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Invited Article

Designing for Tension: Balancing the Pace of Trust and the Pace of Innovation in AI-Integrated Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has created a structural crisis in higher education that is as much organizational as it is pedagogical. As large language models (LLMs) and agentic systems evolve at an exponential rate, academic institutions find themselves caught between moving at the pace of technological innovation and the pace required to build institutional trust. A flagship university in the Rocky Mountain West developed a university-wide AI commitment framework that can be mapped to four robust organizational frameworks (i.e., organizational ambidexterity, relational coordination theory, the automation-augmentation paradox, and psychological safety). By applying these frameworks to a successful AI policy development context, the analysis articulates a strategy for designing for tension. This proposed strategy is a deliberate approach to governance that requires a pace of trust to enable the pace of innovation for success in GenAI infusion across college campuses.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, AI Policy, Pace of Trust, Pace of Innovation, Literacies, Competencies

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Designing for Tension: Balancing the Pace of Trust and the Pace of Innovation in AI-Integrated Higher Education

David Firth, Jason Triche, and Isho Tama-Sweet

1. INTRODUCTION

For Information Systems (IS) educators, the current AI revolution is not merely an external disruption but a core disciplinary challenge. Historically, the IS field has served as the bridge between technological capability and organizational value. Sharp et al. (2025) tracked this evolution since the inception of ISEDJ in 2003, covering shifts from cloud computing and data analytics to the current generative AI era. While GenAI tools like ChatGPT-5 offer unparalleled possibilities for knowledge acquisition and personalized learning, they also introduce profound risks regarding academic integrity, ethical use, and the potential displacement of critical thinking.

The pedagogical value of GenAI is being navigated in real time across campuses globally. IS faculty are uniquely positioned to lead this endeavor, as the discipline's focus on model curriculum, outcomes assessment, and socio-technical systems provides the necessary tools to evaluate AI integration. ISEDJ and its sister publication, the Journal of Information Systems Education (JISE), have become primary venues for documenting how students interact with these tools, and for suggesting curricula updates. However, the rate of technological change often outpaces the traditional curriculum update process, creating a relevance gap that requires a proactive, strategic response. This relevance gap is exacerbated by the tensions that exist on university campuses. In one camp are those who see their university as a place where students learn to think critically, with an emphasis on ethics, epistemology, and caution. They see the university as a place to teach established and trusted literacies. In the other camp are those who advocate for emphasizing rapid experimentation and workforce relevance. They see the university as a place to teach students competencies.

This paper introduces an AI commitment framework called the Future Project, developed at our university. The Future Project was built using existing frameworks and theories. The Future Project also leans into the tension between the pace of technological change and the pace of academia and uses it as a feature, not a defect. In this paper, we first discuss literacies and competencies and introduce terms such as the pace of trust and the pace of innovation. We then discuss how moving either at the pace of trust or the pace of innovation creates an inherent tension on university campuses. Next, we introduce four theoretical frameworks to help understand how to think about this tension. We then present an exemplar of how an AI policy was developed at our university. We apply the four frameworks to this exemplar to help understand why it is successful and conclude with a prescription for AI policy development at other universities.

2. LITERACIES AND COMPETENCIES

To effectively navigate the integration of artificial intelligence in higher education, it is important to distinguish between the two often conflated constructs of literacies and competencies. In our view, both are essential to student development. They represent different dimensions of learning, engagement, and application within academic and professional contexts. The following discussion clarifies these concepts and highlights their complementary roles in preparing students for an AI-augmented world.

In an academic setting, the concept of literacies is best understood as a set of foundational, context-sensitive capabilities that enable individuals to critically engage with, interpret, and make meaning from information, tools, and systems within a given domain (Long & Magerko, 2020). Unlike discrete skills, literacies are inherently reflective, metacognitive, and situated. They require not only the ability to use a tool or interpret information, but also an understanding of the underlying assumptions, limitations, and implications of that use. In the context of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, literacies extend beyond technical familiarity to include epistemological awareness, including how knowledge is generated, validated, and contested. For example, AI literacy involves recognizing the probabilistic nature of outputs, identifying bias or hallucination, and understanding the socio-technical systems that shape the generative AI's behavior (Long & Magerko, 2020). Within higher education, literacies are closely tied to the institution's

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traditional role as a site of critical inquiry and knowledge validation. Universities support students in becoming discerning participants in knowledge ecosystems, capable of questioning sources, evaluating evidence, and situating their understanding within broader intellectual and ethical frameworks. As such, literacies are less about performance and more about interpretive capacity, forming the cognitive and ethical foundation upon which more applied abilities are built.

In contrast, competencies in an academic setting refer to the demonstrable ability to apply knowledge and skills to effectively perform tasks or solve problems in specific contexts, often aligned with professional or disciplinary expectations (Voorhees, 2001). Competencies are action-oriented and outcome-focused (Boyatzis, 2008). They emphasize what learners can do, particularly in real-world or simulated environments. In the context of artificial intelligence, competencies might include integrating AI tools into workflows, generating and refining outputs, analyzing data with AI-assisted methods, and designing solutions that leverage AI capabilities. These competencies are increasingly central to workforce readiness, as employers seek graduates who can operate effectively in technology-rich environments (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Competencies are not merely technical, however. They also encompass judgment, adaptability, and the capacity to collaborate with both humans and machine agents. Importantly, competencies are most effective when grounded in underlying literacies. Without critical understanding, the application of AI tools risks becoming superficial, uncritical, or even harmful. Thus, within higher education, competencies represent the operationalization of knowledge, translating abstract understanding into practical capability. The relationship between literacies and competencies is therefore complementary rather than hierarchical. Literacies provide the critical and ethical grounding, while competencies enable purposeful action. Together, they define a comprehensive approach to preparing students for participation in complex, AI-augmented academic and professional environments.

2.1 The Pace of Trust: AI Literacies

A literacy focus involves maintaining academic rigor, ensuring standardized assessment, and protecting the reputation of the university's degrees. This is what we term the pace of trust. It moves slowly because changes must be vetted to ensure they do not undermine the value of the academic credential. While the phrase pace of trust is not formally codified in the literature, it reflects a well-established body of work emphasizing the need to work with ethical responsibility, transparency, and institutional legitimacy (Stilgoe et al., 2013; Floridi et al., 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). The pace of trust perspective reflects higher education's longstanding role in safeguarding knowledge, intellectual rigor, and ethical practice. This perspective aligns closely with emerging frameworks around AI literacies which emphasize critical engagement with AI systems (Long & Magerko, 2020).

Key elements of these AI literacies include understanding how AI systems generate outputs, recognizing bias, hallucinations, and limitations, evaluating outputs critically, and preserving authorship and academic integrity. Concerns around these key elements reflect deeper epistemological questions, such as what constitutes knowledge in an AI-mediated environment, and how learning should be assessed when AI can generate high-quality outputs. Scholars have noted that generative AI challenges traditional models of assessment and authorship, requiring new approaches to evaluation and pedagogy (Kasneci et al., 2023).

2.2 The Pace of Innovation: AI Competencies

In contrast, a competency perspective emphasizes workforce readiness and adaptability. We term this the pace of innovation. From this viewpoint, AI is already embedded in professional contexts, and higher education must prepare students accordingly (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This leads to a focus on AI competencies, including integrating AI into workflows, using AI to solve real-world problems, rapidly iterating on ideas, and enhancing productivity and creativity.

2.3 Why This Tension Matters

The emergence of artificial intelligence in higher education has amplified a structural tension between the pace of trust and the pace of innovation, reflecting competing institutional priorities that are difficult to reconcile in practice. In one respect, universities are historically grounded in norms of rigor, peer review, ethical accountability, and epistemic validation. These

processes inherently require time, deliberation, and consensus-building (Stilgoe et al., 2013; Floridi et al., 2018). Alternatively, the rapid evolution of AI technologies, coupled with external pressures from industry and workforce demands, incentivizes institutions to adopt tools and pedagogies more rapidly to remain relevant and competitive (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This divergence creates friction across faculty, administrative, and disciplinary lines, as stakeholders differ in their tolerance for uncertainty, risk, and change. As a result, universities become sites of contested adaptation where decisions about AI integration are shaped not only by technical capability but also by underlying values regarding knowledge, authority, and responsibility. Rather than being a temporary disruption, this tension represents a persistent and defining feature of AI adoption in higher education, requiring institutions to intentionally navigate and, ultimately, design for the coexistence of both imperatives.

The tension between the pace of trust and pace of innovation reflects deeper differences in how higher education conceptualizes knowledge, teaching, and assessment, and the transformation AI imposes upon them. In contrast to how universities traditionally conceptualize knowledge, AI shifts knowledge from static content to dynamic content by continuously generating outputs. This challenges traditional models of content mastery and emphasizes the evaluation and synthesis of information (Luckin et al., 2016). In terms of teaching, AI repositions instructors from content deliverers to facilitators of critical thinking and application (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Assessment is also challenged under the new paradigm. Traditional product-based (e.g. "write an essay", or "create a PowerPoint deck") assessment becomes less meaningful when AI can generate outputs. This necessitates process-based and reflective assessment models (Kasneci et al., 2023). Lastly, the pace of innovation challenges how we evaluate authorship of scholarship. AI complicates notions of authorship, raising questions about originality and intellectual ownership (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020). As agentic systems contribute increasingly sophisticated reasoning, the primary tension lies in determining whether "originality" resides in the initial prompt, the algorithmic synthesis, or the human refinement of the output. Consequently, institutions must reconcile these shifting definitions of ownership with existing frameworks of academic integrity to prevent institutional paralysis and maintain the pace of trust.

In the next section, we present four theoretical frameworks to help us understand and reconcile this tension.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS TO UNDERSTAND AND RECONCILE THE TENSION

3.1 Theoretical Framework I: Organizational Ambidexterity

The central challenge for any university in the age of AI is a classic management dilemma of how to leverage and maintain existing pedagogical and research strengths while exploring radically new, disruptive technologies. This is the essence of organizational ambidexterity, which is the ability to be equally adept in both camps. In the context of higher education, the theory of organizational ambidexterity (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) is the ability for universities to exploit current capabilities like existing curriculum, academic standards, and administrative processes, while simultaneously exploring new opportunities, like developing and implementing AI-centric curricula, and automating administrative systems. We refer to the former part of this theory (i.e., exploiting current capabilities) as the pace of trust. What the theory refers to as exploration, conversely, involves experimentation with new technologies and radical innovation. We refer to this as the pace of innovation. Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) define ambidexterity as the ability to simultaneously exploit existing capabilities such as stability and trust, and explore new frontiers through innovation. Exploitation (i.e., pace of trust) is about safeguarding academic integrity and human authorship. Exploration (i.e., pace of innovation) is about rapidly piloting AI-augmented curricula.

Scholars suggest that the success of digital transformation in knowledge-intensive organizations depends on the balance between these two modes (March, 1991). If an institution focuses too heavily on exploitation, doing what it has done before, and advancing only when a new idea has proved it can be completely trusted, it risks becoming obsolete as the workforce demands new AI competencies. If it focuses solely on exploration without a foundation of trust, it may suffer from theoretically unsound thinking, fragmented governance, and shadow AI adoption.

3.2 Theoretical Framework II: Relational Coordination Theory

While ambidexterity provides the structure, relational coordination theory (RCT) provides the social mechanism for successful AI integration. Developed by Gittell (2002), RCT posits that effective coordination of complex, interdependent tasks requires high-quality communication supported by relationships of shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect. AI integration in a university setting is a quintessential example of reciprocal interdependence (Thompson, 1967), in which the actions of IT departments, faculty, administrators, and students influence one another in a continuous loop.

In many institutions, the introduction of AI has exposed fragmented and poorly coordinated relationships across functional groups, reflecting low levels of relational coordination (Gittell, 2002; Gittell, 2011). Faculty may view AI as a threat to academic integrity, while administrators may view it primarily as a tool for efficiency and cost reduction. RCT offers a way to bridge these silos by fostering a learning network that mirrors the network of care found in healthcare settings (Gittell, 2002).

3.2.1 The Seven Dimensions of Relational Coordination as Applied to AI

To navigate the tension between innovation and trust, institutions must operationalize the seven dimensions of RCT within their AI strategy. The seven dimensions are shared goals, shared knowledge, mutual respect, and communication that is frequent, timely, accurate, and problem-solving (Gittell, 2002) that collectively enable effective coordination in highly interdependent environments. This is detailed in Table 1.

3.3 Theoretical Framework III: The Automation-Augmentation Paradox

The third pillar of our theoretical framework is the automation-augmentation paradox (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). This theory challenges the simplistic narrative that organizations should always prioritize augmentation (i.e., humans collaborating with machines) over automation (i.e., machines replacing human tasks).

RCT Dimension	Role in AI strategy	Outcomes
Frequent Communication	Moving beyond ad-hoc emails to regular, structured updates on AI capabilities and policies.	Reduces uncertainty and the use of shadow AI tools.
Timely Communication	Addressing ethical dilemmas and integrity violations in real-time rather than waiting for semester-end reviews.	Prevents the buildup of faculty resentment and anxiety.
Accurate Communication	Providing clear data on model biases, privacy risks, and hallucination rates.	Builds trust through transparency and honesty.
Problem-Solving Communication	Shifting from a punitive model of cheating detection to a collaborative model of authentic assessment.	Fosters a shared responsibility for student learning.
Shared Goals	Aligning the campus under a common vision of human-centered AI for the public good.	Overcomes subgoal optimization where departments compete for resources.
Shared Knowledge	Understanding how AI affects different disciplines differently (e.g., coding vs. creative writing).	Enables cross-boundary coordination and mutual support.
Mutual Respect	Valuing the perspectives of both the tech-forward early adopters and the cautious, skeptical faculty.	Overcomes status barriers and encourages inclusive dialogue.

Table 1: The seven dimensions of RCT (Gittell, 2002) and their role in AI strategy

The paradox suggests that as AI systems become more capable and automate more complex cognitive tasks, the need for high-level augmentation (i.e., human oversight, ethical judgment, and verification) actually increases. In higher education, this paradox will become evident in a shift from grading content to grading process. As LLMs become capable of generating A-level essays (i.e., automation), the role of the professor shifts toward evaluating the student's process, prompt engineering logic, and source verification (i.e., augmentation). If an institution focuses too heavily on automation (e.g., using AI for all grading and administrative triage), it risks reinforcing cycles that lead to a loss of human expertise and institutional memory. Conversely, overemphasizing augmentation without sufficient automation can lead to cognitive overload and burnout for faculty who are forced to manage increasingly complex student-AI, faculty-AI, and administration-AI workflows.

3.4 Shadow AI and Theoretical Framework IV: Psychological Safety

A recurring theme in IS research is the emergence of shadow AI, referring to the unauthorized use of consumer-grade AI tools by faculty, students, and staff seeking efficiency outside of sanctioned institutional channels, a phenomenon conceptually aligned with prior research on shadow IT (e.g. Behrens, 2009; Silic & Back, 2014). When the pace of innovation (e.g., the availability of easy-to-use tools) exceeds the pace of trust (e.g., the development of clear, safe policies), users will inevitably bypass sanctioned tools in favor of personal solutions that offer measurable value. The risks of shadow AI are:

- Data Privacy: Sensitive student or research data may be input into models without appropriate security protocols.
- Academic Integrity: Unauthorized use creates an opaque environment where it is impossible to distinguish between original work and machine-generated output.
- Digital Inequity: Students who can afford premium, private AI tools may gain an unfair advantage over those relying on limited, institutional alternatives.

3.4.1 The Role of Psychological Safety

To mitigate shadow AI, institutions must cultivate an environment of psychological safety. Edmondson (1999) defines this as a shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. In the context of AI, this means that faculty and students must feel safe to experiment with new tools without fear of judgment or a competence penalty.

Research suggests that individuals who feel psychologically safe are more likely to speak up with ideas, report errors, and seek feedback (Edmondson, 1999). For AI adoption, this is critical because AI outputs are often uncertain, ambiguous, or imperfect. If users fear negative evaluation, they will hide their use of AI, perhaps leading to the shadow AI problem. Conversely, a psychologically safe environment allows the community to fail forward and learn from the technology's mistakes in a transparent manner. Psychological safety operates at each level of analysis within higher education. Table 2 articulates the impact of psychological safety at each of these levels and a strategy the institution can take to improve safety at that level.

Level of Interaction	Impact of Psychological Safety on AI Adoption	Institutional Strategy
Individual Faculty	Willingness to admit lack of fluency and seek training.	Providing stipends and professional development for AI exploration.
Classroom (Student)	Willingness to disclose AI use and discuss its ethical implications.	Engaging students as partners in policy formation.
Administrative Teams	Willingness to report hallucinations or biased outcomes in automated workflows.	Establishing open, inclusive dialogue that welcomes skepticism.
Institutional Level	Ability to pivot strategy based on feedback from the front lines.	Maintaining principled adaptation and regular quarterly surveys.

Table 2: Impact of Psychological Safety on AI Adoption at different levels within higher education and strategies to improve safety

Research suggests that individuals who feel psychologically safe are more likely to speak up with ideas, report errors, and seek feedback (Edmondson, 1999). For AI adoption, this is critical because AI outputs are often uncertain, ambiguous, or imperfect. If users fear negative evaluation, they will hide their use of AI, perhaps leading to the shadow AI problem. Conversely, a psychologically safe environment allows the community to fail forward and learn from the technology's mistakes in a transparent manner. Psychological safety operates at each level of analysis within higher education. Table 2 articulates the impact of psychological safety at each of these levels and a strategy the institution can take to improve safety at that level.

4. FUTURE PROJECT AT OUR UNIVERSITY

Our university provides a useful longitudinal case study for how a flagship public university can navigate the tension between the pace of trust and the pace of innovation. Launched in early 2025, with support from a locally headquartered technology consulting company, this endeavor, labeled the Future Project, was designed as a university-wide initiative that prioritizes community input, academic values, and thoughtful integration over pace. The project proceeded in phases, which are described below.

4.1 Phase I: Exploration and Engagement (Spring 2025)

The first phase of the Future Project focused on the relational and structural foundations of AI governance. This phase was not about selecting tools, but about orienting faculty and staff coordinators and conducting cross-campus conversations. By engaging over 200 participants, the university established a shared knowledge base, which reflects a core tenet of relational coordination theory (see Table 1).

The identification of key opportunities and challenges during this phase allowed the university to build its absorptive capacity, which is the organization's ability to recognize the value of new knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it effectively (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Rather than a top-down mandate, the project coordinators, who represent 55 departments, served as boundary spanners who could translate the university's AI vision into discipline-specific practices. Boundary spanners are individuals who link internal and external organizational environments and facilitate information flow (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).

4.2 Phase II: Strategy Development (Summer 2025)

In Phase II, the university transitioned from inquiry to formal strategy. This involved defining the university's AI Commitments (described in Section 4.5) and building a framework for sustainable AI governance. A key structural outcome was the development of a visual representation of the university's statewide AI leadership role, which positioned the university as a central node in our state's workforce development ecosystem.

4.3 Phase III: Implementation and Community Dialogue (Fall 2025 – Spring 2026)

The current phase involves soliciting campus-wide feedback on the draft commitments. This iterative process is a hallmark of principled adaptation (Stilgoe et al. 2013), where policies are refined based on real-world usage patterns and community critique. This phase also includes the launch of pilot programs and early action items, which allow for controlled exploration within a safe, institutional pace of trust framework.

.4.4 The Four Lines of Effort: A Comprehensive Information Systems Perspective

Each phase of the Future Project is organized around four interconnected lines of effort. These map directly to the core concerns of IS education. These lines of effort functioned as subgroups within the Future Project. Each subgroup was composed of self-selecting individuals who wanted to work on issues related to this domain.

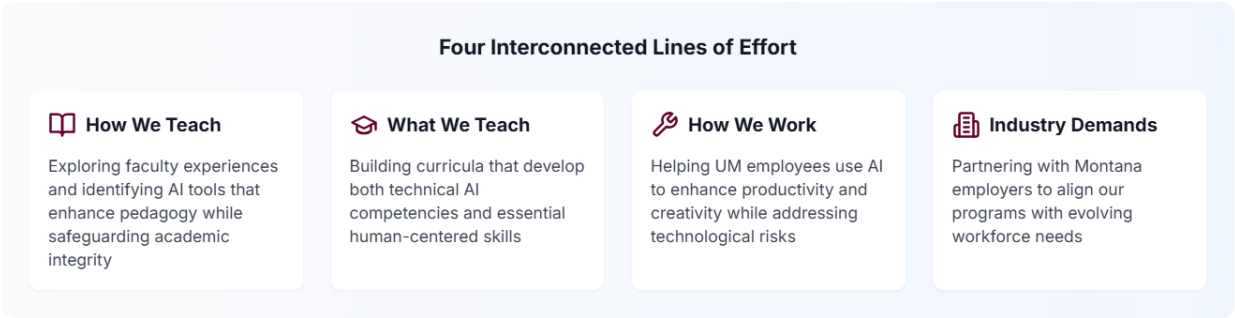


Figure 1: The Future Project is split into four lines of effort

#	AI Commitment	Description
#1	Preserve Human Judgment	Preserve human judgment and authorship in teaching, research, creative work, and decision-making. AI should augment, not replace, the distinctly human dimensions of life and work on campus.
#2	Engage Students as Partners	We engage students as partners in shaping the ethical, creative, and civic possibilities of AI, preparing them for thoughtful leadership in an AI-augmented world.
#3	Uphold Transparency	We uphold transparency and accountability in how AI tools are selected, applied, and evaluated, ensuring clarity in both capabilities and limitations.
#4	Ensure Equitable Access	We ensure equitable access to AI tools, training, and learning opportunities across all disciplines, backgrounds, and stages of life, bridging digital divides rather than reinforcing them.
#5	Support Faculty Development	Support faculty and instructors as they navigate evolving pedagogies, assessment practices, and ethical dilemmas introduced by AI. This includes professional development, peer communities, and flexible policy guidance.
#6	Equip Staff and Administrators	Equip staff and administrators with the resources, training, and policy clarity needed to integrate AI into their work responsibly, efficiently, and in alignment with our values and goals.
#7	Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure	Invest in sustainable infrastructure, responsible governance, and inclusive policies that promote innovation while protecting rights, privacy, and intellectual integrity.
#8	Environmental Responsibility	Pursue creative, sustainable solutions to reduce the environmental impact of AI development and deployment, aligning our technological progress with climate responsibility.
#9	Foster Inclusive Dialogue	Foster an open, inclusive campus dialogue that welcomes curiosity, critique, and collaboration from all perspectives, including those skeptical of AI's role in education and society.

Table 3: The nine elements of the AI Commitment

The four lines of effort are:

1. How We Teach: This effort explores faculty experiences and identifies AI tools that enhance pedagogy while safeguarding academic integrity. It addresses the automation-augmentation paradox (see Section 3.3) by seeking tools that augment the instructor's capability rather than automating the educational experience out of existence.
2. What We Teach: This focuses on building AI literacy across disciplines and developing critical thinking about AI capabilities and limitations. It recognizes that students must not only be savvy users but ethical and innovative creators.
3. How We Work: This investigates how our employees can use AI to enhance their work while addressing risks of technological displacement. This line of effort applies organizational ambidexterity (see Section 3.1) to the university's administrative side, seeking administrative efficiency without sacrificing human oversight in decision-making.
4. Industry Demands: By engaging directly with the employers of our graduates, our university aligns its academic programs with evolving workforce needs. This ensures that the relevance gap in the IS curriculum is closed through direct industry partnerships.

4.5 Our University's AI Commitment

During Phase II, the strategy-development phase of the Future Project, the university developed the AI Commitment. This is the university's foundational approach to artificial intelligence, rooted in human learning, creativity, and community flourishing (see https://Umontana.AI/commitment). A screenshot of the web page for this is in Appendix A.

Our AI commitment represents a more adaptive and institutionally appropriate approach than a traditional AI policy because it prioritizes guiding principles over prescriptive rules in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Policies, by design, tend to be static, compliance-oriented, and quickly outdated when applied to technologies like AI that are advancing at an exponential pace (Stilgoe et al., 2013). In contrast, a commitment framework enables principled adaptation, allowing institutions to remain anchored in core values, such as transparency, equity, and human judgment, while still encouraging experimentation and innovation. A principled adaptation is one in which institutions evolve in response to technological change while remaining grounded in enduring normative commitments (Floridi et al., 2018). This closely aligns with the organizational ambidexterity framework (see Section 3.1). This is particularly important in higher education, where rigid policies risk either constraining pedagogical creativity or being widely ignored as impractical. By articulating shared values rather than fixed prohibitions, as is common in policy, an AI Commitment fosters a culture of trust, dialogue, and collective responsibility, aligning more effectively with the university's mission of inquiry and intellectual exploration. In doing so, it provides a flexible yet ethically grounded foundation for navigating the tension between the pace of trust and the pace of innovation. Table 3 describes the nine AI Commitments at our university.

We map the AI Commitments to the theoretical frameworks of organizational ambidexterity (Section 3.1), relational coordination (Section 3.2), the automation-augmentation paradox (Section 3.3), and psychological safety (Section 3.4) in Table 4.

Our university explicitly engages the shadow AI problem by fostering psychological safety. It does this by welcoming curiosity, critique, and collaboration from all perspectives, including those skeptical of AI's role under the Foster Inclusive Dialogue element of our AI commitment. By providing clear, sanctioned, secure enterprise alternatives like Grammarly and NotebookLM, we reduce the incentive for users to turn to unauthorized tools.

#	AI Commitment	Theoretical Lens	Institutional Application
1	Preserve Human Judgment	Ambidexterity (Exploit/Pace of Trust) and Automation-Augmentation	Ensures AI augments rather than replaces cognition. This commitment ensures the university continues to exploit its core competency of critical thinking. It signals that while we explore AI, we will not abandon the stable human elements that define higher education, thereby maintaining institutional trust
2	Engage Students as Partners	Relational Coordination (Shared Goals and Mutual Respect)	Co-creating ethical frameworks with learners. Gittell (2011) emphasizes mutual respect as a driver of pace. Treating students as partners rather than subjects of an AI Commitment allows the university to move at the pace of trust by co-creating the rules of engagement.
3	Uphold Transparency	Psychological Safety (Safety)	Openly discussing tool selection and evaluation. As Edmondson (1999) notes, transparency reduces the perceived risk of innovation. By being clear about how AI is selected and evaluated, our university creates a safe zone for faculty and students to operate without fear of arbitrary punishment.
4	Ensure Equitable Access	Relational Coordination (Shared Knowledge)	Closing the digital divide to maintain social cohesion. Access is the baseline for shared knowledge. If only a portion of the student body has access to advanced AI, the relational coordination of the entire campus is fractured. Equitable access ensures everyone is moving at the same pace of innovation.
5	Support Faculty Development	Psychological Safety (Capability Building)	Provide training to reduce fear and increase agency.
6	Equip Staff and Administrators	Psychological Safety (Capability Building)	Training is the antidote to the fear of obsolescence. By supporting development, we increase the psychological safety of our staff, allowing them to lead innovation rather than resist it.
7	Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure	Ambidexterity (Explore/Pace of innovation)	Building infrastructure for responsible integration.
8	Environmental Responsibility	Ambidexterity and Psychological Safety	Being environmentally responsible encompasses the pace of innovation. Ambidexterity, as well as providing the psychological safety that the academic community values, is important for addressing environmental issues.
9	Foster Inclusive Dialogue	Relational Coordination (Mutual Respect) and Psychological Safety	Encouraging skepticism and critique as a form of trust. Inclusive dialogue serves as the bridge between exploration and exploitation. Leading with integrity ensures that the pace of innovation never outruns the pace of trust, creating a sustainable, long-term ambidextrous culture.

Table 4: Mapping AI commitments to the theoretical foundations

Our university explicitly engages the shadow AI problem by fostering psychological safety. It does this by welcoming curiosity, critique, and collaboration from all perspectives, including those skeptical of AI's role under the Foster Inclusive Dialogue element of our AI commitment. By providing clear, sanctioned, secure enterprise alternatives like Grammarly and NotebookLM, we reduce the incentive for users to turn to unauthorized tools.

5.DESIGN FOR PRODUCTIVE TENSION

The central argument of this paper is that our academic institutions should not resolve the tension between moving at the pace of trust and moving at the pace of innovation, but instead design for it. Dynamic tension is a strength. Innovation without trust leads to risk, inequity, and institutional rejection. Trust without innovation leads to stagnation and irrelevance for the workforce. Effective institutions maintain a dual framing strategy in which AI competency is taught, and every AI tool used must be paired with an AI literacy reflection.

To successfully design for productive tension, higher education institutions should follow a multi-level strategy derived from effective frameworks and organizational theories. Specifically, we recommend the following strategies of establishing structural ambidexterity, prioritizing relational coordination, cultivating psychological safety, re-centering the human in the automation paradox, and closing the relevance gap in the curriculum.

5.1. Establish Structural Ambidexterity

Create a dedicated exploration unit (e.g., a Future Project) that is spatially separated from the day-to-day operations but functionally integrated through a network of department-specific coordinators. This allows for rapid experimentation without destabilizing the core exploitative pace of trust mission of the university.

5.2. Prioritize Relational Coordination

Invest in human architecture before technical architecture. Use the seven dimensions of RCT to build trust between IT, faculty, students, and administration. Move beyond top-down mandates to inclusive dialogue that values skepticism and critique.

5.3. Cultivate Psychological Safety

Develop a safe-to-fail environment where faculty, students, and administrators can disclose their AI use and learn from mistakes. Provide sanctioned, secure enterprise alternatives to mitigate the risks of shadow AI.

5.4. Re-Center the Human in the Automation Paradox

Apply a human-in-the-loop framework to all AI-augmented processes. Ensure that AI augments and never replaces the distinctly human dimensions of education. Prioritize authentic, process-led assessment over content-based grading.

5.5. Close the Relevance Gap in Curriculum

Regularly update the IS curriculum to include AI literacy and technical AI competencies. Engage directly with industry partners to ensure that graduates possess both the technical skills and the human-centered skills (e.g., creativity, ethics, reasoning) that the future of work demands.

6. CONCLUSION

The integration of artificial intelligence into higher education is not a technical problem to be solved, but a social and organizational challenge to be managed. The pace of trust is the foundational constraint that determines whether innovation strengthens or diminishes the academic mission. Based on our experience, the most effective path forward is a deliberate, human-centered approach that is grounded in academic freedom, critical thinking, and transparency. This allows faculty, staff, and students to move safely and sensibly at the pace of innovation.

By synthesizing organizational ambidexterity, relational coordination, the automation-augmentation paradox, and psychological safety, IS educators can provide the theoretical rigor and empirical evidence needed to guide their institutions through this transition. The goal is not to reach a final state of AI adoption but to build a framework, an AI Commitment for ongoing growth and principled adaptation. In this new landscape, the university's value lies not in its ability to generate content, but in its ability to foster the wisdom, curiosity, courage, and care

needed to wield that content for the public good. As we design for tension, we ensure that higher education remains a vital, human-centered institution in an increasingly automated world.

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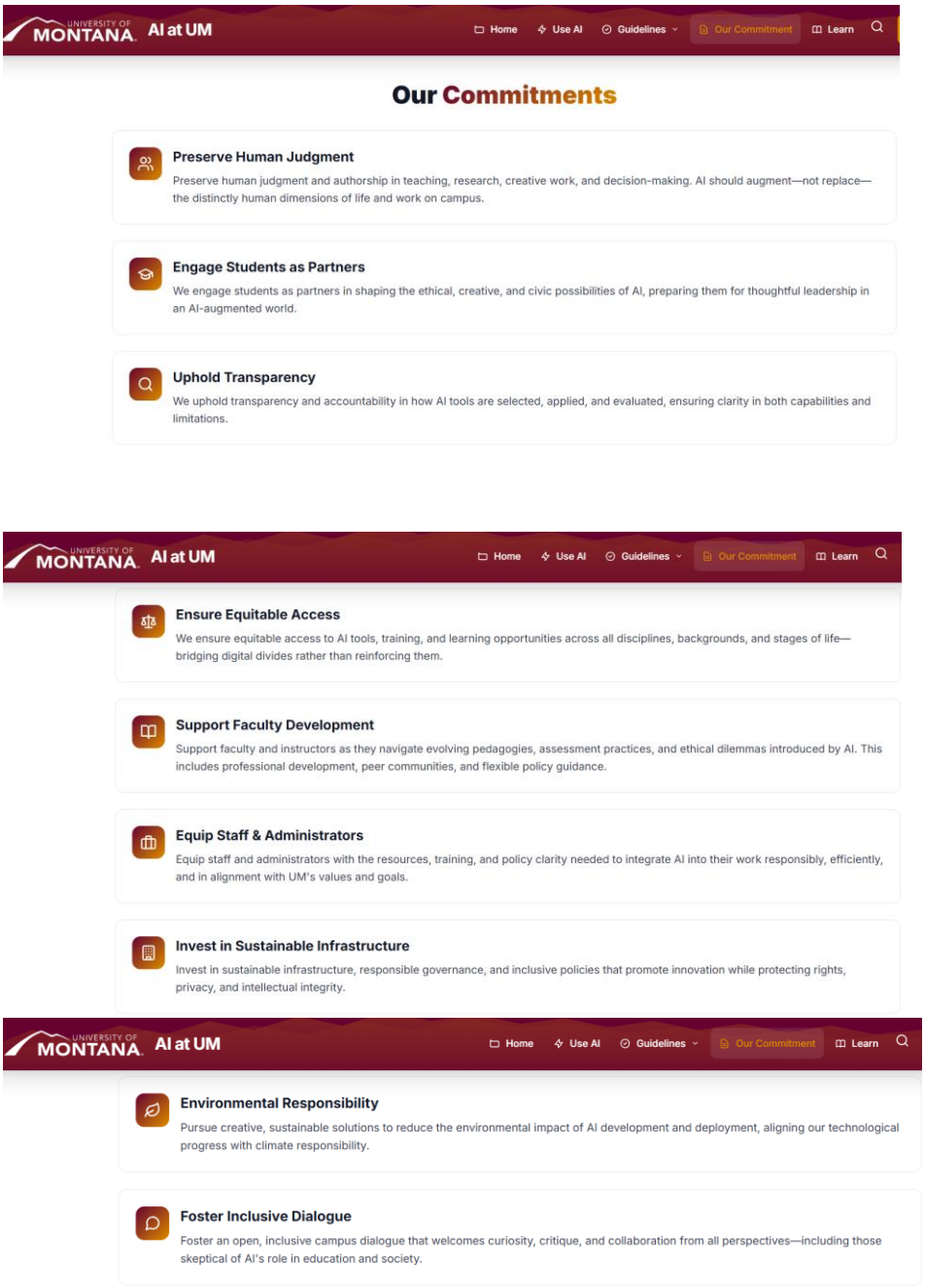
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APPENDIX A: The University of Montana "AI Commitment"



From: https://Umontana.AI/commitment