

The CIO's Starter Guide to Leading AI Adoption on Campus


Lay the groundwork to meet the AI moment

Chief information officers, often serving as de facto AI leaders, face the colossal task of ushering their campuses safely and swiftly into an AI-enabled future. CIOs can use this starter guide to understand and communicate the organizational groundwork necessary to successfully govern, enable, and apply AI on campus. Completing the steps outlined below will help CIOs accelerate responsible AI innovation and adoption.

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Governance

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RISK

Campus pursues ad hoc AI initiatives without proper vetting, potentially exposing campus to risk.



MANDATE

Ensuring the responsible deployment of AI by **establishing governance mechanisms such as pilot mandates and risk mitigation protocols.**

STARTER GUIDE CHECKLIST


☐ Define AI principles (e.g., embracing AI as a tool for learning) to guide institution-wide adoption

☐ Form governance structures with leadership oversight and implementation teams that designate accountability for mitigating AI risks and exploring opportunities

☐ Position faculty in general governance bodies and/or convene specific subcommittees to help guide ethical use of AI (e.g., reviewing AI-enabled solutions)

☐ Formalize protocols to fast-track review of low-risk AI projects while establishing escalation paths for higher-risk projects


☐ Centrally track AI projects and applications to curtail shadow AI projects and ensure all efforts abide by institutional risk and vendor criteria



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Enablement

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RISK

AI initiatives and adoption stagnate because opportunities are not meaningfully supported or scaled.



MANDATE

Enabling campus AI adoption by **building organizational capabilities such as IT AI skill sets and community literacy.**


STARTER GUIDE CHECKLIST

☐ Prioritize IT AI staff roles based on institutional AI posture (e.g., data science skill sets when building solutions vs. staff with knowledge of institutional systems when buying)

☐ Educate senior leaders about AI cost realities and the need to diversify funding sources for sustainability (e.g., budget reallocation, student fees)

☐ Move beyond general awareness and instead build tool- and role-specific training to help users integrate AI tools into their workflows


☐ Advertise IT's role as a consultative partner for campus AI adoption and experimentation (e.g., hosting symposiums, office hours)



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Application

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RISK

Poorly implemented AI applications lead to campus underutilization and suboptimal return on investment.



MANDATE

Deploying AI applications successfully, from **structuring right-fit pilots to partnering with functional experts in solution development.**

STARTER GUIDE CHECKLIST

☐ Design right-fit pilots for campus to accurately evaluate applications and maximize ROI; recommended practices include:

☐ Showcase solutions to senior leaders first

☐ Select units/roles with most apparent business need (and empower managers to decide)

☐ Train users early and continuously


☐ Survey use to gauge efficiency gains

☐ Build a Community of Practice to collaborate on use cases


☐ Assess application risk (i.e., input and output data, complexity of the role AI fulfills) first to inform build versus buy decisions

☐ Match data preparation to application risk instead of trying to fix all institutional data at once (e.g., a staff FAQ chatbot requires less prep than a one-stop student assistant)

☐ Partner with functional experts to test applications, ensuring they address relevant problems accurately



See EAB's AI posture research to create a strategic vision and roadmap for what AI adoption should look like on your campus, while balancing institutional aspirations with IT realities.

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Explore our AI case studies

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