Memorandum

August 28, 2025

To: Members of the Artificial Intelligence Task Force

From: Joseph S. Paul, President   JsP

RE: Charge to the Task Force

As I shared at Fall Convocation, we have before us a golden opportunity to prepare our students to join a workforce that will be constantly changing due to the disruption from rapidly evolving artificial intelligence. To this end, I asked that the scope and membership of the Artificial Intelligence Task Force be expanded to include evaluation of best practices and the development of a plan to integrate AI literacy throughout the curriculum. I am formally charging the Artificial Intelligence Task Force with the mission of developing plans for preparing Southern Miss to create graduates who are Ready For Life by becoming a leader in integrating AI skills training across the curriculum as faculty deem appropriate.

Intended outcomes:

The primary outcomes expected from the Task Force include:

1. Recommendations to the Provost, Deans, and general administration on a path forward to assure that all baccalaureate graduates have a fundamental understanding of how to utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI literacy).
2. Development of career readiness and workforce-relevant AI competencies. Recommendations to the academy (deans, school directors, faculty) on how to best integrate the utilization of AI as it applies to the specific post-graduate professions our graduates will enter. Development of pathways or best practices on how our faculty can help our students develop specific applied AI skills that they will need in the world of work.
3. Recommendations to the administration on any infrastructure needs the university may need to develop to achieve the above-listed outcomes.
4. Recommendations to the administration for appropriate quantitative and qualitative metrics for assessing AI literacy.

Possible tasks:

The work of the Task Force may include, but should not be limited to, the following tasks:

1. **Curriculum audit:** Review current courses across colleges to assess existing AI content. Identify gaps and opportunities for AI integration.
2. **Faculty engagement and training:** Survey faculty to understand interest and current usage of AI tools. Recommend faculty development workshops for AI literacy and pedagogy. Promote interdisciplinary collaboration around AI.

3. **Student readiness and support:** Design pathways or micro-credentials to support students in developing AI skills. Recommend co-curricular opportunities with an AI focus.
4. **Partnerships and resource development:** Explore partnerships with local industry, government, or other universities. Identify funding sources (grants, industry, foundations) for curriculum development and implementation.
5. **Ensure institutional readiness for future AI advances:** Build policy and technical infrastructure to adapt to rapidly evolving AI tools, capabilities, and workforce needs.
6. **Support faculty innovation in teaching with AI:** Provide a sustainable framework for faculty to experiment, iterate, and implement AI-enhanced pedagogies.

Guiding Principles

In your deliberations, I ask that you consider the following guiding principles:

- **Interdisciplinary Reach:** AI affects all fields. Recommendations should reflect the needs and contributions of a broad range of disciplines.
- **Ethical Foundations:** AI literacy must include critical engagement with ethical, legal, and social considerations, helping students learn that artificial intelligence is a tool to be used in concert with their own curiosity, creative thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy and sound judgement.
- **Access:** Ensure that training in AI literacy is available to students regardless of major.
- **Adaptability:** AI technologies evolve rapidly. Recommendations should support curricular approaches that are sustainable and responsive to new developments.

Work product and timeline:

The Task Force will meet on **Tuesday, September 9, 2025, from 1:00-2:15 p.m.** The meeting will be held in IC319 with a Zoom link available to members who cannot participate in person. Please contact Dr. Kelly Lester if you are unable to attend either in person or via Zoom, Kelly.Lester@usm.edu.

Any curricular recommendations should be presented to the Provost, Deans, and general administration by the end of the fall 2025 term. This allows time for proposed courses, programming or other curriculum-related recommendations to be considered by the appropriate councils for fall 2026 implementation. I would like to receive a comprehensive white paper including all recommendations by the conclusion of the spring term of 2026.

I appreciate your willingness to engage in this important and timely work. Your expertise and leadership will position our university to proactively and thoughtfully manage the challenges and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence.

Thank you again for your service to the University and our shared goal to prepare our students to be Ready For Life.