MUS AI Task Force Recommendations

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MUS AI Task Force

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence—especially generative AI tools that can create text, images, code, audio, and other content—is quickly becoming embedded in K-12 and higher education and the workforce. These tools can improve productivity, expand access, and support teaching, learning, research, and student services. They can also introduce broader ethical concerns and material risks, including privacy and security concerns, bias and inequity, intellectual-property exposure, and threats to learning, critical thinking, and academic integrity.

This document provides recommendations to support Montana University System (MUS) institutions as they evaluate and implement AI in key areas of university life, including administrative operations, instruction and assessment, and research and scholarly activity.

The Opportunities and Challenges of AI for the Montana University System

AI should support students completing programs, earning credentials, transferring, and getting jobs. It can enhance teaching and learning, strengthen student support, improve administrative efficiency, and accelerate research—if implemented with appropriate safeguards, if accessible to our institutions, and if we take proactive steps to mitigate against potential ethical, financial, or geographical AI divides.

Potential Opportunities	Key Challenges to Address
Personalized learning support; accessibility tools; formative feedback and tutoring.	Risk of overreliance that undermines learning; unequal access; hallucinations and misinformation.
Faster development of teaching materials, examples, rubrics, and alternative formats (e.g., captions/alt-text).	Copyright/IP exposure; unclear attribution; need for transparent academic integrity expectations.
Administrative automation (drafting communications, summarizing, routing inquiries, basic analytics).	Privacy and security risks; inappropriate automated decisions; vendor data practices and retention.
Research assistance (literature discovery, coding support, draft generation, workflow acceleration), data analyses.	Research integrity; sponsor/publisher requirements; restrictions on sensitive/proprietary/controlled data.
Workforce preparation: building AI literacy and ethical practice in safe learning environments.	Need for ongoing professional development; rapid tool evolution; change-management and governance.

Purpose of This Guidance

- Provide a shared set of core principles for responsible AI use across MUS institutions.
- Establish minimum expectations and considerations for common implementation domains (e.g., procurement, instruction, research).
- Support faculty, staff, and students in building AI literacy and using AI ethically and transparently.
- Protect students, faculty, staff, and the public by prioritizing privacy, security, accessibility, equity, and human accountability.
- Serve as a living resource that can be updated at the direction of the Board as technologies, laws, and institutional practices evolve.

Development and Contributors

This guidance reflects the work of the Montana University System (MUS) AI Task Force convened by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). It is intended to be used and adapted by MUS institutions as they develop local policies, training, and implementation plans.

This document will continue to evolve based on campus feedback, changes in technology, and emerging legal and regulatory requirements. Campuses are encouraged to share suggested edits, examples, and resource links with OCHE so that the guidance can remain current.

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The included guidance is organized into four main areas:

1. Core principles for AI Use in the MUS
2. Recommended system actions
3. Campus essential practices and considerations, organized by domain (procurement and software, instruction, and research)
4. Resources to support adoption

Core Principles for AI Use in the Montana University System

The following principles inform institutions' local AI policy, professional development, and implementation.

Data Privacy and Security

In most cases, the data users generate with AI tools, as well as the text entered into the tools to generate that data, are not private. The content is often used to train the AI tool and may be sold to third parties.

AI use must comply with all relevant laws and policies related to student data, including FERPA, and uphold strong data governance practices. Without explicit permission, AI tools **should not** be used with sensitive information such as student information regulated by FERPA, human subject research information, health information, HR records, etc.

AI tools may not be used for surveillance, sharing of personally identifiable data, or automated decision-making without a student's informed consent.

Transparency and Accountability

Administrators, educators, and students should know when AI is involved in learning, grading, decision-making, or access to services.

When AI is used in academic or administrative work, this use must be clearly disclosed within the work product, including the tools used and the extent of the contribution.

Bias Awareness and Mitigation

AI tool outputs must be critically examined for embedded biases. Campuses should regularly assess whether certain groups are disproportionately impacted by the use of an AI tool and take proactive steps to reduce harm.

Human Discretion

All AI use must include active human engagement and oversight. No decision impacting a grade, enrollment status, or employment status may be delegated to an AI tool. Administration and faculty may allow or disallow AI use for specific tasks or assignments and, if allowing use, should specify which tools may be used and in what capacity. In academic courses, faculty should clearly indicate their expectations in the course syllabus regarding student use of AI on course assignments, exams, papers, creative works, etc. Faculty decisions about AI use should be guided by learning objectives. For practice-based learning (labs, skill development, etc.), AI tools can serve as learning aids when used

transparently. For assessments of individual mastery (exams, demonstrations, etc.), AI use may be inappropriate.

Protection of Intellectual Property

Use of publicly available generative AI tools may inadvertently expose proprietary information, including intellectual property (IP), to unauthorized parties. This may violate copyright, trademark, or patent protections or compromise research integrity. Users should ensure that inputs to and outputs of AI tools do not include protected, unpublished, or sensitive materials unless the tool explicitly supports secure use.

Academic Integrity

AI must be used in ways that reinforce learning, not undermine it. Clear expectations must guide when and how students use AI tools, with an emphasis on originality, transparency, and reflection. Instructors should consider how the emerging discourse around AI use can complicate or undermine the ways that students understand their obligations to engage with and document their sources. Students should understand that learning to use AI tools safely and critically is itself a professional skill.

Restricted Uses

Generative AI shall not be used for any activities that are harmful, illegal, or in violation of an individual's federal and state constitutional rights, federal or state law, Executive Order, or any campus, OCHE, or BOR policy.

Use of Approved and Non-Approved Tools

All students, faculty, and staff are strongly encouraged to use only tools that have been procured and vetted by the unit. University employees should not enter any non-public institutional data into any unvetted AI tools. Use of non-vetted or third-party tools remains subject to all MUS and institutional guidance and policies, including but not limited to those related to data privacy, accountability, research and instructional standards, and academic integrity.

Each campus should clearly identify and communicate AI products that are available to students, faculty and staff, and that are considered vetted and/or have been procured. Each campus should have an approval process for procurement of AI tools, as set forth below.

Recommended System Actions

Training

1. Provide a system-wide AI training for students, faculty and staff that develops basic AI literacy, which the U.S. Department of Labor's AI Literacy Framework describes as including the following foundational content areas: understanding AI principles, exploring AI uses, directing AI effectively, evaluating AI outputs, and using AI responsibly. Introduce a variety of AI tools, and training on MUS standards for ethical AI use, academic integrity, and data privacy/security.
2. Support campus pilots of third-party vendor credentials as a route for staff upskilling and student co-requisite opportunities. MUS institutions and Montana tribal colleges will have free access to these micro credentials through a National Association of System Heads (NASH) community of practice.

Procurement

1. Continue work with state and MUS procurement to establish cooperative purchasing and/or master contracts for approved AI vendors.
2. Develop a centralized inventory of vetted AI software available to MUS institutions.
3. Coordinate optional campus implementation of ChatMT.ai as a secure and affordable means for students, faculty, and staff to access frontier AI models.

Instruction

1. Develop and curate in a Canvas Commons course training and resources available system-wide to support faculty, addressing:
   - Pedagogical strategies for AI use in the classroom
   - Leveraging various AI tools and strategies for writing effective prompts in support of enhanced teaching and learning, development of course resources, etc.
   - Designing courses and assignments to align with course approach to AI (from resistance to integration) and institutional policies/guidelines on ethical use
   - Using AI to support inclusive and accessible teaching practices for students with disabilities
   - Practical tools, such as sample syllabus language for different AI policies (encouraged, limited, prohibited), assignment-specific AI use guidance templates, disclosure format examples, FAQ responses to common student questions, and discipline-specific examples; and

- Resources to share with students, such as “How to Disclose AI Use” quick reference guides, examples of good v. bad prompts, decision trees on when to use AI tools and when not to, and verification and fact-checking strategies.

2. Host and make available through Canvas Commons webinars featuring MUS faculty and staff and focusing on AI literacy and use cases across functional areas of the MUS (teaching and learning, student services, research, etc.).
3. Convene faculty from similar disciplines to develop field-specific policies, common assessment strategies, and shared examples and resources.

Operations

1. Collaborate with institution leaders to develop, prioritize, and pursue AI strategies or projects that enhance MUS operations across functional units (e.g. business services, student services, financial aid, enrollment and admissions, etc.).

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Campus Essential Practices and Considerations

Domain 1: Procurement and Software

Guiding Principles

- **Standardized Due Diligence:** AI vendor should meet the requirements of established assessment frameworks for data security and accessibility and standard MUS contract terms for data protection.
- **Risk-Based Procurement:** AI software should be evaluated based on the sensitivity of data involved, the scale of use, and potential institutional impact.
- **Purpose-Driven Acquisition:** AI tools should be procured only when they support clearly defined instructional or operational needs and do not introduce unnecessary risk.

Essential Items	Planning Considerations / Recommended Practice
1. Contractual Safeguards. Contracts should clearly define data ownership, data retention, and deletion requirements. Vendors should be prohibited from using institutional data for advertising, resale, or AI model training unless explicitly authorized. Breach notification timelines and escalation expectations should be clearly stated. Vendors should be required to notify institutions when AI features or data practices change. **2. Security and Privacy Review.** Prioritize AI vendors that maintain a current SOC 2 Type II report and complete the Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit (HECVAT). Review should be proportional to the level of risk and data sensitivity involved.	1. Develop a central location to communicate to campus stakeholders about approved and supported AI tools, their intended uses, and any limitations on use, including data handling expectations. 2. Assess and monitor AI tool purchases to ensure compliance with data security requirements and identify areas for savings through shared procurement. 3. Develop processes to periodically review AI vendors and tools to ensure that security documentation remains current and that data practices have not materially changed. Develop processes to periodically review non-AI vendors and tools to determine whether there are significant changes in functionality or data use, such as when non-AI vendors incorporate AI tools or functionality into existing software. 4. Review institutional procurement approvals process to ensure tools which may process sensitive or large-scale personal data undergo a security and privacy review and a legal review. University employees should not enter any non-public institutional data into any unvetted or unapproved AI tools. To be approved, an AI tool must be accessible to everyone who engages with it with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Domain 2: Instruction

Guiding Principles

Instructional use of AI should:

- Support authentic student learning rather than replace essential cognitive or disciplinary work.
- Preserve faculty authority over course design, assessment, and instructional methods.
- Promote transparency, accountability, and academic honesty.
- Advance equity, access, and inclusion for all students.
- Remain adaptable as technologies, pedagogies, and disciplinary standards evolve.

Essential Items	Planning Considerations / Recommended Practice
1. Establish clear and flexible expectations for AI use in policy. • Academic integrity • Assessment 2. Provide resources to faculty that help to communicate AI-use expectations to students. • Sample syllabus statements • Acknowledgment/disclosure and citation standards 3. Recognize faculty authority and responsibility to determine whether, how and the degree to which AI is used in the classroom, and to communicate these expectations consistent with institutional policies. 4. Encourage faculty to only incorporate into coursework vetted AI tools that are accessible to all students and comply with data privacy, security, and student records protections. 5. Assess curricula and degree pathways to integrate AI skills where relevant to the workforce needs in that field.	**1. AI and curriculum** Institutions should support and facilitate faculty efforts to incorporate AI literacies and competencies across the curriculum, including at the institutional, programmatic, and course-level learning outcomes and objectives. **2. Assessment and Learning Outcomes** Institutions should encourage assessment designs that emphasize: • Process, reflection, application, and synthesis. • Contextualized or in-person demonstration of learning where appropriate. **3. AI Detection** Reliance on AI detection tools is discouraged as a primary academic integrity enforcement mechanism. Allegations of misuse must follow established academic integrity procedures and afford students appropriate due process. **4. Equity, Access, and Accessibility** Students should not be required to pay to use GenAI tools unless equivalent access is provided. Policies and practices should account for disparities in access, digital literacy, and experience with AI technologies. Institutions should: • Support accessible AI tools for all student users. • Promote the use of AI to enhance accessibility for students with disabilities. • Develop strategies to mitigate emerging “digital AI divides,” including disparities related to premium tools and advanced capabilities.

Domain 3: Research

Guiding Principles

Use of GenAI in research should:

- Uphold research integrity and scholarly responsibility.
- Preserve human accountability for all research outputs.
- Align with disciplinary norms and sponsor requirements.
- Protect confidential, proprietary, and human-subjects data.
- Remain transparent, reviewable, and adaptable as technologies evolve.

Essential Items	Planning Considerations / Recommended Practice
1. Reinforce via training that researchers must not input personal, private, or HIPAA, FERPA, Common Rule, and Export Control-protected information into an unsecure GenAI system. 2. Encourage compliance with the following standards of accountability for AI use in research: • Researchers retain full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all research outputs, regardless of GenAI assistance. • GenAI tools may not be treated as authors, co-investigators, or independent decision-makers. • Errors, bias, or misconduct arising from AI use remain the responsibility of the researcher(s). • AI use in research should be documented and disclosed according to disciplinary best practices or sponsor requirements.	Campuses should consider providing guidance to prioritize risk mitigation without unnecessarily constraining legitimate scholarly work. • Research-facing guidance and examples • Support from research offices, libraries, and compliance units • Training on responsible and compliant AI use

Resources

National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Department of Commerce, AI Risk Management Framework, available at: https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/ai/NIST.AI.100-1.pdf.

U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration's AI Literacy Framework, available at: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2026/02/ETA-20260212-hi.jpg.

WCET AI Education Policy, Guideline, & Practice Ecosystem Framework 2025, available at: https://wcet.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2025/10/2025-WCET-AI-Education-Policy-Practice-Ecosystem-Framework_Final.pdf.

AI Disclosure

These recommendations were developed through collaboration of the MUS AI Task Force representatives. AI tools were used in limited and intentional ways to assist in generating concepts. Human authors retained synthesis of ideas, development of final recommendations, and oversight and editorial decisions of final recommendations.