the study describes, and each resource here can be used on its own or paired with companion resources in the playbook.

In this Action Guide

From here, the guide moves from evidence to action. The sections below describe its parts, its appendices, three ways to spend time with it, and a starting point for each role, so that a leader with ten minutes, an hour, or a working session can begin in the right place.

Guide Contents

Parts of the Guide	What Each Covers
About the Research Study	The survey, the interviews, and the leaders who took part, and how the evidence was analyzed
Part One: Where Institutions Are with AI Governance	What institutions report having in place, where they are investing, what their governance covers, and who holds the work
Part Two: How Higher Education Leaders Are Navigating AI Governance	The study's first question, answered in three sections, one for each governance theme: Policy and Ethics, Leadership and Culture, and Institutional Accountability
Part Three: Governance for AI Literacies Use and Development	The study's second question, showing how governance work draws on the AI literacies an institution already holds and builds new ones
Part Four: From Findings to Action	The findings turned into decisions for this month, actions for this semester, and questions to return to each year, mapped to the roles that own them
Planning and Closure	Questions for reflection and ways to continue the work
Appendices	Five toolkits built from the findings, with their companions in the playbook

Each part closes with its key takeaways, so that a reader with only minutes can carry its findings forward. Within the parts, the survey evidence is paired with the voices of the leaders who took part, attributed by role and institution type, and with examples of practice drawn from the interviews and from the AI Literacies Case Example Database. Role-based actions name first moves for senior leaders, faculty governance, technology and compliance leads, and student leaders; design principles distill a finding into a single commitment that can guide a decision; and toolkit pointers connect each finding to the appendix built for it.

Guide Worksheets and Toolkits

The appendices are where the findings become working documents, designed to be completed in a working session rather than read. Five toolkits follow the pattern established by the *AI Literacies in Practice* playbook's appendices, which have become its most used pages: a statement of purpose, the settings each is best suited to, a single page of fillable prompts, and implementation tips.

Name	What It Does
Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template	Charters a standing governance body with the authority, membership, cadence, and renewal date that distinguish a lasting structure from a short-lived one
Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot	Helps a leadership team locate its institution and name its next moves rather than assign itself a score
Appendix C: AI Leadership Roadmap Worksheet	Turns the Part Four roadmap into commitments with an owner, a date, and the public artifact that will show each one happened
Appendix D: Existing Policy and Structure Inventory	Maps the values, policies, bodies, practices, people, partnerships, and learning an institution can already build on, and names the opportunity wherever one is not yet in place
Appendix E: AI Tools Baseline Decision Record	Records a decision most institutions face: which tools everyone can use, under what data terms, at whose cost, and with what pilots alongside
Appendix F: Companion Resources from the Playbook	Pairs each toolkit with its companions in the playbook and sets the order in which to use them

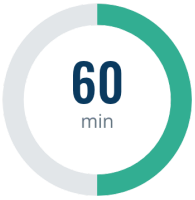
Every toolkit can be used on its own, and Appendix F places them in the sequence the leaders in this study most often followed.

Three Ways to Use This Guide

The guide is built for three kinds of attention, and each path carries you and your colleagues to a different result.

Ten Minutes

Skim the executive summary, the key takeaways that close each part, and the Leadership Roadmap in Part Four. Together they carry the whole argument and the first moves to take.



One Hour

Read Parts One through Four of this guide in order. This path is excellent for anyone preparing to brief a cabinet, a senate, or a board on what is possible through AI governance and literacies development.

2 Hour Session

Complete all of the worksheets in the appendices, worked through with a leadership team that you convene and paired with the companion toolkits in the AI Literacies in Practice playbook.

Whichever path you choose, the guide works equally well read alone, discussed with a team, or carried into a working session with the AI Literacies in Practice playbook open beside it. The working session can also be the first of several: the worksheets in Appendices A through E, paired with their companions in the playbook, can serve as the charge of an AI working group or governance committee, completed collaboratively across a series of its meetings. Appendix F sets out that sequence.

Where to Start by Role

This guide is written for everyone who shares responsibility for AI at an institution: presidents and chancellors, provosts, deans and department chairs, chief information and financial officers, student success leaders, faculty governance leaders, teaching and learning center and digital learning leaders, and the staff who brief and support them. The table below offers a starting point by role, and any role can begin anywhere.

If You're...	Start Here With...	And Try This Tool...
Just beginning, in any role	Part One: Where Institutions Are	Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot
A president, chancellor, or system head	Naming who owns AI governance and what the governance body decides (Part Two: Institutional Accountability)	Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template
A provost or vice president for academic affairs	Assessment and syllabus language (Part Two: Policy and Ethics)	*AI Literacies in Practice Playbook* in Appendix F: AI Policy Decision Guide Template
A dean, department chair, or unit director	An inventory of the AI use and the policies already present in your units (Part Two: Policy and Ethics)	Appendix D: Existing Policy and Structure Inventory
A chief information officer or technology leader	The tools baseline and vendor data terms (Part Two: Policy and Ethics)	Appendix E: AI Tools Baseline Decision Record
A chief financial officer	The access-and-cost decision (Part Two: Policy and Ethics)	*AI Literacies in Practice Playbook* in Appendix J: Access Impact Assessment Guide
A vice president for student success or student affairs	Student seats on the governance body (Part Two: Leadership and Culture)	*AI Literacies in Practice Playbook* in Appendix G: Student Advisory Planning Guide
A faculty governance leader	The consultation path that precedes any policy motion (Part Two: Leadership and Culture)	Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template
A digital learning or teaching and learning center leader	The shift from policing AI use to enabling it (Part Two: Leadership and Culture)	*AI Literacies in Practice Playbook* in Appendix H: AI Literacies Reflection and Teaching and Facilitation Guide

Whatever your role, start with something real. Choose a decision that is already in front of you, such as a request to approve a tool, a question about syllabus language, or a committee that meets without a clear charge, and find the section, the role-based action, and the toolkit that speak to it.

Governance work draws on the AI literacies an institution already holds, and the same work builds new ones.

Then start with the structures you already have. The policies, bodies, and relationships that already touch AI are the raw material of coherent governance, and extending them with a clear charge, an owner, and a review date accomplishes more, sooner, than building anew.

Key Takeaways

- Standing still is not neutral. AI is already in use across the institution, and governance decides whether the institution's values are present in the decisions made in its name.
- Most institutions already hold what they need to govern AI well: a mission, policies that can be extended, bodies that already deliberate, and people who have taken on the work.
- AI governance is leadership and change management work, and a leader at any level can begin it from where they stand.
- This guide reads its findings through two lenses: the Governance domain of the *WCET AI Education Policy, Guideline, and Practice Ecosystem Framework*, which describes where decisions happen, and the *Dimensions of AI Literacies*, which describes the capacities people bring to them and develop through them.

Every finding in the parts that follow rests on what the leaders in this study were willing to share, and the weight those findings can bear depends on knowing who those leaders are, what they were asked, and how their responses were analyzed. The following section sets out that ground before the findings begin.

About the Research Study

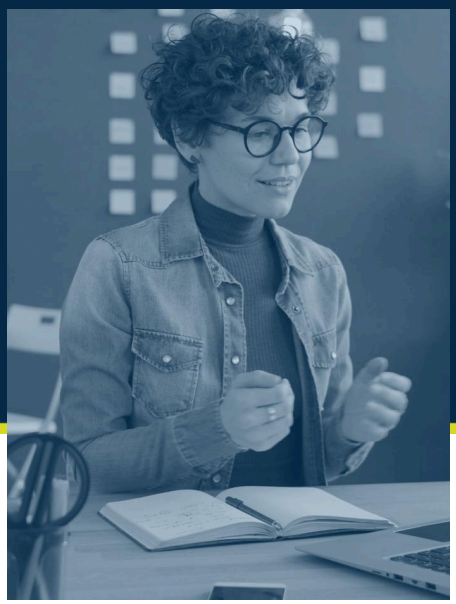


Photo. A woman with curly hair and glasses speaks and gestures toward her laptop at a desk, with a notebook open in front of her.

Whose experience do these findings rest on, what were they asked, and how were their answers analyzed?

This action guide presents the cumulative findings from the second round of a qualitative research study on AI governance and AI literacies development in higher education. The study explores two research questions:

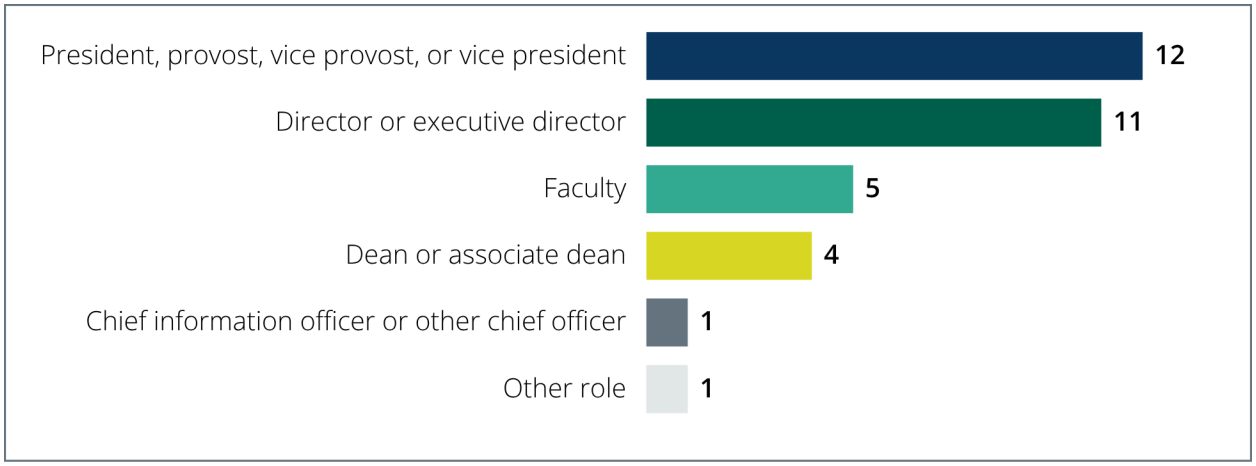
1. How do academic leaders navigate and make decisions about AI governance?
2. How does the development of AI literacies relate to AI governance decision-making?

The survey was distributed through the research team's academic networks and partner organizations between April 27 and October 5, 2026. The final analysis included 54 survey respondents, who provided 374 open-ended answers across ten survey questions and nine "Other (please specify)" fields. The study also included eight semi-structured interviews of approximately 90 minutes each. Interviews were organized into four parts: institutional context, governance decision-making, AI literacies, and looking ahead.

In addition to the survey and interviews, the research team incorporated open submissions from the AI Literacies Case Example database, a collection of institutional case examples, policies, frameworks, and governance approaches gathered from educators and academic leaders from across the globe. The study also incorporated a thematic analysis of 16 published works on AI literacies frameworks that were spotlighted in the *AI Literacies in Focus* report. These works were selected from over 50 publications identified through a literature search and they informed both the survey design and the analytical framework used in the study.

Participants represented a range of institutional roles and settings. The sample was not intended to be representative and the findings are not intended to be generalizable to all higher education institutions. Rather, the findings provide insight into how a diverse group of institutional leaders approach AI governance and the development of AI literacies. Of the 54 survey respondents, 34 provided role information. Respondents included directors and executive directors, provost-level leaders, faculty members, deans, digital learning leaders, chief officers, and other institutional staff. Because many respondents held responsibilities that spanned multiple categories, these role groupings overlap.

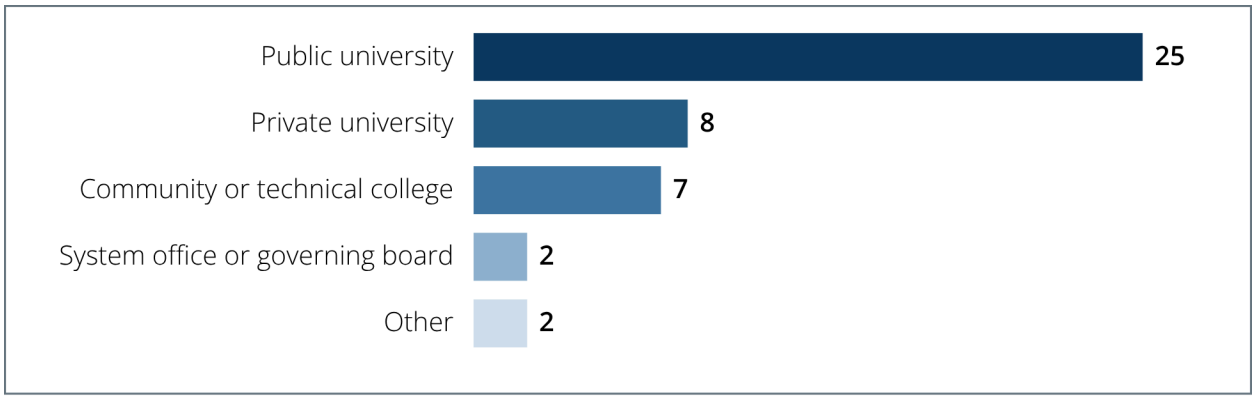
Respondents by Role



n = 54 respondents; twenty did not report a role.

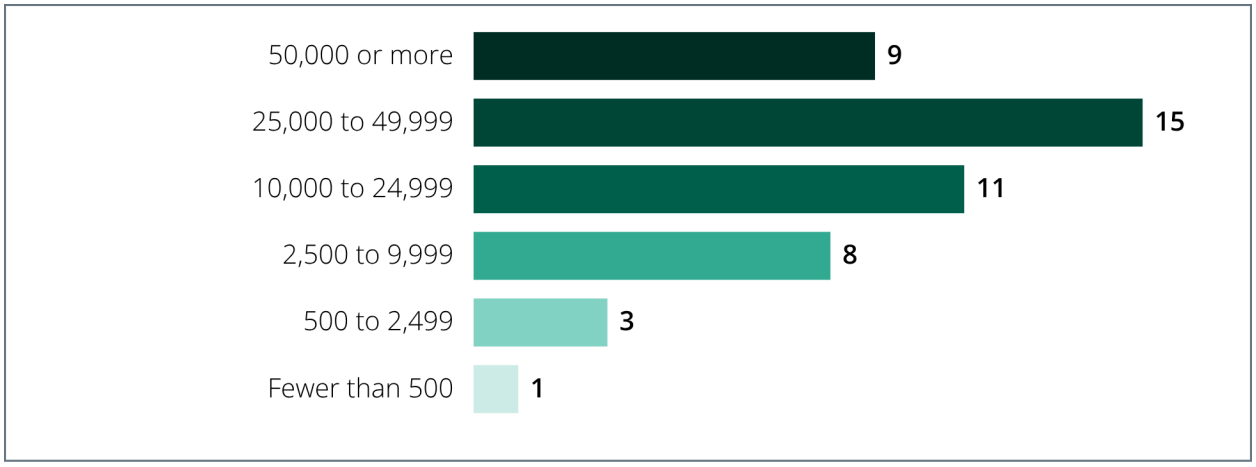
Participants represented public universities (25), private institutions (8), community or technical colleges (7), system offices or governing boards (2), and other organizational contexts (2); ten respondents did not report institution type. Among the 44 respondents who reported institutional size, institutions ranged from fewer than 500 students to more than 50,000 students.

Respondents by Institution Type



n = 54 respondents; ten did not report an institution type.

Respondents by Institution Size



n = 54 respondents; ten did not report an institution size.

Where Respondents Were Located

Forty-three of 54 respondents reported a country; eleven did not. Circle area is proportional to the number of respondents.

Respondents who provided location information represented nine countries: the United States (30), Canada (3), the United Kingdom (2), Egypt (2), Singapore (2), Australia (1), Brazil (1), Israel (1), and

New Zealand (1); eleven respondents did not report a country.

The study also examined participants' formal involvement in AI-related work. Of the 44 respondents who answered this question, five had been formally responsible for AI-related initiatives for less than one year, twelve for one to two years, and sixteen for three to four years; eleven respondents indicated that they had taken on AI-related work informally rather than through a formally designated role. Thirty-four of the 44 respondents reported serving on an AI-related committee, task force, or advisory body.

Formal Involvement in AI-Related Work

77%

serve on an AI-related committee, task force, or advisory body

36%

have held formal responsibility for AI-related initiatives for three to four years

27%

have held formal responsibility for one to two years

25%

took on AI-related work informally rather than through a designated role

Of the 44 survey respondents who answered the questions about involvement; ten did not.

Data analysis used both deductive and inductive approaches. The research team developed a priori codes from the two analytical lenses described in the preceding section: the Governance domain of the WCET framework and the Dimensions of AI Literacies. Survey responses and interview transcripts were prepared, de-identified, segmented into units of analysis, and coded using the study codebook and coding protocol. Open coding captured findings that emerged beyond the a priori codes.

Two members of the research team conducted independent analyses using the analytical lenses. One researcher prepared a summary of findings, and a second researcher reviewed and built on that summary. Findings were then discussed by the full research team and refined through consensus-building. Across the survey and interview data, the analysis generated 1,167 coded extracts, 418 from the survey and 749 from the interviews.

The study adopted a grounded theory stance that values both prevalent and outlier themes. Because institutional leaders often want to understand how common particular practices, structures, and challenges are, Part One reports selected counts from the survey data. The parts that follow describe how leaders are navigating AI governance and how AI literacies relate to governance decision-making across institutional contexts.

PART ONE

Where Institutions Are At with AI Governance

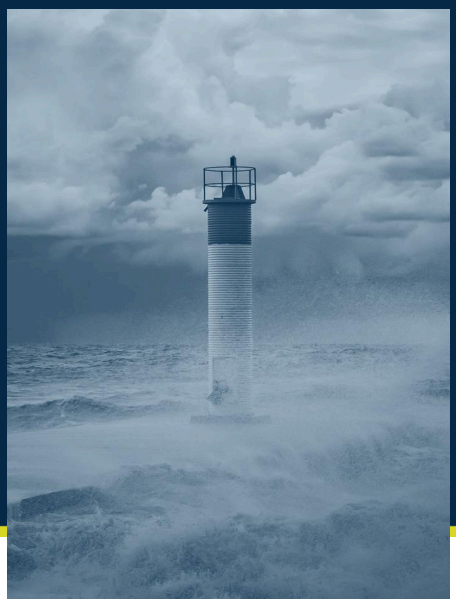


Photo. A slender lighthouse stands on a breakwater as storm waves break around it beneath heavy clouds.

Where do institutions stand with AI governance, and what do the ones furthest along share with the ones just beginning?

Most institutions in this study are already governing AI in practice. They are approving tools, developing guidance, providing professional development, and responding to questions from faculty, staff, and students. Every institution in this study, including the ones furthest along, started from the same place within a few years of one another.

The survey describes that starting place in four ways. It shows which governance practices institutions have in place, and the pattern is that the practices most often reported are the ones that establish a basis for governance or cut across the whole institution, while the practices that resource and sustain governance over time remain less common. It shows where institutions are investing, which is in learning rather than in dedicated time, funding, or recognition. It shows how far governance already reaches, across teaching and learning, student support and services, and institutional operations. And it shows who is carrying the work, which is often people new to formal AI-related roles or who took the work on without being asked.

Read together, these four findings describe institutions that are building governance and building their own expertise at the same time, with the foundations in place before the structures that will sustain them. The sections below take each finding in turn, and Part Two follows the leaders who are navigating these conditions into the decisions they are making.

To understand where institutions are in their AI governance efforts, the study examined four categories of governance practices: foundational, strategic, transformative, and cross-cutting.

AI Governance Practices Reported by Survey Respondents

Category	Description	Examples and Findings
Foundational	Establishes the policies, structures, and principles that support AI governance.	AI task force, steering committee, or advisory body (41); AI policy statements in course syllabi (36); data governance, privacy, or security policies (34); ethical and responsible AI principles (26); alignment with institutional mission, vision, or values (22).
Strategic	Focuses on planning, coordination, resourcing, and sustainability.	Safe environments for AI experimentation (31); participation in external AI communities or partnerships (31); AI procurement, implementation, and sustainability roles or regulations (21); guidelines for AI use in research and scholarship (21); dedicated funding (18); dedicated staffing (14); policy review cycles (9).
Transformative	Integrates AI into long-term institutional priorities and change initiatives.	AI literacies or AI curriculum for students (27); AI integrated into institutional strategic plans (19); public-private partnerships related to AI (16); AI-focused hiring initiatives (7).
Cross-cutting	Supports activity across all categories by developing AI literacies, building capacity, and creating opportunities for participation.	Professional development or training related to AI (44); faculty and staff AI champions or ambassadors (34); student participation in AI policy and guideline development (17); cultures of accountability and transparency around AI use (14).

The four categories describe kinds of practice rather than stages of development; an institution does not pass through them in order, and the Maturity Snapshot in Appendix B is where this guide locates an institution's stage.

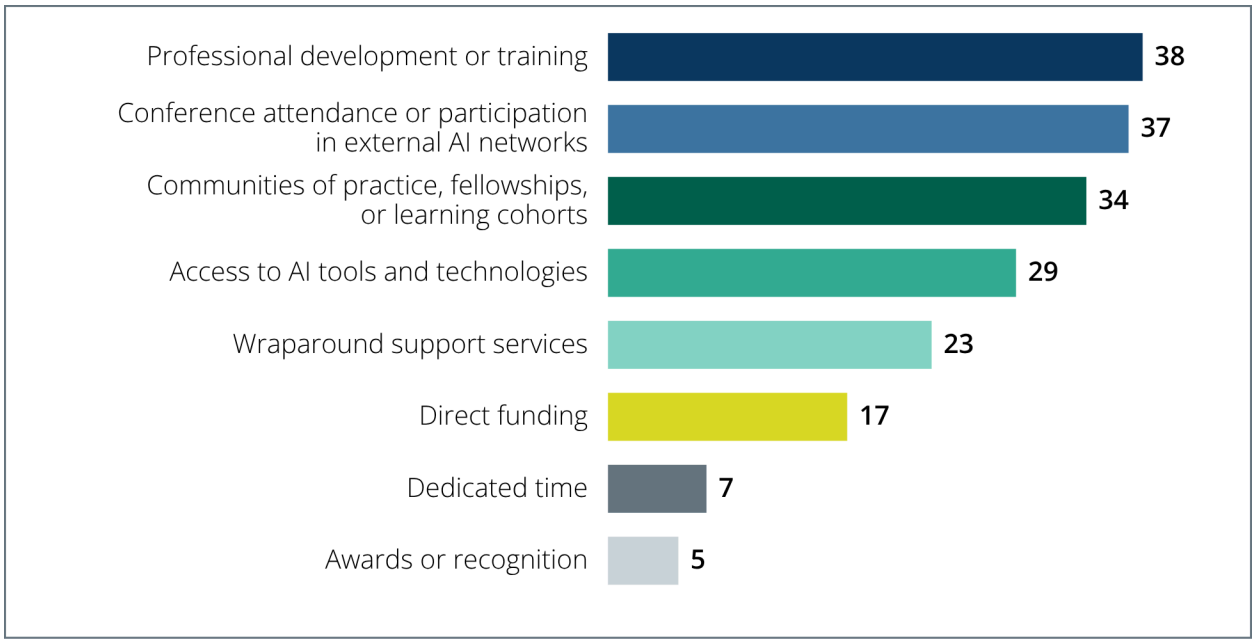
Foundational and cross-cutting practices are more common than strategic and transformative practices. Institutions are establishing governance structures, policies, guidance, and professional development while still building dedicated resources, long-term planning processes, and sustainable approaches to governance.

AI governance work is already taking place across institutions, but many of the structures associated with more mature practice are still emerging. Where they exist, they build on existing committees, policies, decision-making processes, and institutional values rather than on new governance systems, so that AI governance is incorporated into the structures an institution already has rather than developed as a separate function.

Institutions are often developing governance and institutional expertise at the same time. Many respondents reported holding formal responsibility for AI-related work for four years or less, and others reported that they had taken on the work without being formally tasked with it. Yet most respondents who answered the question about involvement reported serving on an AI-related committee, task force, or advisory body. Governance work is therefore frequently led by people who are establishing new practices while building their own knowledge and experience.

The survey also examined how institutions are supporting the development of AI-related skill sets and mindsets. Professional development, conference attendance, participation in external AI networks, and communities of practice were all reported more frequently than dedicated time, funding, or recognition.

Institutional Supports for AI Skill Sets and Mindsets

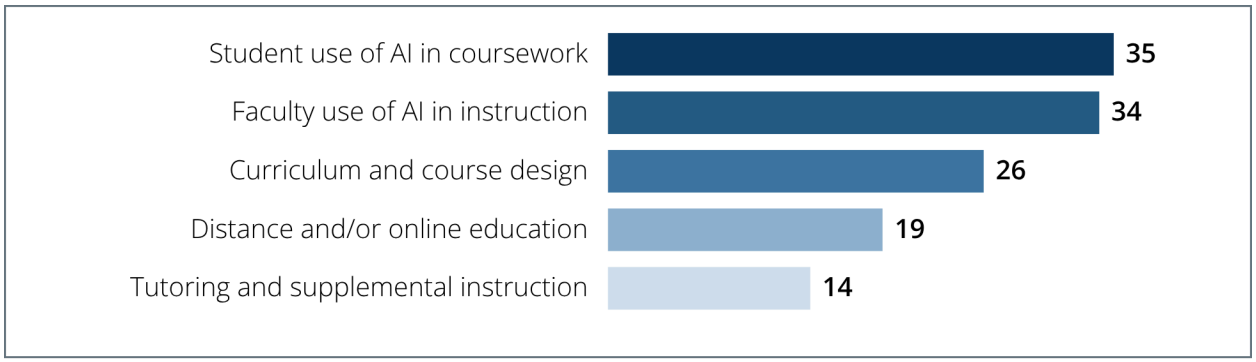


n = 54 survey respondents.

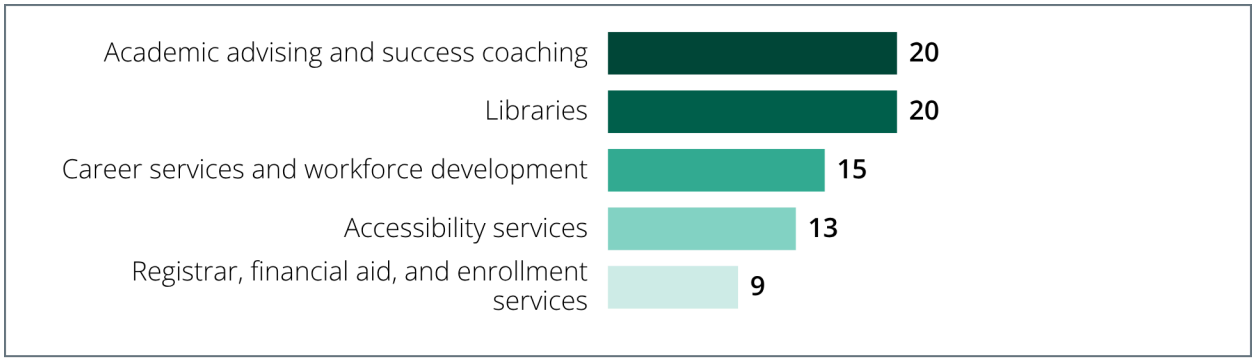
The distribution of supports reinforces the patterns in the practices table above. Institutions are investing heavily in learning opportunities, access to expertise, and communities of practice. Direct funding, dedicated time, and formal recognition were reported less frequently. AI governance work is often being added to existing responsibilities rather than supported through dedicated staffing or significant new resources. The findings from the respondents further expand on this by highlighting cost as a constraint, and the institutions that moved described governance built from the time of the people already in the room and from agreements the institution already held, so that the work began before any new budget line existed and the first sanctioned tool was often one the campus already licensed. The emphasis on professional development suggests that learning is becoming central to governance efforts. Building AI-related knowledge and confidence appears to be a priority regardless of where institutions are in their governance development. The areas included in AI governance decisions further illustrate the scope of the work. Respondents reported governance activity across teaching and learning, student support and services, and institutional operations. Faculty use of AI in instruction, student use of AI in coursework, curriculum and course design, academic advising, accessibility services, information technology, procurement, legal affairs, human resources, and institutional research were all identified as areas under consideration.

Areas Considered in AI Governance Decisions

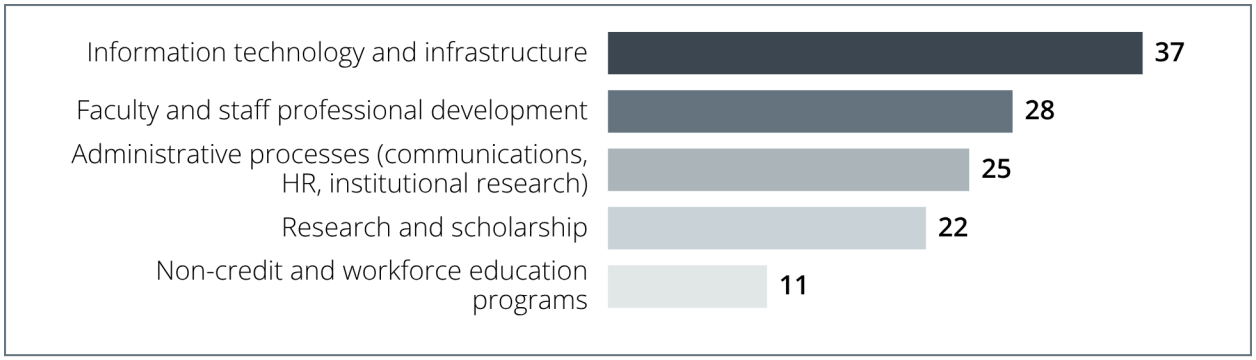
TEACHING AND LEARNING



STUDENT SUPPORT AND SERVICES



INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS



n = 54 survey respondents; respondents could select more than one area in each group.

AI governance is not confined to a single office or a single category of decisions. Governance responsibilities are distributed across academic, operational, and student-facing functions. As a result, in these institutions, governance is more closely connected to existing decision-making structures rather than treating governance as a standalone activity.

The findings also highlight the relationship between governance and AI literacies. Professional development was the most common cross-cutting practice, followed by AI champions and ambassadors. Student participation in AI policy and guideline development was reported less frequently. Institutions are therefore investing more heavily in developing the knowledge, skills, and

capacity of faculty and staff than in creating opportunities for students to participate directly in governance. Even so, governance and AI literacies are developing together: governance activity often coincides with efforts to develop AI literacies across the institution, a relationship Part Three examines directly.

Institutions have moved beyond the question of whether AI requires governance as governance activity is already taking place across higher education. However, most institutions remain in a developmental stage, still building the ownership structures, review processes, and long-term approaches associated with more mature practice. Foundational structures, professional development, and opportunities for experimentation are more common than dedicated resources, policy review cycles, strategic planning, and other transformative practices.

Institutions are building governance while building institutional expertise, determining who owns the work, and deciding how governance responsibilities should be coordinated across the institution.

Key Takeaways

- Institutions are building governance while building institutional expertise, determining who owns the work, and deciding how governance responsibilities should be coordinated.
- Foundational and cross-cutting practices are more common than strategic and transformative practices.
- Institutions are investing more heavily in learning opportunities and communities of practice than in dedicated time, funding, or recognition.
- AI governance already extends across teaching and learning, student support and services, and institutional operations.
- Governance responsibilities are often carried by people who are new to formal AI-related roles or who took on the work informally.

In the next section, we examine how leaders are navigating these conditions, which are later translated into decisions, actions, and timelines in Part Four.

PART TWO

How Higher Education Leaders Are Navigating AI Governance

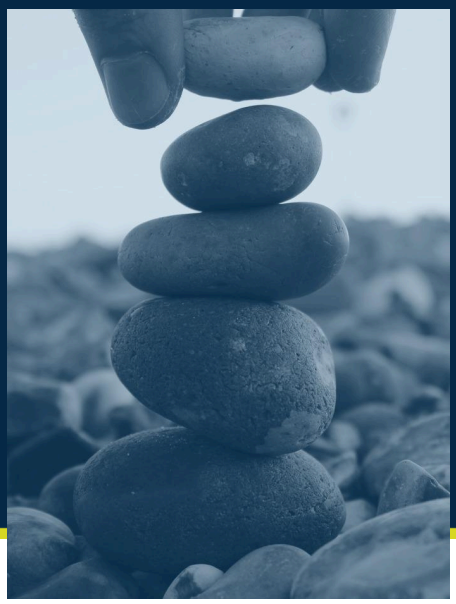


Photo. A hand sets a fifth stone on a balanced stack of pebbles on a stony beach.

How are leaders building AI governance one decision at a time, and which of those decisions have held?

No institution governs AI all at once. Governance arrives as a decision in front of someone: a request to approve a tool, a line of syllabus language, a vendor contract coming up for renewal, a complaint about a detection score, a committee that has met twice without a charge. The leaders in this study described governance built the way a cairn is built, one stone set on the ones already placed, each decision bearing the weight of the next. Some of those decisions held and some did not, and the difference between them is the subject of this next section. Part Two follows leaders through the decisions that make up AI governance, organized by the three themes of the Governance domain: Policy and Ethics, Leadership and Culture, and Institutional Accountability.

Two conditions shape every one of those decisions, whichever theme it falls under. The first is fragmentation. Most institutions begin with several groups involved in AI governance and no clear owner, and the common move among the institutions that made progress was to connect existing committees, policies, and processes rather than replace them. The second is the pull between speed and care. Twenty-one respondents described feeling caught between moving quickly and moving carefully; the institutions that moved forward chose their pace deliberately and put a date on it. Connect what exists, and set a date to look again: those two moves recur in every theme that follows, and they are the first things to look for in any decision of your own.

Policy and Ethics

Policy and ethics decisions are where many institutions first encounter the tension between speed and care. Leaders are being asked to provide guidance on acceptable use, data privacy and security, transparency, accountability, tools, vendors, institutional data, and student access while the technology continues to evolve. Many institutions are responding by extending existing policies rather than creating entirely new ones. Plagiarism guidelines, data governance frameworks, acceptable use policies, and information security protocols are being adapted to the AI context. As one participant reflected, institutions are moving forward while "knowing that we can't be certain in all things, but that we have to move forward to the best of our ability."

One of the costs of doing nothing is that AI behaviors become implicit culture, without the institution's values embedded within AI practices.

Institutions most often completed a principles statement and extensions of existing data privacy and security policies first, while questions about tools and assessment remained open. Leaders described policies for specific tools becoming outdated quickly as new tools emerge and existing tools change. In contrast, institutions reported greater confidence in guidance grounded in values, which means starting from the mission, vision, and values the institution already holds rather than writing AI policy and practice guidance outside them. An institution that begins there is extending commitments its community already recognizes, and the resulting guidance holds as the tools change because it was never written for a tool. One institution built its governance on a short set of published guiding principles drawn from its core values and declined to promote tools that did not serve them; another wrote a framework deliberately agnostic about the specific technology or platform at hand; a survey respondent described "a guiding document with principles tied to existing values and best practices." Leaders also drew a line between policy and guidance. Policy carries formal approval and is slow to revise; guidance can be issued and updated as the tools change, which is why one respondent advised "[L]ess is more. Guidelines and clarity in favor of policy."

A related shift is taking place in academic policy. Several institutions described moving from detecting misuse toward supporting responsible use, a shift the survey shows institutions wanting across the whole enterprise, as "a cultural shift from policing to embracing," but documents as a decision taken only in assessment and academic integrity policy. One institution revised its assessment policy so that it "does not condone nor support the use of AI detection tools." Another leader explained, "we try to [actively] discourage this detect part." Rather than attempting to control every use case, these institutions are focusing on transparency, accountability, and expectations for responsible use. Leaders also described growing attention to bias, particularly in decisions involving institutional tools, automated processes, and access to AI-enabled services. Questions about approved tools often extend beyond functionality to vendor data terms, institutional data access, privacy, and accountability.

Access is also emerging as a policy issue. Decisions about approved tools, funding models, and procurement increasingly affect who can participate in AI-enabled learning and work. Institutions that addressed this issue established a common baseline of access and funded it centrally so that access was not determined by departmental

resources or individual ability to pay. As a result, opportunity, affordability, access, and belonging are becoming part of policy and ethics discussions alongside privacy, security, and accountability. As institutions adopt AI tools, they are also making decisions about oversight, who can approve tool use, and what institutional data can be accessed by external systems.

The tension within this governance theme is clear: policy written for today's tools ages quickly, while institutions still need guidance today. Leaders are balancing pressure to act with recognition that the technology will continue to change. The institutions that appear most comfortable with this tension are not waiting for certainty. Instead, they are extending existing policies, grounding decisions in institutional values, and creating guidance that can evolve over time.

Several practices are helping institutions move forward. These include organization-wide AI guidelines that are regularly updated, AI integrity statements, updated data security and external data transfer policies, and closed platforms for student data. Rather than writing comprehensive AI policy from scratch, these approaches build on existing policy while providing immediate guidance.

Case Examples

- A private university in the United States answered the tools question without waiting for a new policy. Because the campus already ran on a single productivity suite, the suite's AI assistant sat under the same vendor data-privacy commitments as everything else the institution used, so a default tool could be provided quickly and with some confidence, with guardrails kept on personally identifying information and FERPA-covered data. The decision rested on terms the institution already held, not on the tool's features.
- A public university in North America placed an algorithmic impact assessment beside the privacy impact assessment in its procurement process, so that a tool's effects on people are weighed at the same moment as its handling of data. The same institution lets faculty opt out of using AI, with one exception: a program that is about AI cannot opt out of it.
- St. John Fisher University's AI Toolkit, shared through the AI Literacies Case Example Database, publishes the list of university-approved tools alongside plain guidance on what may be done with protected and unprotected tools, turning the access and data decisions into something every member of the campus can read.

Design Principle

Build from the policies and guidelines that you already have before you write new ones.

Toolkit References

- Appendix E: AI Tools Baseline Decision Record records the decision this section returns to most often.
- In the *AI Literacies in Practice Playbook*, Appendix F: AI Policy Decision Guide Template and Appendix J: Access Impact Assessment Guide, carry the policy and access decisions.

Leadership and Culture

Leadership and culture sit at the intersection of governance and practice. Leaders are not only making decisions about AI use across the institution; they are also shaping how those decisions are communicated, understood, and supported by the people who carry them out. Cross-functional steering committees emerged as the most promising practice. By bringing information technology, libraries, teaching and learning centers, legal counsel, student affairs, faculty representatives, and other stakeholders into the same conversation, these groups help institutions develop shared language, shared understanding, and a more holistic view of how AI is being used and supported across academic, operational, and student-facing functions. Rather than treating AI as the responsibility of a single office, these institutions are creating structures that connect perspectives that might otherwise remain separate.

Respondents consistently identified two leadership needs that are within the control of institutional leaders: a shared understanding of AI among the people making decisions, and visible engagement from the top. Twenty-two respondents named uneven understanding of AI among decision makers as the obstacle they most often faced, more than any other in the survey. The institutions that addressed it set a baseline: one required everyone involved in governance to reach a minimum level of AI literacies, "regardless of if you're a professor or if you're a TA," and another required a short course of everyone who decides. Part Three returns to this finding and to the order in which experience and governance belong. Fifteen respondents pointed to leadership engagement. The interviews provided concrete examples of what visible engagement looks like in practice. One institution described a president who attended the kickoff of the governance process. Another described a provost who completed the required AI course before anyone else and said so publicly. Elsewhere, leaders described a president and provost who were aligned in their decision to move slowly and deliberately rather than rushing to adopt policies or tools. Leaders also described sensemaking as part of the work. Rather than waiting for certainty, they acknowledged uncertainty, created opportunities for discussion, and continued making decisions as conditions changed.

The findings also show that committees are most effective when membership is representative and the charge is clear. Leaders repeatedly described the value of including diverse perspectives, including people who were skeptical of AI. As one participant reflected, "it was very useful to have him on the task force." Institutions reported that disagreement often improved decision-making when it was informed and included within the governance process. One institution adopted a simple principle: anyone may reject AI use, but no one may remain uninformed. Several institutions also emphasized reducing fear and stigma around AI use so that questions, experimentation, and concerns could be discussed openly. Informed disagreement was treated as an asset rather than an obstacle.

Trust emerged as another important factor. While technical expertise is necessary, the people who are most trusted are not always the people with the deepest technical knowledge.

Teaching and learning centers, department chairs, and other middle-level leaders often serve as interpreters, facilitators, and translators between institutional governance processes and everyday practice.

Institutions that appeared to move most quickly often worked through trusted individuals and existing institutional structures to build understanding and support. Communication also emerged as a design choice rather than a by-product of governance. Leaders described the value of creating one shared location for AI-related resources and directing people to it consistently. Others highlighted the importance of using common terminology and a shared framework for communicating expectations. Shared language and common terminology helped participants work from the same definitions and expectations. These practices contrasted sharply with situations in which information was distributed across multiple offices, leading to what one respondent described as "screaming into the void."

Underlying many of these discussions is a tension between expertise and trust. The people with the most technical knowledge and the people with the most institutional trust are often different people. Effective governance brings both into the process. Cross-functional committees, representative participation, and shared communication structures help institutions balance technical expertise with institutional legitimacy.

A cost of doing nothing is the creation of contradictory signals that harden into culture, with one office teaching AI use while another penalizes it.

Several practices are helping institutions move forward. Rather than creating entirely new governance structures, institutions are often using existing bodies—including academic senates, analytics leadership teams, and faculty development committees—to review and revise guidance in ways that align with institutional culture. Other practices include cross-functional steering committees, shared resource hubs, and professional development focused on the hesitant middle rather than early adopters. This approach recognizes that long-term adoption depends less on the earliest adopters and more on building confidence among those who remain uncertain about whether and how AI should be used. Together, these practices create common language, reduce confusion, support ongoing adaptation as technologies and institutional needs change, and help leaders support their colleagues by removing obstacles and barriers to ethical and impactful AI usage.

Case Examples

- A private university in North Africa built its governance process to be small and participatory at once: two co-chairs and a compact steering group for agility, with the work distributed across four impact areas. It began with stakeholder research rather than a draft, and found that when the community could see itself in the process, buy-in "happens almost automatically." Common language and guiding principles were written early so that staff, who had felt left out while the first two years focused on faculty, could join the conversation on the same terms.
- A community college district in the United States made students full members of its AI task force ("You are equal in this room to everyone else") and had speakers come to the task force throughout the year so the group could stay informed about how AI was being used in its own context rather than in the press.
- The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' AI Learning Community, shared through the AI Literacies Case Example Database, extends the same logic across a system: a standing learning community open to all employees, designed to broaden AI literacies among the people who will carry decisions rather than only the early adopters.

Design Principle

Good governance removes barriers, making the ethical and impactful path the most straightforward one for you and your colleagues to walk.

Toolkit References

- Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template sets the membership, consultation path, and transparency commitments this section describes
- In the *AI Literacies in Practice Playbook*, Appendix E: Cross-Functional Collaboration Planning Template, Appendix G: Student Advisory Planning Guide, and Appendix H: AI Literacies Reflection and Teaching and Facilitation Guide, carry the collaboration, student voice, and shared learning.

Institutional Accountability

Institutional accountability begins with a question that many institutions are still working to answer: Who owns the work?

Fragmentation emerged as the defining challenge in this governance theme. Respondents described task forces, committees, and working groups that were making progress but were not always connected to one another or to institutional decision-making processes. As one respondent observed, "Governance across our institution is poor and disconnected from strategy. This makes for a poor foundation for new governance structures."

The most common missing piece was a named owner. Twenty of 54 respondents identified the absence of a clearly identified leader, office, or governance body responsible for coordinating AI-related decisions, and it was also among the things respondents most often wished they had addressed earlier. Institutions that addressed this challenge did so in different ways. Some designated a specific leader. Others established shared ownership between academic affairs and information technology. Others adopted distributed accountability models in which responsibility was shared across multiple units, on the reasoning, as one leader put it, that AI "is everyone's responsibility." The common factor was not the governance structure itself but clarity about who was responsible for moving decisions forward: AI can be everyone's responsibility only when it is also, in a named place, someone's.

The findings also distinguish between structures designed to start work and structures designed to sustain it. Task forces often helped institutions respond to immediate questions and develop initial guidance. However, respondents reported that many temporary groups lost momentum once early priorities had been addressed or membership changed. Institutions that sustained progress planned for the transition before the task force ended. In some cases, responsibilities moved to an implementation group with defined milestones. In others, the work drifted because no successor structure had been identified.

The institutions furthest along have embedded governance into everyday operations.

AI-related decisions are increasingly connected to existing institutional processes, including student conduct expectations, syllabus guidance, curriculum development,

promotion and tenure discussions, budgeting processes, and strategic planning. Rather than operating as a separate initiative, AI governance becomes part of how the institution makes decisions, reviews policies, and responds to change.

Several examples illustrate what durable structures look like in practice. Institutions described standing committees with multi-year appointments, staff support, and recurring work plans. Others built governance around review cycles that allowed policies and guidelines to be revisited regularly. One institution reviewed guidelines every six months with faculty and student participation. Another renewed its governance plan each year. Standing structures not only sustain the work but also preserve institutional memory when leadership, committee membership, and institutional priorities change. These approaches help institutions maintain continuity while adapting to changing circumstances.

The cost of doing nothing? A policy that no one owns is a policy that no one follows.

Review processes emerged as an important operational practice. Respondents described policies that stalled because they lacked a mechanism for revision. In contrast, governance structures that included review dates and scheduled opportunities for reconsideration were able to respond more effectively to changing technologies and institutional needs. The findings point to a simple lesson: an AI policy with a review date is a decision; one without is a hope.

The findings also highlight an important consideration for systems and multi-campus institutions. Leaders are not only deciding what decisions need to be made, but also where those decisions should sit and how campus perspectives are represented. Several respondents described governance structures that connected campus input to system-level decision-making, creating pathways through which proposals could move from discussion to implementation.

The central tension in this governance theme is permanence and adaptability. Institutions need structures that are stable enough to maintain accountability and institutional memory while remaining flexible enough to respond to changing technologies, policies, and priorities.

Several practices are helping institutions move forward. These include standing committees with clear charters, governance structures connected to operations, budgeting, and strategy, and review cycles with established dates. Together, these practices create common language, reduce confusion, and support ongoing adaptation as technologies and institutional needs change.

Case Examples

- At a community college district in the United States, ownership runs from the top down and into the tools people already use. The elected board writes AI into the chancellor's annual charges, and those charges become part of the chancellor's evaluation. The district's AI syllabus framework moved from a teaching and learning working group to the full task force, then to the faculty senate, the five vice presidents, and the strategic leadership team before adoption. Faculty now choose among three AI statements inside the system that publishes their syllabi and add their own guidance beneath, so the decision lives where the work happens and leaves a public record.
- A public university in Southeast Asia appoints members of its governance committees for three-year terms, runs each meeting to a formal agenda, and relies on a secretariat that follows up every action item, which is what keeps a standing body standing when membership changes.
- A South African university's AI Resource Hub, described in the AI Literacies Case Example Database, gives the institution's AI guidelines a single home and a cascade: department heads carry the guidance to their units from one shared source rather than from memory.

Design Principle

A task force may write the first draft, but a standing body of colleagues and stakeholders keeps it alive.

Toolkit References

- Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template charters the standing body.
- Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot locates the institution.
- Appendix D: Existing Policy and Structure Inventory finds what already exists.
- In the *AI Literacies in Practice Playbook*, Appendix K: Communications Planning Template, carries the transparency commitments.

Role-Based Actions Across the Three Themes

The decisions in this part are made by different people in different seats, and most of them are made in parallel. The table below gathers the first moves for each role across the three themes, so that a leader can read down a row for their own work and across a column to see who else is moving on the same theme. None of these moves requires a new budget or a new structure to begin, and every one of them is stronger when the people in neighboring rows know it is underway.

Role	Policy and Ethics	Leadership and Culture	Institutional Accountability
President or chancellor	Set the expectation that AI guidance starts from the institution's mission and values.	Complete the preparation you ask of others, and say so publicly.	Name the owner of AI governance and where the role sits.
Provost or vice president for academic affairs	Own assessment and syllabus guidance, and decide the institution's stance on AI detection.	Seat the skeptics, and route decisions through the people faculty trust.	Give the governance body something to test in its first term.
Chief information officer and compliance lead	Own the vendor data terms and set the tools baseline.	Translate contract terms and technical constraints into language the campus can act on.	Co-own the work with academic affairs rather than own it.
Chief financial officer	Decide whether the baseline tool is funded centrally, so access does not depend on a unit's budget.	Fund the preparation requirement before funding the next tool.	Attach the budget line once a pilot has reported.
Faculty governance leader	Bring existing integrity and assessment policy to the table as the starting text.	Agree the consultation process before any policy motion.	Set the review date on every guideline the senate adopts.
Teaching and learning center or digital learning leader	Draft the guidance faculty will actually use, in the institution's own terms.	Carry decisions into practice through the hesitant middle, not only the early adopters.	Keep the single hub where guidance lives, and keep it current.

Role	Policy and Ethics	Leadership and Culture	Institutional Accountability
Student leader	Review the opt-out provisions and the access check attached to any tool decision.	Bring evidence of student attitudes, including distrust, to the table.	Hold a seat with a vote, and ask for the review date.

No row is complete on its own. The moves that held in this study were the ones made in sight of one another, which is the work of the standing body described in Institutional Accountability and chartered in Appendix A.

Key Takeaways

- Most institutions begin with several groups involved in AI governance and no clear owner; the common move is to connect what exists rather than replace it.
- Leaders feel pulled between speed and care; the institutions that moved chose their pace deliberately and set a date for review.
- Guidance that starts from the institution's own mission, vision, and values outlasts policy written for particular tools, and guidance can be revised faster than policy.
- Governance works through the people the institution trusts, who are not always the people with the most technical knowledge; representative committees with a clear charge bring both to the table.
- A task force can start the work; a standing body with a named owner, a charter, and a renewal date sustains it.

PART THREE

Governance for AI Literacies Use and Development

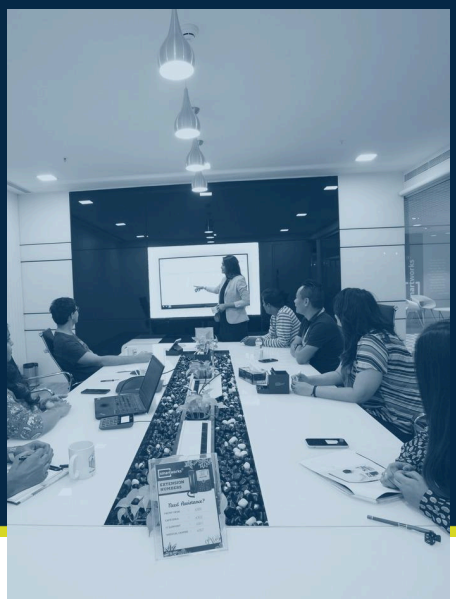


Photo. Seven colleagues around a conference table listen as a presenter points to a screen at the front of the room.

Which AI literacies do leaders and institutions bring to governing AI, and which ones grow through the work?

Leaders bring AI literacies to the work of governing AI, and governance bodies that take on hands-on work build more of them. Across the survey and the interviews, Critical, Confident, and Cognitive AI Literacies are the dimensions most often in use when leaders decide, and Civic and Cultural AI Literacies come forward most clearly where institutions decide together.

The AI literacies that grow through governance grow where the governance body has something to test rather than only something to review, and most leaders in this study say that hands-on experience with AI should come before a seat at the table. Taken together, these findings make governance a vehicle for building institutional capacity as well as a mechanism for managing risk. Part Three addresses the second research question: How does the development of AI literacies relate to AI governance decision-making? The answer runs in both directions. Institutions bring capacities to the table in order to decide, and the act of deciding builds new capacity. In a leader's terms, the people who govern AI well are drawing on what they already understand about it, and the work of governing, done with care, is one of the ways they come to understand more. Both levels appear in the evidence, and this part reports them separately. The survey asked leaders how their own understanding of AI shaped their governance decisions, so it mostly reveals the AI literacies that individual leaders bring. The interviews describe committees, councils, working groups, and systems at work, so they reveal the AI literacies an institution holds together.

The AI Literacies Leaders Bring

Twenty-eight of 54 survey respondents describe drawing on their own understanding of AI when they make governance decisions, and every leader interviewed does the same. Three dimensions recur. Critical AI Literacies, the capacity to examine the power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in AI practices, appear in the responses of 13 of 54 respondents and run through all eight interviews. Respondents describe bringing "the critical and ethical angle" to decisions and asking of any proposed use, "does it serve a greater good?" One leader summarized the stance in a sentence: "just because the technology can, it's not necessarily we have to." Another respondent described the knowledge behind it: "I also have deep understanding related to data privacy, bias, and ethics that informs how I see the use of tools."

Cognitive AI Literacies, the capacity to understand how AI tools function within institutional systems and to reason about them, appear in 9 of 54 respondents and in six of the eight interviews. They show up as vendor vetting, as attention to data security, and in one institution as an algorithmic impact assessment written into the procurement process itself. Confident AI Literacies, the ability to solve problems and manage one's own learning within AI-driven environments, appear in 21 of 54 respondents, more than any other dimension in the survey, and in five of the eight interviews. Leaders describe weighing tools against criteria they have set for themselves and keeping pace with the technology by their own effort: "I've had to upskill continuously and as rapidly as possible by participating in external professional development."

The implication for any institution is encouraging. The AI literacies that governance draws on most are already common among the people who lead, which means an institution can begin with the people it has.

AI Literacies Leaders Bring to Governance Decisions

Dimension	What It Means	How Leaders Used It
Confident AI Literacies	Developing the ability to solve problems and manage learning within AI-driven environments by understanding and harnessing their unique features and potentials.	The dimension respondents described most often. Leaders set their own criteria for each tool, kept pace through reading, webinars, and outside networks, and treated the moment as sensemaking, "knowing that we can't be certain in all things, but that we have to move forward."
Critical AI Literacies	Examining the power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in AI practices, reflecting on the broader societal impacts of AI-driven decisions and actions.	Leaders weighed each proposed use against ethics, bias, and privacy, asking whether it serves a greater good and bringing "the critical and ethical angle" to tool decisions. It runs through all eight interviews, and leaders held that AI outputs support human judgment rather than replace it.

Dimension	What It Means	How Leaders Used It
Cognitive AI Literacies	Expanding intellectual capabilities by engaging with AI-enabled processes and environments.	Leaders reasoned about what AI can and cannot do inside institutional systems: vetting vendors, attending to data security, and at one university writing an algorithmic impact assessment into procurement beside the privacy review.

Case Examples

- A grant director at an institution in North America used generative AI to propose outcome measures and draft plan language for an assessment framework. The director then tested every suggestion against the grant's requirements, institutional data, and assessment practice before combining the useful ones into a single plan. The director's conclusion was that AI is for generating options, not answers, and that "growth depends on continual observation, pruning, and care."
- A people leader at a U.S. organization drafts policies, professional development, and employee communications with generative AI. Each draft is reviewed for bias, oversimplification, and whose perspectives it centers, and the tool is prompted toward the organization's own values. The practice opened organization-wide conversations about responsible use.

The AI Literacies Institutions Hold Together

Where the interviews describe collective work, dimensions that the survey barely registers come into view. Civic AI Literacies, employing AI knowledge to contribute to community empowerment and shared norms, and Cultural AI Literacies, recognizing the connections among people, tools, and points of engagement, appear in half or more of the interviews (Civic in four of eight, Cultural in six). They surface in participatory research with stakeholders that produced buy-in, as one leader put it, "because they can see themselves in the process"; in a district task force that seats students as full members and tells them "You are equal in this room to everyone else"; and in student focus groups that revealed to one institution "how much distrust there is."

Constructive AI Literacies appear in most of the interviews as well, including one institution building AI agents for its own workflows. Communicative AI Literacies appear in several, most clearly in the work of translating vendor contract terms into language faculty leaders could act on. Creative AI Literacies appear in only a few, the least represented dimension and the one with the most room to grow.

These are literacies held by a collective rather than by a person. No single member of a governance group needs all eight dimensions, and the institutions in this study that governed well assembled them across both roles, usage, and perspectives held: the skeptic and the early adopter, the technologist and the teaching center director, the faculty governance leader and the student.

AI Literacies Institutions Hold Together

Dimension	What It Means	How Institutions Used It Together
Constructive AI Literacies	Utilizing AI tools to build, remix, and generate new content, applying AI capabilities.	Institutions built with AI rather than only ruling on it: a catalog of the AI applications a university had developed for itself, academic leaders building agents for their own workflows, and students funded to build agents for course development.
Cultural AI Literacies	Recognizing the connections between people, AI-informed resources and tools, and points of engagement within AI tools and AI-enabled environments.	Governance groups attended to who was in the room and who was not: a common language so staff could join faculty on the same terms, skeptics from the humanities and social sciences seated on purpose, and respect for students who object to AI on principle.

	Dimension	What It Means	How Institutions Used It Together
	Civic AI Literacies	Employing AI knowledge and skills to contribute positively to society, using AI to foster community empowerment, engagement, and societal progress.	Institutions decided with their communities rather than for them, through hundreds of stakeholder conversations, students seated as full members of a task force, and decisions worked out "backwards from those who are most directly affected."

Case Examples

- A North American institution is preparing staff to bring AI into routine work such as scheduling, meeting notes, and email. Staff join discussions and demonstrations before anything is rolled out, and access is set to fit each team's needs.
- Another institution in North America used its president's State of the University address to introduce AI to the whole faculty and staff. Student avatars asked prepared questions during the speech, and a live avatar answered the community's questions afterward using the university's own website as its source.

The AI Literacies That Grow Through Governance Work

The interviews show where growth happens inside governance: in bodies that do hands-on work. Eight of 54 respondents describe growth, and several of those attribute it to professional development or outside networks rather than to the governance work itself. A six-month working group that tested AI in grading changed the mind of the leader who chaired it. Student focus groups and stakeholder workshops taught governance bodies what their communities actually thought, which no policy review could have revealed.

Confident AI Literacies were cited the most, in seven of the eight respondents who report growth and in interviews as well; one respondent put it simply: "This has helped keep me in the loop with the growth in AI."

Critical AI Literacies were also cited for growth, reported by three respondents and echoed in the interviews: "I have become more aware." Cultural, Civic, and Cognitive AI Literacies grow in a small number of cases each. In fact, some leaders cite emerging work as focused on Cultural AI Literacies specifically. One district task force set out to build its Cultural AI Literacies, making it a theme for the whole year to invite people in to describe how they use AI because, as its leader put it, “We need to be informed in our own context.”

AI Literacies That Grew Through Governance Work

Dimension	What It Means	How It Grew
Confident AI Literacies	Developing the ability to solve problems and manage learning within AI-driven environments by understanding and harnessing their unique features and potentials.	The dimension that grew most, reported by seven of the eight respondents who described any growth. It grew in people who stayed inside the work, in grassroots groups and working groups: “This has helped keep me in the loop with the growth in AI.”
Critical AI Literacies	Examining the power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in AI practices, reflecting on the broader societal impacts of AI-driven decisions and actions.	It grew where a group tested AI against its own assumptions. A leader who chaired a working group on AI in grading, and led student focus groups along the way, changed their mind and said so publicly; a respondent described becoming “more aware” that AI outputs are never definitive.
Cultural AI Literacies	Recognizing the connections between people, AI-informed resources and tools, and points of engagement within AI tools and AI-enabled environments.	It grew through listening. Student focus groups showed one institution “how much distrust there is,” and a district task force made hearing how people use AI its theme for a year because “we need to be informed in our own context.”

Case Examples

- At a South African university, academic staff learn in workshops and consultations to test AI-generated summaries against peer-reviewed and trusted disciplinary sources before using them in course or assessment design. The goal is that they verify rather than accept.
- A community learning series in the United States had participants test AI-written text, compare search results, and examine how their data is used. By the end they were asking sharper questions and judging outputs more carefully.

Which Comes First?

Experience comes first, and governance deepens it, which means training and governance belong in one plan rather than two.

Leaders in this study are clear about the order of operations. Thirteen of 54 respondents and most of the leaders interviewed treat hands-on experience with AI as the entry ticket to governance rather than its reward. “You have to be an avid user,” one leader said. A respondent went further: “I would have required everyone to accomplish certain tasks using the tools and then write reflective summaries on them BEFORE they could be on [a] governance group.” The requirement is use, not endorsement, and experience over expertise. The institutions in this study wanted skeptics at the table, and seated them on purpose, because informed opposition improved their decisions; the same institution that ruled “anyone may reject AI use, but no one may remain uninformed” is the one whose working group changed the mind of the leader who chaired it. A skeptic who has used the tools can say what is wrong with them, and that is the voice these leaders were asking for.

The concern behind these statements is the obstacle respondents name more often than any other, uneven understanding of AI among the people who decide, raised by 22 of 54: “Efforts are being led by individuals without deep knowledge of AI and zero experience with governance initiatives,” one respondent wrote, and a system leader observed that “people are making decisions and are reacting based on what they’re hearing in the popular press.”

The institutions that acted on this concern required a short course of everyone who takes part in governance, with senior leaders completing it first and saying so, and one system office is planning training so that its campus representatives are ready "to be part of governance." At the same time, the governance bodies that pilot, test, and consult build AI literacies as they go.

What This Means for Leaders

Policy development is professional development. Governance done this way becomes a reason to reduce the stigma around experimentation rather than a reason to avoid it, and the culture it produces is one of ethical, responsible innovation. Three moves follow from the findings in this part.

Give the Group Something to Test

A bounded pilot, a tools evaluation, a round of student focus groups. The AI literacies that grew in this study grew in groups that did work of this kind.

Make Preparation Universal and Short

A brief course completed by everyone who makes decisions builds shared understanding, removes the stigma of not knowing, and gives the skeptics in the group standing to be heard.

Treat Pilots as Professional Learning

Charter each pilot as critical professional development for the people who make decisions, and say so when it is chartered.

Design Principle

Give your governance body something to test, not only something to review.

Toolkit References

- Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template carries a Member preparation row for the training requirement and the AI literacies the body expects to build.
- Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot AI Governance Maturity Snapshot carries a row for the readiness of the people who decide.
- In the *AI Literacies in Practice Playbook*, Appendix H: AI Literacies Reflection and Teaching and Facilitation Guide structures the reflection a governance body can hold on the literacies it is using and gaining.

Key Takeaways

- Governance draws most on the AI literacies leaders already hold, above all Critical, Confident, and Cognitive, so an institution can begin with the people it has.
- Civic and Cultural AI Literacies come forward where institutions decide together, held by the body rather than by any one member.
- Governance builds AI literacies where the governance body has something to test, not only something to review.
- Hands-on experience comes before a seat at the table, and the requirement is use, not agreement; informed skeptics improved decisions.
- Training and governance belong in one plan rather than two.

The next part of this guide turns these findings (as well as those of Parts One and Two) into the decisions, actions, and questions a leadership team can take up this month, this semester, and each year.

PART FOUR

From Findings to Action

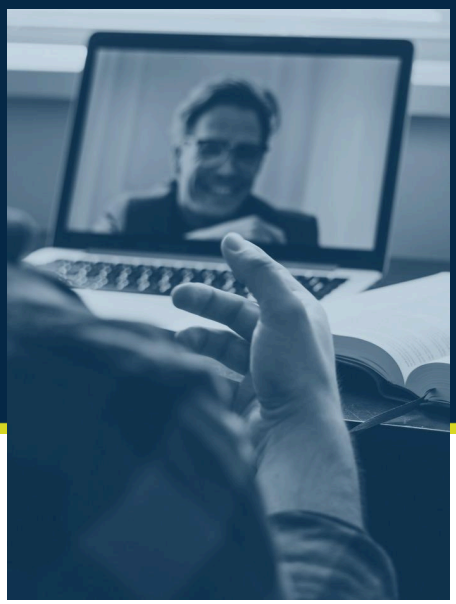


Photo. Seen over a person's shoulder, a man on a laptop screen smiles during a video call, with an open book on the desk beside the laptop.

How might our operational decisions today lay the groundwork for agile, ethical, and future-ready uses of AI across the institution?

The findings in this study point to five moves that institutions can make now. These moves are accompanied by a calendar of actions and a set of artifacts that demonstrate progress. Examples include a documented governance owner, an inventory of existing policies and governance bodies, a tools baseline, a charter for a standing governance structure, published decisions and rationales, and a regular review cycle. Together, these actions move institutions from ad hoc responses toward governance that can adapt as technologies, policies, and institutional priorities change.

01	Name an owner.	**02**	Build on existing structures.
03	Develop shared understanding before writing rules.	**04**	Establish standing structures with review dates.
05	Address tools, access, and data governance before deployment.		

With the Benefit of Hindsight

When asked what they would do differently, leaders consistently returned to five themes: starting earlier, creating one governance body with clear ownership, building shared understanding before writing rules, securing executive buy-in, and settling governance questions before signing contracts or deploying tools.

The strongest message was the importance of starting earlier. One respondent's advice was direct: “Start these conversations earlier.” By the time many institutions began governance discussions, AI use was already present across teaching and learning, operations, and student services. Leaders described the challenge of catching up once adoption was already underway. Starting earlier was not about having all the answers. It was about creating space for discussion before decisions became urgent. Nor did it mean starting well. One respondent described the current state as “the messy middle,” and the leaders who moved treated an imperfect and even informal beginning, with a date set to revise it, as the right place to enter a conversation that will keep changing.

Many respondents also reflected on the complications created by fragmented governance structures. Overlapping committees, unclear authority, and disconnected decision-making processes often made governance more difficult than necessary. In hindsight, leaders frequently wished they had created a single governance body with clear ownership rather than distributing responsibility across multiple groups.

Shared understanding emerged as another recurring theme. Respondents repeatedly emphasized the importance of developing common language, building AI literacies among decision makers, and ensuring that participants understood the issues before drafting policy. Institutions that invested in learning, discussion, and sensemaking often found it easier to reach agreement when governance questions eventually emerged.

Leadership engagement was also identified as a critical factor. Governance efforts gained momentum when presidents, provosts, and other senior leaders were visibly involved and when participants understood that the work carried a clear institutional mandate. Leaders described executive engagement as a signal that AI governance was not solely a technology issue or the responsibility of a single office, but a shared institutional priority.

Finally, many respondents reflected on the risks of allowing technology adoption to outpace governance. Contracts were signed, tools were deployed, and practices became established before questions about ownership, accountability, privacy, procurement, and oversight had been fully addressed. Several participants suggested that governance discussions should begin before implementation decisions are made so that expectations, responsibilities, and review processes are already in place.

Taken together, these reflections reinforce the importance of starting governance work before questions about tools, policy, and oversight become urgent.

Priorities Ahead and Where Institutions Need Capacity

Asked what their institutions would prioritize over the next one to two years, respondents described a clear agenda. Several priorities recurred across institutions:

A central AI leader or clear ownership structure	**Guidelines that address teaching, research, and administrative uses of AI**
Assessment redesign	**A baseline set of approved and supported AI tools**
Student AI competencies embedded within the curriculum	**Data and privacy policies that address AI use**
Formal review cycles for policies and guidance	

These priorities reflect a shift from initial response toward sustained governance. Clear ownership remains a priority because many institutions continue to operate with multiple groups involved in governance but no agreed-upon coordinator. Guidelines remain a focus because leaders are attempting to provide direction across teaching, research, and administrative functions simultaneously. Assessment redesign and student AI competencies point to continued interest in how AI changes learning, while tools baselines, data policies, and review cycles reflect the need for governance structures that can keep pace with rapid change.

Respondents also identified specific areas where additional institutional capacity is needed:

Administrators and deans	**Faculty senates and faculty governance bodies**
Staff across academic, administrative, and student-facing units, whose AI literacies shape the quality of the work governance decides on	**Processes for approving use cases alongside tools**
Understanding the risks associated with delaying governance decisions	

The emphasis on administrators, deans, faculty governance bodies, and staff suggests that institutions increasingly view AI governance as a shared leadership responsibility rather than solely a technology function. Respondents also highlighted the need to evaluate how tools will be used, not simply whether tools should be approved. Several leaders pointed to the risks associated with delayed decision-making, noting that a lack of governance can create uncertainty, inconsistency, and unintended consequences as AI adoption continues to expand.

The findings suggest that governance capacity is not solely a technical challenge. Institutions are seeking support in leadership, communication, decision-making, coordination, and implementation.

Opportunities for Innovation and Growth

Opportunity	What the Findings Show	What This Looks Like
Standing Structures	Many institutions began with task forces and working groups, but the most durable approaches relied on permanent structures with clear authority, membership, and review processes. Task forces can start the work. Standing structures sustain it.	A standing governance committee with a charter, defined authority, and scheduled review dates.
Transparency and Communication	Transparency and communication also emerged as important conditions for effective governance. Leaders described the value of documenting decisions, communicating rationales, and maintaining accessible resources that could be updated as policies evolved.	Governance decisions and supporting rationale are published in a shared location and reviewed regularly.
Student Perspectives and Access	Student perspectives and access considerations are becoming increasingly important as AI becomes more integrated into teaching, learning, and institutional operations. Governance decisions increasingly affect who has access to tools, resources, and opportunities.	Students participate in governance discussions and institutions evaluate how decisions affect access, affordability, and belonging.
Governance as Collective Capacity-Building	Another opportunity involves treating governance as collective capacity-building. Throughout this study, policy development, governance discussions, professional development, and AI literacies development frequently occurred together. Governance processes often served as opportunities for learning, sensemaking, and reducing stigma around experimentation.	Governance activities often include professional learning opportunities and contribute to the development of AI literacies.

Opportunity	What the Findings Show	What This Looks Like
Procurement Before Deployment	Attention to procurement processes before deployment also emerged as an area for growth. Institutions increasingly recognize that governance begins before a tool is adopted.	Procurement and governance processes require review of data terms, privacy implications, institutional data access, and accountability before implementation.
A Named Owner	Finally, the findings reinforce the importance of naming an owner and deciding where responsibility sits. Institutions used different ownership models, but governance moved more effectively when responsibility was clearly understood.	A designated leader, governance body, or shared governance structure is responsible for coordinating AI-related decisions and ongoing review.

Leadership Roadmap

The leadership roadmap translates the study findings into decisions for this month, actions for this semester, and a question to return to each year. The actions reflect findings across all parts of the study, including ownership, shared understanding, assessment, access, review cycles, governance structures, and AI literacies development, and the final row is for the leadership team acting together, because the decisions in this study that held were made in sight of one another.

The roadmap reflects a central finding of the study: governance succeeds when ownership is clear, decisions are connected to existing structures and to one another, and review is built into the process.

Role	This Month	This Semester	Annual Question
President or Chancellor	Name the owner and clarify what the governance body decides versus recommends.	Support the chartering of a standing governance structure and complete the institutional AI short course publicly.	What has the governance structure learned and what should it test next?
Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs	Inventory policies and governance bodies that already touch AI.	Lead an ongoing conversation on AI's effect on assessment and learning, and adopt the common academic guidance that comes from it, such as a syllabus statement, with a review date.	Have guidelines been reviewed with faculty and students, and what did they ask to change?
Chief Information Officer	Establish the institutional tools baseline.	Co-own implementation, procurement review, and governance processes with academic and administrative partners.	Who can and cannot access approved tools?
Chief Financial Officer	Review funding implications for AI access and implementation.	Align funding decisions with approved governance priorities.	Does the current funding model support access for everyone the institution serves?

Role	This Month	This Semester	Annual Question
Vice President for Student Success	Identify mechanisms for student participation.	Incorporate student perspectives into governance discussions.	How are student experiences informing governance decisions?
Faculty Senate Chair	Establish agreement on governance processes and review responsibilities.	Participate in governance review cycles and policy development.	Do existing governance processes continue to support institutional needs?
The Leadership Team Together	Put AI governance on the cabinet agenda as a standing item and agree who brings what.	Hold at least one cross-divisional review in which the tools baseline, the funding model, academic guidance, and student participation are decided in the same room.	What did we decide together this year, and what did we decide apart that should have been decided together?

The only high-risk strategy is doing nothing.

Key Takeaways

- Five moves can be done right away:
  - Name an owner
  - Build on existing structures
  - Develop shared understanding before writing rules
  - Establish standing structures with review dates, and
  - Address tools, access, and data governance before deployment.
- The most common regret is not starting sooner, and an imperfect start with a review date is a sound place to begin.
- Governance capacity is a leadership need as much as a technical one, among administrators, faculty governance, and staff alike.
- Task forces start the work; standing structures with published decisions sustain it.
- Decisions hold when the leadership team makes them together and in sight of one another.

PART FIVE

Planning and Closure

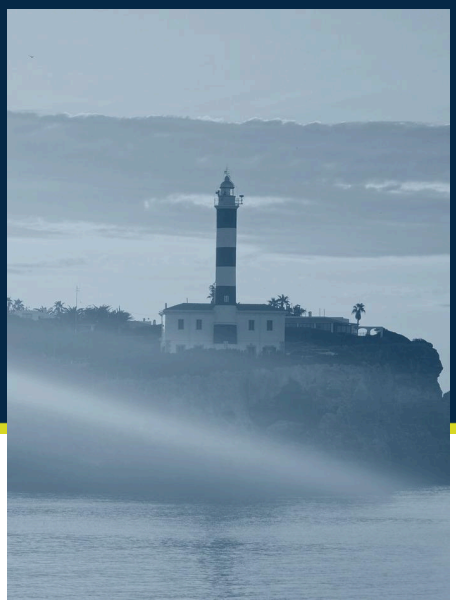


Photo. A striped lighthouse on a headland at sunrise, with a shaft of light falling across the water in the foreground.

What is the next decision about AI that will be made in our institution's name, and who will be in the room?

What would our governance decide differently if the people most affected by AI had the strongest voice in it?

Where does our institution need more structure, an owner and a date, and where does it need more flexibility, guidance rather than policy?

What has our institution learned about AI by governing it, and what will we test next?

These questions could be offered at a cabinet retreat, a senate meeting, a governance body's first session, or a quiet hour alone before any of them. They do not require a finished strategy to answer. They ask only that an institution look at the decisions already being made about AI in its name, notice who is making them and who is missing, and decide what it wants the next decision to look like. The leaders in this study approached questions like these from very different starting points, and their answers were as varied as their institutions.

What they shared was the willingness to treat governance as something an institution does continually rather than something it completes.

Guided by the findings from this research study that are curated into this guide, we invite you to consider the following next steps.

Select

Choose one move from Part Four and give it an owner and a date. If your institution has several groups and no clear owner, begin with the Existing Policy and Structure Inventory (Appendix D) and the AI Governance Structure Charter Template (Appendix A).

Document

If a tools decision is on the table, use the AI Tools Baseline Decision Record (Appendix E). Document what you decide and why, make it visible to the people it affects, and set the date on which you will revisit it.

Share

Then share what you learned, inside the institution and beyond it, so that others can begin from your experience rather than from nothing. Need a place to share? Consider the AI Literacies Applied Case Example database.

Final Thought

This guide opened with a narrative that many leaders are told: that their institutions are behind, that progress belongs to the best resourced, and that AI is moving too fast to be governed. The leaders in this study did not describe that world. They described institutions that began in the same fog, with AI in use everywhere and no clear sense of who was steering, and that found their way by lighting what they already had: a mission worth protecting, policies and bodies worth extending, and people at every level willing to take on the work. Most of them brought their AI literacies to governance. The ones who grew those literacies gave their governance bodies real work to do, something to test rather than something to review, and discovered that the capacity they feared they lacked was built in the act of deciding. The harbor they describe has little to do with technology: time returned to human connection, access for every student, AI literacies as a shared foundation, adoption anchored in values, and governance that enables rather than polices. No institution reaches it by waiting for the fog to lift. The invitation is the same for every institution at every stage: name the owner, start from what you have, set the date, and begin.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

As generative AI technologies continue to develop, the authors affirm the importance of transparency and openness in scholarly practice through the inclusion of usage statements. These declarations foster trust, support responsible research practices, and contribute to a broader culture of knowledge sharing as institutions and scholars continue to work out the role of AI in academic work.

Generative AI tools were used at defined points in this project, and the authors retained responsibility for every analytic, editorial, and design decision. In the research, Elicit and Semantic Scholar assisted with the literature review, Zoom's transcription service produced interview transcripts that the team reviewed, and Claude Max, used in incognito mode with only the anonymized data, generated a comparative set of open codes as a check on the authors' coding. Claude Max proposed the guide's outline and some draft language, which multiple members of the research team then wrote, revised, and reviewed.

In production, it assisted with the design of the tables, figures, and icons under the authors' direction. No images in this guide were generated by AI. The photographs are credited to their photographers, and the figures present the study's own data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to the leaders who took part in this study, in survey responses and in interviews that asked a great deal of their time, and whose candor about their own institutions made these findings possible. The authors also thank the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association and the Academic Innovation Alliance for sharing the invitation to participate with their communities.

RESEARCH MATERIALS

The survey instrument, interview protocol, and codebook for this study are available from the authors on request by using the contact form on the Opened Culture website. Additionally, the first round of findings is reported in *AI Governance and the Development of AI Literacies in Higher Education: A Thematic Analysis*.

IMAGE CREDITS

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Appendices

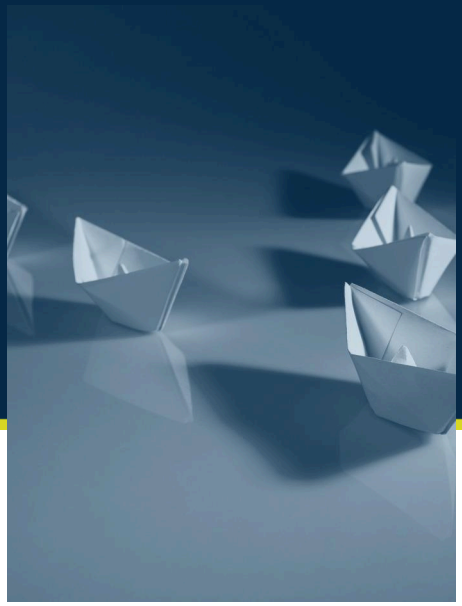

Photo. A series of paper boats rest on a smooth surface, one slightly ahead of the rest, each casting a long shadow in low light.

The following appendices provide five ready-to-use toolkits built from the findings of this study and aligned with the Governance domain of the *WCET AI Education Policy, Guideline, and Practice Ecosystem Framework* and with the *Dimensions of AI Literacies*. Each follows the pattern established in *AI Literacies in Practice*: a statement of purpose, the settings it is best suited to, a page of fillable prompts, and implementation tips.

The toolkits can be used independently or together, and in sequence they trace the path the leaders in this study described:

- Find what already exists (Appendix D)
- Decide the tools question (Appendix E)
- Charter the body that will carry the work (Appendix A)
- Locate the institution and name its next moves (Appendix B), and
- Commit to them with owners, dates, and public artifacts (Appendix C).

The letters follow the order in which the parts of this guide first point to each toolkit; Appendix F sets out the sequence of use and names who leads each step. The first two steps come before a governance body exists, because AI use is already underway and the tools decision cannot wait for a body, and because the inventory is what a charter is written from.

Where a companion toolkit already exists in the *AI Literacies in Practice* playbook, it is referenced by letter and link rather than reproduced, so that the two publications stay in dialogue and the playbook's tools remain current.

Every artifact the toolkits produce, from a completed inventory to a published charter, is also a case example in the making, and the AI Literacies Case Example Database welcomes them as they stand, in progress as well as complete, so that the field can learn from the work while it is still underway.

Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template

PURPOSE

Charter a standing AI governance body with the authority, membership, cadence, and renewal date that sustain it, so that the work does not end when a task force does.

BEST FOR

Cabinet or leadership retreat (90m), governance working session (60m), annual charter review (30m)

Section	Prompt	Your Response
Name and mandate	What is the body called, and what is it for? State its purpose in two sentences that a faculty member or a student could repeat.	
Decision authority	Which decisions does the body make on its own authority, and which does it recommend to another body or officer? Name that body or officer for each.	
Owner, chair, and staffing	Who owns AI governance for the institution, and where does that role sit? Who chairs the body, and what staff time supports it between meetings?	
Membership by role	Which roles hold seats, including academic affairs, information technology, data governance, the library, student affairs, faculty governance, legal and compliance, and students? Which seats carry a vote?	
Relationship to existing bodies	How does the body relate to the faculty senate, information technology governance, data governance, and curriculum and assessment committees? Which decisions pass through each?	

Section	Prompt	Your Response
Consultation path	What consultation happens before any policy motion, with whom, and how many times? How is feedback reported back?	
Cadence and work	How often does the body meet, and what does it test or pilot between meetings so that its work includes something to try, as well as something to review?	
Transparency	Where are decisions and their rationales published, and how do faculty, staff, and students learn of them?	
Member preparation	What preparation is expected before a member joins, such as a short course or a period of hands-on use? Which AI literacies does the body draw on, and which does it expect to build through its work?	
Renewal and succession	When is this charter renewed? If the body succeeds a task force, what closes and what transfers? Who carries the work if the chair or the owner leaves?	

Implementation Tips

- Draft the decision authority line first. The rest of the charter follows from a clear statement of what the body decides and what it recommends.
- Seat at least one informed skeptic and at least one student with a vote rather than an advisory role; the institutions in this study that did so described stronger decisions and wider trust.
- Choose a renewal cadence the institution can keep. The bodies in this study set review cycles as short as six months and appointments as long as three years, and the date mattered more than the interval.
- Give the body something to test in its first term, such as a tools review or a bounded pilot, so that members build AI literacies through the work rather than only reviewing the work of others.
- Publish the charter where faculty, staff, and students can find it. The charter is the body's first public artifact.
- Pair with Appendix B at the annual review to check whether the body's work has moved the institution.

Companion toolkits in AI Literacies in Practice: Playbook Appendix E: Cross-Functional Collaboration Planning Template, to assign responsibility across the body's work; Playbook Appendix I: Initiative Charter Template, to charter a single initiative within the body's remit; Playbook Appendix K: Communications Planning Template, for the transparency commitments above.

Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot

PURPOSE	Help a leadership team locate its institution on the continuum this study describes, from scattered activity to coordinated governance to governance embedded in everyday operations, and name its next moves rather than assign itself a score.
BEST FOR	Leadership team working session (60 to 90m), annual review (30m), first review after the governance body is chartered

Area	Starting	Coordinating	Embedding	Our Next Move
Policy and Ethics	Guidance exists in pockets, often as temporary changes to acceptable use or integrity policy; tools and assessment remain open questions.	A short principles statement is published and existing data, privacy, and integrity policies are extended to AI; guidance is technology-agnostic; a stance on AI detection has been decided.	AI terms appear in syllabus policy, assessment policy, procurement, and contracts, each with a review date; access is treated as a policy question with a funded baseline.	
Leadership and Culture	Senior leaders delegate the work; several groups meet without a shared vocabulary; units send contradictory signals about AI use.	Senior leaders are visibly engaged and have completed the preparation they ask of others; a representative body has a clear charge; skeptics and students are seated; one hub carries the guidance.	Governance routes through the people faculty and staff trust, including teaching centers and chairs; experimentation is normalized; informed disagreement is treated as an asset.	

Area	Starting	Coordinating	Embedding	Our Next Move
Institutional Accountability	Task forces form around urgency and dissolve when it passes; ownership is unclear; nothing is scheduled for review.	A named owner and a standing body with decision authority and a renewal date; decisions and rationales are published; a successor is named when a task force closes.	Governance is linked to budgeting, strategy, and operations; review cycles are on the calendar; the work survives turnover; in a multi-campus system, it is clear which decisions are made at the system level and which at each campus.	
Data and Procurement	Tools are acquired unit by unit; vendor AI terms are unread or unknown; use continues without the institution's knowledge.	A baseline tool is decided for everyone under reviewed data terms, with pilots alongside and term-bound licenses; procurement review includes AI terms.	Data terms and procurement are reviewed before any deployment as a matter of course; contracts carry AI language; an inventory of tools is maintained and visible.	
Student and Stakeholder Voice	Student attitudes are assumed rather than gathered; no student holds a seat.	Students and other affected groups are consulted through focus groups or surveys; students hold seats on the governance body.	Student representation carries a vote; stakeholder workshops shape decisions; opt-out provisions and alternatives are defined; feedback is reported back.	

Area	Starting	Coordinating	Embedding	Our Next Move
Readiness of the People Who Decide	Decisions rest on popular accounts of AI rather than hands-on use; understanding among decision makers is uneven.	A short course is required of everyone who decides, leaders first; hands-on experience is expected before a seat.	The governance body tests and pilots as part of its work; AI literacies grow through governance; training and governance are planned together.	

Implementation Tips

- Complete the snapshot as a team rather than in one office. The disagreement about which stage a row sits in is the most useful thing the exercise produces.
- Expect an uneven profile. Priorities come from the rows that sit furthest behind the others, and from the rows where the team could not agree.
- Write one next move for every row, then choose no more than three to carry into Appendix C, where each receives an owner, a date, and a public artifact.
- Use the moves the leaders in this study made as candidates for the final column: name an owner; extend what exists; charter a standing group with a renewal date; set a tools baseline; require a short course of everyone who decides.
- If the team cannot describe the first column with confidence, complete Appendix D first. The inventory supplies the evidence the snapshot needs.
- Repeat annually and keep the prior year's snapshot alongside the new one.

Companion toolkit in AI Literacies in Practice: Playbook Appendix D: AI Integration Maturity Snapshot, which covers the operational domains of access, policy, support, procurement, and data and pairs with this one for a whole-institution picture.

Appendix C: AI Leadership Roadmap Worksheet

PURPOSE	Turn the roadmap in Part Four into commitments: three decisions for this month, three actions for this semester, and three questions for each year, each with an owner, a date, and the public artifact that will show it happened.
BEST FOR	Cabinet or leadership team meeting (30m to set), quarterly review (15m), annual review alongside Appendix B (30m)

This Month: Three Decisions

Commitment	Owner	Date	Public Artifact
Name who owns AI governance for the institution, where that role sits, and what the governance body decides rather than recommends. (Suggested lead: president or chancellor.)			A published statement of ownership and decision authority
Inventory the values, policies, bodies, practices, and people the institution can already build on, using Appendix D. (Suggested lead: the governance owner, with deans and chairs reporting for their units.)			The completed inventory, shared with the governance body
Set the tools baseline: which tools everyone can use, under what data terms, at whose cost, and with what pilots alongside, using Appendix E. (Suggested lead: chief information officer, with the chief financial officer and provost.)			A tools baseline decision record

This Semester: Three Actions

Commitment	Owner	Date	Public Artifact
Charter a standing governance body with decision authority, representative membership, and a renewal date, using Appendix A. (Suggested lead: president or chancellor, with the faculty governance leader.)			The published charter
Adopt a required syllabus statement on AI use, with a review date. (Suggested lead: provost or vice president for academic affairs, with the faculty senate.)			The statement, with its review date, on a single hub everyone is directed to
Launch a short course on AI for everyone who takes part in governance, with senior leaders completing it first. (Suggested lead: provost, with the teaching and learning center or digital learning unit.)			Announced completion by the cabinet, then by the governance body

Each Year: Three Questions

Commitment	Owner	Date	Public Artifact
What do faculty and students say the guidelines should now say? (Suggested lead: faculty governance leader, with the vice president for student success.)			Revised guidelines with the next review date
Who can and cannot reach the tools we provide, and what will we change? (Suggested lead: chief financial officer, with the chief information officer; see Playbook Appendix J.)			A published access review
What did the governance body learn this year, and what will it test next? (Suggested lead: the governance body's chair or owner.)			The body's annual report, with the next pilot named

Our Own Commitments

Commitment	Owner	Date	Public Artifact

Implementation Tips

- Set the worksheet in a single meeting. The commitments are given; the conversation is about owners and dates, and about replacing any line with a move better suited to the institution's position in Appendix B.
- Name a person, not an office, in the owner column. Shared responsibility is appropriate for several of these moves, but one person signs each line.
- Choose artifacts the campus will actually see. A hub, a charter, a syllabus statement, or a decision record carries more weight than an internal memo, and each should state what was tried and why, what was learned, and what comes next.
- Share the artifact as it stands. A charter under revision, a decision record, or a pilot that stalled can be submitted to the AI Literacies Case Example Database and updated as the work moves, and your in-progress practice is often what another institution most needs to see.
- Review quarterly in fifteen minutes by asking two questions of each line: has the date passed, and does the artifact exist? The artifact is the evidence of progress.
- When a line is complete, replace it with the next move from Appendix B, so the worksheet stays current rather than finished.
- Keep the completed worksheet with the charter so that the commitments survive changes in leadership.

Companion resources in AI Literacies in Practice: "Making It Visible: The Public Artifact Commitment" (Section 7), for the three elements every artifact should carry; Playbook Appendix I, Initiative Charter Template, for any commitment that grows into an initiative of its own; Playbook Appendix K, Communications Planning Template, for telling the campus what was decided and why.

Appendix D: Existing Policy and Structure Inventory

PURPOSE	Recognize the values, policies, bodies, practices, and people an institution already has to build AI governance from, and where any of these is not yet in place, name the opportunity to create it.
BEST FOR	A two-week collaborative assignment across units before a governance body's first meeting, with each unit describing its own strengths and opportunities; a conversation with the governance owner (60m); an annual refresh alongside Appendix B (30m)

Section	Prompt	What We Have	Our Opportunity
Values we already hold	Which commitments in our mission, values, and strategic plan already speak to how AI should serve our students and our community? If AI has not yet been named in them, which existing commitment would we extend first, and in whose words?		
Policies we can build on	Which existing policies already carry the principles AI requires, such as those on data and privacy, academic integrity, procurement, research, and accessibility? If none yet speaks to AI, which one would carry those principles furthest with the least new language, and who stewards it?		

Section	Prompt	What We Have	Our Opportunity
Bodies ready to carry the work	Which bodies already deliberate well on technology, curriculum, assessment, data, or research, and which AI decisions could each carry? If nobody is ready, which existing group is closest, and what charge would make it so?		
Practices already working	Where are faculty, staff, and students already using AI thoughtfully, and what is working for whom? If we cannot yet see it, whom would we ask first, and how might we invite colleagues to show us what they are trying?		
People already leading	Who has taken up AI work, formally or informally, and what expertise and trust do they hold? If no one has yet, who holds the trust of colleagues on questions like this, and what would invite them in?		
Partnerships and platforms in place	Which existing vendor relationships and platforms already include AI features and data commitments we can rely on? If we have not yet looked, which agreement renews soonest, giving us the chance to shape its terms?		
Learning already underway	What AI-related professional learning already exists here, and who offers it? If little exists, which external offerings, partner institutions, or networks could we draw on now, and who would go first?		

Section	Prompt	What We Have	Our Opportunity
Guidance already shared	What guidance has the institution already offered its community, and where does it agree? If none yet exists, what single statement, in the words of our own values, could we offer this term?		
Where to focus next	Given what we have and the opportunities we see, which three moves would make the biggest difference now, and who is best placed to make them?		

Implementation Tips

- Complete the values row first and keep it visible through the rest. It is the standard against which every other row is read, and it is the one row every institution can fill today.
- Invite each unit to describe what it is proud of as well as what it has. The leaders in this study spoke of grassroots work with pride, and the inventory should let that pride show.
- Where a row comes back empty, fill the opportunity column and treat that row as the one with the most freedom to design. A decision made before any practice has formed displaces nothing and has nothing to unlearn, which is why leaders across the field describe an empty row as the easiest place to decide well.
- Treat every row as a starting point. A single policy that already carries the right principle can be the first thing extended, and a single committee that already works can be the first to carry an AI decision.
- Name and thank the people in the leadership row publicly, with their consent. Recognition is how informal leadership becomes sustained capacity.
- Share the completed inventory as the governance body's first public artifact, and use it to fill the first column of Appendix B with confidence.
- Refresh it annually and record what moved, so that the inventory becomes a history of the institution's growth as well as a map of its assets.

Companion resources in AI Literacies in Practice: "Culture First: Mission, Vision, and Values" (Section 2), and in particular the first step of the Mission-to-Literacies Alignment Process, which surfaces the commitments an institution already holds; the Cross-Role AI Learning Circle in Section 6, Exemplars in Action, for how existing practice becomes shared guidance; Playbook Appendix E, Cross-Functional Collaboration Planning Template, for assigning the rows across units.

Appendix E: AI Tools Baseline Decision Record

PURPOSE	Record the decision that leaders return to more than any other: which AI tools everyone at the institution can use, under what data terms, at whose cost, and with what pilots alongside, so that the decision is visible, revisited on a schedule, and made as a matter of access rather than procurement alone.
BEST FOR	Working session with the chief information officer, chief financial officer, and provost or their delegates (60m), or the equivalent roles for a unit setting a baseline within its own scope; quarterly review (15m); review at each contract renewal

Section	Prompt	Your Response
The baseline and the reason	Which tool or tools will everyone at the institution be able to use, and why these? If no baseline exists yet, which tool already covered by an agreement we hold is the nearest candidate? If a campus-wide license is beyond our means, which of the alternatives is ours: an existing agreement, term-bound licenses for courses that use the tool, or a system or consortium agreement?	
Data commitments	What does the vendor commit to regarding our data, including whether it is used for training, how long it is retained, and who can access it? How do those commitments compare to the terms in agreements we already hold?	

Section	Prompt	Your Response
Who has access	Who can use the baseline: all students, including those outside funded programs, all faculty, all staff, and partners? Does the tool meet our accessibility standards? Who benefits from this decision, who might be harmed by it, and which voices are missing from the room where it is being made? Who is left out, and what would include them?	
Who pays and for how long	How is the baseline funded, whether centrally, by unit, through an existing license, or through a student fee, and for what term? When is the renewal decision, and who makes it?	
Pilots alongside	Which tools are in pilot beyond the baseline, under whose ownership, with what term-bound licenses, and on what date is each reviewed?	
Opt-out and alternatives	Who may decline to use AI tools, under what provisions, and what alternative is offered so that declining carries no penalty?	
Guidance and support	Where will people find guidance for the baseline tool, and what training accompanies it, for whom, and when?	
Voices in the decision	Who was consulted before this decision, including faculty governance, students, information technology, legal and compliance, and accessibility services, and how did their input change it?	
Owner and review	Who owns this record, when will the decision be revisited, and what would trigger an earlier review, such as a change in vendor terms, a data incident, or a need the baseline does not meet?	

Implementation Tips

- Look inside existing agreements first. Several institutions in this study found their baseline in a platform they already licensed, with data terms they had already reviewed, which made the decision faster and the case to the chief financial officer easier.
- Decide the baseline for everyone. The institutions that did so described it as an access decision: what is provided to faculty is provided to students.
- Keep pilots bounded by term and date, so that experimentation stays possible without hardening into commitments no one chose.
- Publish the record. Which tool, why, under what terms, and when it will be revisited is the information the campus needs most, and the record is a public artifact in itself.
- The "Who has access" row carries the three questions of the AI Literacies in Practice playbook Appendix J, the Access Impact Assessment Guide; complete the full guide before finalizing a decision that changes who can use what.
- Revisit quarterly and at every renewal. The tool landscape changes faster than policy does, and a record with a review date stays a decision rather than becoming a habit.

Companion resources in AI Literacies in Practice: Appendix F: AI Policy Decision Guide Template, for the one-page decision pattern this record extends; Playbook Appendix J: Access Impact Assessment Guide; Playbook Appendix D: AI Integration Maturity Snapshot, for the access and procurement rows that this decision moves.

Appendix F: Companion Resources from the WCET AI Literacies in Practice Playbook

The toolkits in this guide were built to work alongside those in the *AI Literacies in Practice* playbook, which remains the home for the playbook's tools so that they stay current as the playbook is updated. The table below pairs each toolkit here with its companions in the playbook and places the pairs in the order the leaders in this study most often followed: find what exists, decide the tools question, charter the body that will carry the work, locate the institution and name its next moves, and commit to them in public, with a suggested lead for each step, since the first two happen before the governance body exists. Each row is also a working session of 60 to 90 minutes, so the five rows together form a sequence that a leadership team can complete in a semester, that a facilitator can run as a series, and that a community of practice can return to year after year.

When	Who Leads	Begin with This Guide	Pair with the Playbook	What the Pair Produces
Before the governance body's first meeting	The governance owner named this month, with deans and chairs reporting for their units	Appendix D: Existing Policy and Structure Inventory	Section 2, Culture First, and its Mission-to-Literacies Alignment Process; Playbook Appendix E, Cross-Functional Collaboration Planning Template	A shared picture of what already exists, who holds it, and the values every decision will reflect
This month	Chief information officer, with the chief financial officer and provost	Appendix E: AI Tools Baseline Decision Record	Playbook Appendix F, AI Policy Decision Guide Template; Playbook Appendix J, Access Impact Assessment Guide	One published decision about tools, data terms, cost, and access, with a review date
This semester	President or chancellor, with the faculty governance leader	Appendix A: AI Governance Structure Charter Template	Playbook Appendix I, Initiative Charter Template; Playbook Appendix G, Student Advisory Planning Guide; Playbook Appendix K, Communications Planning Template	A standing body with decision authority, student seats, a renewal date, and a plan for telling the campus what it decides

When	Who Leads	Begin with This Guide	Pair with the Playbook	What the Pair Produces
This semester, then each year	The governance body, facilitated by its chair	Appendix B: AI Governance Maturity Snapshot	Playbook Appendix D, AI Integration Maturity Snapshot; Playbook Appendix H, AI Literacies Reflection and Teaching and Facilitation Guide	A whole-institution picture across governance and operations, and a facilitated reflection on the AI literacies the governance body is using and gaining
Throughout, reviewed quarterly	The leadership team together, with one owner per line	Appendix C: AI Leadership Roadmap Worksheet	Section 7, Making It Visible: The Public Artifact Commitment; Playbook Appendix K, Communications Planning Template	Commitments with owners, dates, and public artifacts, and the communications that make them visible

The playbook's toolkits referenced above, in the order they appear there:

- **Appendix D: AI Integration Maturity Snapshot.** A diagnostic for leaders across access, policy, support, procurement, and data that surfaces actionable priorities rather than scores.
- **Appendix E: Cross-Functional Collaboration Planning Template.** A planning tool that clarifies who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed across AI initiatives.
- **Appendix F: AI Policy Decision Guide Template.** A one-page structure for institutional policy decisions, documenting rationale, risks, literacies affected, and stakeholder input.
- **Appendix G: Student Advisory Planning Guide.** A design toolkit for building meaningful, sustained student roles in governance.
- **Appendix H: AI Literacies Reflection and Teaching and Facilitation Guide.** A ready-to-use resource for leading conversations, documenting insights, and building cross-functional momentum.
- **Appendix I: Initiative Charter Template.** A concise charter for a single AI initiative, with ownership, success evidence, timeline, risks, communication, and triggers for scaling or sunsetting.
- **Appendix J: Access Impact Assessment Guide.** A pre-launch reflection on who benefits, who may be harmed, which voices are missing, and what safeguards apply.
- **Appendix K: Communications Planning Template.** A map of what to communicate to each stakeholder group across an initiative's lifecycle.

All are available in *AI Literacies in Practice* on the WCET website.

WCET

WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)

3035 Center Green Drive, Suite 200
Boulder, CO 80301

wcet.wiche.edu
wcetinfo@wiche.edu