Educating the Educators About AI: Strategic Initiatives in a Graduate School of Education A Case Study

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Abstract
Much of the discourse about the implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for education so far has focused on what uses of AI should be allowed by students and instructors in current courses. However, as AI is changing the nature of jobs in most professions, including those within the field of education, an even more important question for schools of education is, "How can we prepare our students to successfully manage AI as education professionals in their future careers?" Over the past two years, our school of education has grappled with this question, which led to a comprehensive initiative that included developing our own internal capacity for AI, while at the same time drawing implications for our academic programs as well as our own practices as teachers and researchers. This article will report on both the outcomes of this initiative and the process the faculty went through, as we believe that the insights and lessons learned from this case may help other schools of education prepare for the inevitable disruptions AI is going to cause in all education professions.

Keywords: AI, education, graduate school, faculty impact, student experience, entrepreneurship, instructional technology, strategic initiatives

Borasi, R. and Fredericksen, E. (2026) Educating the educators about AI: Strategic initiatives in a graduate school of education, a case study. *Online Learning 30*(2), 190-217. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v30i2.5450

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been around for a few decades, including several educational applications (as reported in literature reviews by Li et al., 2024, and Rizvi et al., 2023), the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 (OpenAI, 2022) has brought to the forefront the potential – and risks – of AI for education for a few complementary reasons. At the beginning, attention focused mostly on the implications of students' easy access to this technology for "cheating" (e.g., Adams et al., 2023, Dunningan et al., 2023). However, as more and more teachers and administrators have been using ChatGPT or similar tools powered by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) to relieve their administrative burden (e.g., Diliberti et al., 2024, HolonIQ, 2024), and powerful applications to support more personalized instruction (such as MagicSchool [MagicSchool Inc., 2023] and Diffit [Diffit Team, 2023]) have been developed, educators have started to recognize that GenAI may impact education in much more fundamental ways. Indeed, given the predictions that GenAI will transform most professional jobs in the future (e.g., Mervis, 2016, National Science Foundation, 2020), there is no reason to believe that educators' jobs will be spared this fate.

Since a core mission of schools of education is to train the next generation of educators across a variety of professions, these developments mean that as education faculty and academic leaders, we need to ensure that our students are prepared for this new reality – and we need to do this quickly, given the rapid advances of GenAI technology and its educational applications. Furthermore, since GenAI is new to everyone, this calls for preparing faculty and academic leaders to sufficiently understand its potential, limitations, and risks, as well as its implications for specific educational professions.

Recognizing this need, for the past two years the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester has been working on a comprehensive initiative (referred to as the "AI Initiative" hereafter) to both build internal capacity to inform decisions related to GenAI and its implications, and to rethink our current programs preparing teachers, educational leaders, education researchers, counselors, health profession educators, and other education professionals. In designing and implementing this initiative, we leveraged lessons learned from the school's launch of its first online offerings about a decade earlier, while also recognizing the unique challenges posed by AI. We believe that reporting a detailed reconstruction of our journey, based on the artifacts produced and collected along the way, will provide insights and examples that could be valuable for other schools of education facing the same situation.

To better understand this story, we want to provide some background information. The Warner School of Education is part of the University of Rochester (UR), a nationally recognized research university, serving more than 6,000 undergraduate and 5,000 graduate students. The smallest academic unit within the University, the school includes about 45 active faculty members and serves approximately 700 graduate students across doctoral, master's, and advanced certificate programs. Despite its small size, the school offers programs in a variety of fields within education, including teacher preparation, K-12 leadership, higher education, education policy, counseling, human development, health professions education, program evaluation, and human development. Instructional programs are mostly managed by faculty in three main program areas: Teaching & Curriculum, Educational Leadership, and Counseling & Human Development.

In addition to program areas, the school also has four Centers that focus on specific areas within education. The most recent of these centers is the Center for Learning in the Digital Age (LiDA), founded in 2018 with the mission of "*Transforming education by leveraging digital technologies*" through a combination of engaging in research, promoting and supporting specific digitally-rich educational innovations, providing professional learning opportunities for educators, and serving as a catalyst for networking and collaborations around the topic (Center for Learning in the Digital Age, n.d.). The LiDA Center's human resources consist of six individuals (including the two co-authors) who are partially funded by the Center, as well as ten additional LiDA Affiliated Faculty volunteering their time. Not surprisingly, the LiDA Center played a leadership role in the Warner AI Initiative from the very beginning.

Methods

Given the unusual nature of our study, we begin this section by identifying the complementary perspectives and experiences that most informed our work, before describing our study design.

Applying an Entrepreneurship Lens to Educational Innovations

The current Warner AI Initiative was informed by a previous initiative the Warner School engaged in, starting in 2013, to establish its first online courses and programs – referred to as the Online Startup Initiative hereafter and reported in a previous publication (Borasi et al., 2016). Since both initiatives represented major *innovations* for the Warner School, we chose to draw from the literature on entrepreneurship to study them.

As previously done for the Online Startup Initiative (Borasi et al., 2016), this meant first reconstructing how the AI Initiative developed so far with respect to the following key stages of the "entrepreneurial process" (Borasi & Miller, 2022), that is:

- Coming up with & refining the idea for the innovation
- Planning and gathering the resources to launch the initiative
- Implementing and monitoring the initiative
- Planning for sustainability

The following entrepreneurial principles have also been considered in our report and analysis:

- *Not feeling limited by the resources at hand* (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990)–that is, the willingness to pursue a worthwhile innovation even if it requires creative ways to secure needed resources that the organization does not currently have.
- *Considering "missing the boat" risks as well as "sinking the boat" risks (*Brown & Cornwall, 2000)–that is, evaluating the potential consequences of *not* engaging in the

innovation, along with the chances of failing and the negative consequences of doing so.

- *Focusing on managing rather than avoiding risk* (e.g., Palich & Bagby, 1995, Busenitz, 1999)–that is, accepting the reality that any innovation will involve some risks, but those risks can be minimized by predicting potential risks and developing strategies to control them.

- *Accepting the need to make decisions with limited information (*Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2004)–that is*,* accepting the reality that most innovations call for making some time-sensitive decisions with incomplete information, and the willingness to compensate for it by monitoring outcomes on an ongoing basis and being ready to make any needed adjustments.

- *Securing a "champion" to lead the innovation* (Borasi & Miller, 2022)–that is, ensuring that the innovation is led by an individual with the drive to make the innovation successful, as well as the capacity and authority needed to make key decisions.

Key Principles for Instructional Technology Innovations

Innovations can be disruptive because new technologies make previously impossible ways of doing things possible. When these types of interventions occur in higher education, they often raise questions about potential changes in practices. Sometimes, the impact of concerns about the new intervention results in a desire to pause, slow down, or even stop the activity. This is not a new phenomenon in our colleges or universities. One might argue that this is a strength of higher education culture, where individuals can contribute to decision-making. And we have witnessed this kind of situation many times in our careers, especially the central role of faculty in academic or instructional matters.

In this article, we are connecting to our historical experiences with online education, so we would also acknowledge that we experienced this kind of questioning in the early days of that field. It was common for faculty and academic leaders to ask about the impact of that new, innovative way of offering courses. Does an online version of a course count for credit? Does an online version of a course count toward a degree program? Is the tuition for an online course different from that of a traditional, on-campus classroom course? Who decides who can teach an online course? What are the refund policies for an online course? What is the policy for withdrawing from an online course? Those are just a few examples, not a comprehensive and exhaustive list. But they do illustrate the potential to consider technology innovation as new and unique, and something that might have required new policies. We would also note that using precedents or analogies to the traditional academic activities is extremely helpful, because it is the same individuals who are making decisions about these new interventions.

Our guiding principle in the Warner School when we started offering online courses could be represented as the saying, "a course is a course is a course." We were very conscious about NOT creating new policies for a new innovative method of offering courses. We tried to consider those questions through a lens that removed the modality. We took the technology out

of the equation and asked the same question. “Who decides who can teach an online course?” is then the same question as “Who decides who can teach any course?” “What are the refund policies for an online course?” is then the same question as “What are the refund policies for any course?” We would also acknowledge that this approach helps alleviate the need to explicitly define an online course. The dichotomy is difficult and somewhat arbitrary. Can an online course have any in-person meetings? If so, how many before it is no longer an online course? Where do you draw the line? If a course is a course, there is no line.

Recently, there have been discussions on campus related to AI technologies. One question is, “Can students use AI to write their papers?” We would adjust that question and ask, “Can a student use the efforts of someone else to write their papers?” If the answer to the second version is no, then we believe the answer to the first version would also be no. If the question was “Can a student use AI technology to correct the grammar in the paper they wrote?” we would ask a similar question as “Can a student use the efforts of another person to correct the grammar in the paper they wrote?” If the answer to the second version is yes, then we would believe the answer to the first version could also be yes. And in fact, our school offers writing support services to help our students in the writing process.

With regard to faculty, a question might be, “Can a faculty member use AI capabilities to help them design and develop content or activities for their course?” In that case, we might ask, “Can a faculty member ask a colleague to help them design and develop content or activities for their course?” If we are ok with the answer to the second version being yes, then we think the answer to the first version could be yes. Another question might be, “Can a faculty member use AI capabilities to grade and assess a student’s paper and provide feedback?” To help with this one, we might ask, “Can a faculty member ask a colleague to grade and assess a student’s paper and provide feedback?” If we think the answer to the second version is no, then it probably carries over as a no to the first version of that question.

So, as we are faced with new AI-related innovations and the questions that come with them, we believe this strategy can be beneficial. To help the community work through an analysis of those queries, we would suggest the same approach to remove the technology intervention from the situation and try to ask the same questions. This can help inform an appropriate response.

One last thought related to the consideration of questions that remove the technology innovation is that there may be times when it is difficult or when there is a special distinction that makes it challenging to answer the question at hand. Our advice in that case is not to wait for every question to be answered to begin something new; otherwise, you will never start anything. You really need to address the questions you understand at that moment in time. It is almost impossible to anticipate every issue in advance. Moving forward with the new innovation can be informative; you can learn more and improve your ability to answer the question or make a decision.

How Schools of Education Have Addressed GenAI So Far

We recognize that other graduate schools of education at other research universities have also been active with AI plans and initiatives. These efforts fall into a few categories. For institutional strategies, a recent study (McDonald et.al., 2024) noted that the majority of R1

institutions encouraged the use of AI in classrooms and many provided guidance and sample syllabi. A recent article in *EdTech* (Brereton, 2025) highlighted that other institutions have focused on faculty development, support, experimentation, and even faculty hiring in this new field.

Of particular interest are new curricula and degree programs. Examples of this include the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania with their MS Ed in Learning Analytics and AI (Ng, 2024), the School of Education at UC Irvine now offers a Master of Education Sciences with a concentration in AI and Learning Analytics (UCI, 2025), and the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso launched a fully online Master of Arts in Education with a concentration in AI (UTEP, 2025).

It seems reasonable to expect more. The concept of institutional isomorphism (Sakib, 2020) would also support that. So, it may be prudent for graduate schools of education to consider planning and developing new programs in this innovative and expanding field.

Lessons Learned from the Previous Online Startup Case Study

Among the key lessons learned reported in the published case study of the Online Startup (Borasi et al., 2016), we identified the following ones as relevant to the AI Initiative as well:

- *Securing the needed resources and infrastructures–including support from the top:* School-wide initiatives that are potentially transformative require, from the beginning, support from the people controlling key decisions and resources. In the case of the Online Start-up, the dean (who was also the "champion" for this project) played a key role, as in the UR decentralized structure at the time, she was able to allocate the needed resources to hire some online education experts and compensate faculty investing their time learning about online teaching and redesigning their courses in an online format. Even more importantly, though, the dean was in a unique position to make the Online Startup initiative a priority for the school.

- *Securing students and faculty buy-in:* In addition to the dean's support, the success of the Online Start-up also depended on both faculty and students' acceptance of online learning as a viable and high-quality modality. A critical move to gain faculty and students' buy-in was not to force anyone to teach/take an online course unless they wanted to, so the first online offerings were courses that were either electives or had multiple sections (so students had a choice about whether to take the course in the in-person or online modality) and were taught only by faculty who volunteered to do so.

- *Developing internal capacity to implement the initiative:* At the time, offering online courses was first considered, the school did not have any "online education expert" on staff, and only a handful of faculty had prior experience teaching online. To address this challenge, the dean first hired two part-time online experts to jump-start the initiative by modeling high-quality online courses and providing professional development to the faculty. Even more importantly, though, the counter-intuitive decision was made to concurrently launch a new Advanced Certificate in Online Teaching, to develop a cadre of interested Warner faculty, doctoral students, and adjunct instructors able to offer an increasingly rich list of online courses at Warner.

- *Developing new policies and practices related to the initiative to ensure long-term success:* Almost as soon as the Online Start-up was launched, a number of questions began to emerge that called for setting new expectations and/or policies. Addressing these issues upfront was critical to the success of the initiative.

These considerations informed several key decisions about the Warner AI Initiative, and in our reconstruction of how this initiative developed, we pay special attention to *what was put in place* to realize each of these conditions for success in this different case.

Case Design

Given the LiDA Center's interest in exploring AI implications for education as well as the authors' previous experience with the Online Startup, from the beginning we approached the AI Initiative as both a quality-improvement initiative and an opportunity to learn about "*how schools of education should respond to GenAI."* Many artifacts were generated throughout the initiative – including memos, official documents, information posted on the school website, fieldnotes and summaries of key meetings and events, and publicly shared summary results of surveys (including one administered in Spring 2024 to gather students' perceptions about AI and one administered in Summer 2025 to gather faculty's opinions and feedback about the school's AI-related initiatives).

All this information was used to write a first draft of the "story" of the AI Initiative, which was then shared with several Warner faculty to verify its accuracy. A revised version of the story was based on the feedback received. We then used conceptual analysis to examine the story to see if and how the entrepreneurial principles identified in the literature review section were enacted in the AI Initiative, as well as to derive some lessons learned and recommendations for other schools of education.

Results

In this section, we report our reconstruction of how the Warner AI Initiative developed, using the four key components of the entrepreneurial process to structure our narrative.

Coming Up with and Refining the Idea for the Initiative

Following the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, faculty and staff in the LiDA Center (who had already been exploring the potential of AI for education as part of the Center's mission) were immediately intrigued by what GenAI could do for education. Several individuals within LiDA began to individually explore the capabilities of ChatGPT as well as follow webinars and presentations on this topic. Most importantly, the need to have a dedicated person keep up with the new developments around GenAI applications to education and keep the other LiDA faculty and staff informed was identified, and the LiDA director was able to secure the financial support to invest in a full-time post-doc position to do so (using a combination of new gifts, existing grants, and existing Center's funds).

As a result of these preliminary investments and explorations, the LiDA Center came up with the ambitious idea of "making Warner the place to go for AI in education." The value of becoming a leader in this field was clear, given the potential of GenAI to radically challenge current teaching and assessment practices. The novelty of this topic and LiDA's previous

explorations about GenAI could also give Warner a competitive advantage in this area. The success of the Online Startup ten years earlier also gave confidence that the school could achieve – or at least work towards - this ambitious goal, despite not having much AI expertise in-house yet. We also expected that there was a big risk of being left behind if we did not engage with GenAI as a school of education now.

After a series of meetings to turn this initial idea into a concrete proposal, the LiDA Center articulated three key goals and components.

1. **Develop capacity within Warner to understand and leverage the potential of GenAI for education.** Since this is a new and rapidly developing field, we need to create opportunities to learn about possible GenAI applications and implications for education for Warner faculty, staff, and students, as well as secure a commitment to invest the time and effort needed to take advantage of these opportunities.

2. **Engage in exploratory research around applications and implications of GenAI for education.** Given that this is a rapidly emerging field, there is a big need for exploratory research to identify both the potential and risks of GenAI applications in various subfields of education, with new funding opportunities available to support these efforts. We want to be proactive in pursuing grant opportunities in this area, as well as in initiating internally-funded pilot projects to make us more competitive in securing the increasingly available external funding around GenAI.

3. **Provide professional learning opportunities for educators to learn more about GenAI.** While nobody can claim to be an expert in this emerging and rapidly changing field, educators have to make decisions NOW about the use of GenAI in schools and universities. Therefore, there is also a need for opportunities for learning and dialogue to inform those decisions – and Warner will be well-positioned to offer those opportunities as a result of work done within the previous components.

Given that this was an initiative involving the whole school, though, it was clear that the LiDA Center could not undertake it alone, but rather it would need to secure faculty support as well as approval from the dean. Therefore, the LiDA Center's director first presented and discussed the proposed goals and components with the dean in Fall 2023. The dean was supportive of the idea and charged the LiDA Center to develop a more detailed plan to be presented to the faculty. In addition, the dean appointed a new task force to oversee the implementation of the initiative. The AI Task Force included the LiDA Director (who had been the "champion" for the Online Startup as the former dean at the time) as chair, the LiDA Associate Director and Associate Vice-President for Online Learning for the entire university (who also played a key role in the Online Startup), the chair of the Faculty Steering Committee (in charge of setting the agenda and facilitating monthly faculty meetings), the Warner IT Director, and the dean's administrative assistant.

Planning and Gathering the Resources to Launch the Initiative

An initial list of possible interventions to begin to operationalize each of the three components of the AI Initiative was developed by the LiDA Center, informed by lessons learned from the Online Startup. This initial list included the following key initiatives:

1. Developing internal capacity:

    a. Continue to invest in the dedicated post-doc position to keep up with the rapid developments in GenAI applications to education.

    b. Dedicate some time at each faculty meeting to discuss AI-related issues.

    c. Provide multiple and differentiated professional learning opportunities about AI for interested faculty.

    d. Provide one-on-one support to Warner instructors interested in experimenting with GenAI applications in their courses by trained RAs.

    e. Start a Warner GenAI policies & practices committee to examine potential issues and offer recommendations about using GenAI in courses.

2. Engaging in exploratory research:

    a. Submit grant proposals related to GenAI applications to education.

    b. Participate in university-wide research projects and initiatives around AI.

3. Providing professional learning opportunities for other educators around GenAI:

    a. Design and offer new courses about applications and implications of GenAI within specific Warner programs and/or as an elective open to students from multiple programs.

    b. Organize workshops/events for educators in the community.

    c. Host a conference on GenAI implications for education.

As this initial list was shared and discussed with the AI Task Force, it was decided to postpone presenting it at a faculty meeting until we could engage faculty in small group conversations at the December 2023 faculty meeting about their "hopes and fears about AI", related professional learning needs, and possible initiatives. At this faculty meeting, each small group was facilitated by a LiDA-affiliated faculty or staff member, who took field notes in Google Docs and made them accessible to the entire faculty for review and additions.

Among the key needs that emerged from the small group conversations were:

- Learning more about specific GenAI tools.
- Understanding how GenAI tools could help or hinder students' academic writing.
- Discussing implications for Warner course assignments and assessments.
- Developing awareness of ethical issues around the use of GenAI.

- Knowing more about Warner students' uses of GenAI.
- Developing Warner-wide guidelines for uses of GenAI by students.
- Understanding implications of GenAI for K-12 schools.
- Benchmarking with initiatives taking place in the rest of the University and other universities.

The AI Task Force chair then created a handout that identified these key needs/desires and matched each with specific proposed initiatives that could help address that need. The handout was shared with the faculty along with a revised draft proposal for the key initiatives (based on the list reported at the beginning of this section), in advance of the January 2024 faculty meeting, where the proposal was discussed and received overall support from the faculty. As a follow-up, a final version of the proposal, which reflected the input received during the faculty meeting discussion, was created by the AI Task Force chair and sent to all faculty.

It is worth noting that no special funds were allotted to this initiative at the time. However, the initiative benefited from donations that had been previously secured for the post-doc position (which became even more critical to support many of the proposed initiatives), as well as a few new ones, and from a few existing grants related to AI educational applications. Most importantly, though, most of the proposed activities called for time volunteered by faculty – and the LiDA team in particular. The appointment of the AI Task Force by the dean was also significant as a visible signal that the initiative had the support of the school leadership.

Implementing and Monitoring the Initiative

The AI Initiative was officially launched after the January 2024 faculty meeting. This launch involved implementing most of the specific activities that had been listed in the proposal, as well as a few new ones that were developed in response to new opportunities. In this section, we report on just the most impactful activities that took place during the Spring 2024 semester.

First of all, multiple opportunities for faculty professional development were offered, taking into consideration individual faculty's different backgrounds, levels of interest, and preferences in terms of modality. The GenAI post-doc played a key role in organizing and presenting at these events, which included:

- A "basic" in-person workshop for faculty, introducing fundamentals of GenAI and its potentials and risks for education.
- Virtual presentations as part of the existing colloquium series.
- A "GenAI Study Group," facilitated by the Gen AI post-doc, where, in monthly one-hour virtual meetings, she shared new developments in GenAI applications in education with any faculty and doctoral students interested in becoming "pioneers."

The initial proposal of establishing a Warner AI policy committee was abandoned when we learned that our university was establishing university-wide committees to examine

implications and make recommendations about AI uses in research and instruction, respectively, and the AI Task Force chair had been invited to serve on both committees. Instead, the AI Task Force chair was asked to report back at faculty meetings on the progress made by these university-wide committees to inform Warner's decisions.

In March 2024, the GenAI post-doc and three doctoral students, supported by the LiDA team, designed and conducted an anonymous survey of Warner students to better understand their perceptions and needs about AI. This was one of the "needs" expressed by several faculty in the December 2023 conversations. The 113 responses received were analyzed by the post-doc and doctoral students, with only aggregated results being shared with faculty, as well as the LiDA team, to ensure full anonymity to the students who responded. Among the respondents, 92 reported already using AI for coursework, dissertation/thesis, and/or personal research projects. While a combination of benefits and risks was identified by almost every respondent, overall feelings about AI varied considerably, from a handful of students at one extreme who were very negative about any use of AI at Warner and a similar number of students at the other extreme who were strong advocates and begged the administration not to ban AI. Many students asked for more opportunities to learn how to use AI in effective and ethical ways.

In response, a few pilot initiatives to better prepare Warner students were initiated. One involved offering a new credit-bearing doctoral-level seminar on the implications of GenAI for language learning and instruction, designed and facilitated by a new faculty member with interests and expertise in this area, this course turned out to be instrumental for preparing about a dozen of doctoral students, who later served on AI-related grants and/or incorporated what they learned in their own dissertation—thus contributing to building Warner's internal capacity around AI and education. A 90-minute online session on GenAI implications for education was also designed and offered to prospective Warner students. We strengthened efforts (which had already started prior to the launch of the AI Initiative) to develop dual expertise in AI technologies and education for interested Warner doctoral students, as interested students were encouraged to pursue an Advanced Certificate in Data Science alongside their doctoral degree (four students took on this opportunity) and/or to participate in an NSF-funded training program around AR/VR (completed by six students to date).

While these learning opportunities about AI for Warner students already served the community (given that many of our students were practicing educators), additional professional learning offerings open to any educator in the community included monthly sessions of the LiDA Colloquium Series dedicated to addressing specific aspects of AI applications, and presentations at local events for K-12 educators. The latter included a half-day in-person retreat organized by the LiDA Center for representatives of the K-12 Digital Consortium (a collaboration of more than 25 school districts in the region), which involved more than 60 K-12 leaders.

All of the previous initiatives were informed by concurrent research around AI and education undertaken by groups of Warner faculty. This included:

- A project where a few Warner faculty explored a selection of AI tools (such as Synthesia and Microsoft Co-Pilot) as part of a university-wide mini-grant (University of Rochester Educational IT, 2025).

- An interview study to gather information about student affairs professionals' uses and perceptions of AI, conducted by a group of faculty and doctoral students (Barrett, 2022, Barrett et al., 2024, Barrett & Plate, 2024, Cui & Barrett, 2025, Plate & Barrett, 2024).

- An NSF RAPID grant awarded to a group of Warner faculty to study K-12 leaders' perceptions and experiences about AI, which produced an open-access online resource to support their future decisions about AI uses in K-12 schools (Borasi & Han, 2024), as well as several publications (Borasi et al., 2024, 2025, Mason et al., 2024, Miller et al., 2025, Vaughan-Brogan et al., 2024).

In addition, the AI Task Force chair also participated in the leadership team for a few interdisciplinary proposals involving multiple units within the university–a $20M proposal for an NSF-funded AI Institute and an internal planning grant to prepare a proposal for an AI Horizons "transdisciplinary research institute." Even though neither of these major projects ended up being funded, participating in these interdisciplinary grant proposals created unique opportunities to network and develop collaborations across the university, which later led to interdisciplinary grant proposals of great interest and value.

The most impactful events, however, took place during the 30-minute sessions dedicated to AI within each faculty meeting—as these sessions involved almost all faculty members, not just those who were already interested in the topic. Each of these meetings provided an opportunity to provide updates on the AI Initiative, introduce specific AI tools or applications, and, most importantly, have small group conversations on specific implications of AI for the school, facilitated by a member of the AI Task Force and/or LiDA, who took notes and shared them in documents made available to anyone on the faculty.

A few key strategies were employed by the AI Task Force in designing these critical sessions within faculty meetings. First, informed by the principles for instructional technology innovations identified earlier, faculty were asked to address specific issues that were emerging about AI (e.g., could students use AI when writing a paper assigned in a course?) by asking more general questions that did not involve the technology (e.g., what support could students use when writing a paper assigned in a course?). Second, we tried to separate applications of AI to support instructional design from uses of AI in teaching, as the CHLOE 9 Report (Simunich et al., 2024) suggested differences in faculty sentiments about these two applications. Third, rather than presenting faculty with new AI tools they would have to learn, they were made aware of AI features in tools they were already using - like the AI Design Assistant within Blackboard Ultra and the AI-enabled Generate Prompt option in Harmonize. Fourth, in one of these meetings, the chairs of each program area were asked in advance to report on discussions about AI taking place in previous program-level meetings, as a way to ensure that faculty in each program would grapple with implications of AI specific to their programs and research interests.

As a follow-up to the last faculty meeting, the AI Task Force chair shared with all faculty a summary document with links to more details and key information based on AI faculty questions. Faculty were then asked to review this document in preparation for the May 2024 faculty meeting, where the proposal was to be discussed and approved.

Proposal for Discussion at the May Faculty Meeting About Possible Uses of AI by Warner Students

1. (Starting Fall 2024) We will articulate in writing the acceptable uses of AI, and how they should be disclosed, in:

- Each course (in the syllabus, to be decided by each instructor)
- Each program milestones – such as comp exams and portfolios (as part of their written directions, to be decided by the program faculty)
- Thesis/dissertation (Any proposed uses will need to be included in the proposal and be approved in advance by the dissertation/thesis committee)

2. (By summer 2024) We will create a document to ensure some consistency in how these decisions are reported + online resources for instructors to help inform these decisions
3. We will seek conversations with individual students about their uses of AI before making any accusation of academic dishonesty.
4. We commit to continue to learn about possible uses of AI and to share our insights and experiences

Change in Leadership and Its Implications

The planned discussion of the above proposal at the May faculty meeting, however, did not take place, as shortly before the meeting, an unexpected announcement was made that the current dean was leaving and that an external interim dean would start in July 2024. The AI Task Force felt that it was critical to secure the interim dean's support for the Warner AI Initiative before moving forward with any major initiative–especially when involving potential academic policies, curricular changes, or possible new courses/programs in AI for educators. Appreciating that the interim dean would need some time to better understand the school's priorities, the AI Task Force also decided to postpone conversations about the AI Initiative with the interim dean until the Fall.

In the meantime, however, work continued within the LiDA Center and small groups of faculty to explore GenAI tools and their potential applications, pilot some uses of GenAI in course activities, and pursue grant opportunities. The GenAI post-doc continued her exploration of educational applications to GenAI, as well as reporting in the GenAI Study Group meetings. The LiDA Colloquium Series continued to be devoted to topics related to AI. A few faculty began to include learning activities that made use of GenAI tools in their courses - as for example readings and discussions about AI's implications for higher education were added in the "Contemporary Issues in Higher Education" course, GenAI was used to create "interactive cases" in a course preparing school leaders, doctoral students in the introductory research methods course explored how AI could be used as a "thinking partner" when developing research ideas, and students in a teaching methods course for TESOL and world languages explored how they could use a variety of AI tools to support their students second language

development. Some program areas also set aside time and program-level meetings to continue the conversation about AI implications and share uses of GenAI in courses.

The award of an internal planning grant from the Provost's Office to prepare a proposal for an "AI Horizons Transdisciplinary Research Institute" also provided some unique opportunities, as a total of 19 Warner faculty, staff, and students were involved in this initiative. The Transdisciplinary Learning Series, organized as part of the planning grant, provided invaluable learning opportunities for all those involved. The white paper produced by the working group that focused on AI and Education was also instrumental in identifying valuable research ideas within this area. The AI Horizons website (Center for Learning in the Digital Age, 2025), which was created as a result, and includes links to the white paper as well as recordings of the Transdisciplinary Learning Series, represents a valuable resource for anyone interested in pursuing research in this area.

Another impactful event that took place in Fall 2024 was a faculty search that resulted in the hiring of the GenAI post-doc in a clinical faculty position, starting in July 2025 after the end of her current post-doc appointment. This new position was made possible through a combination of new donations and repurposing of LiDA Center's existing funds and provided a critical resource to continue some of the initiatives started in the previous years, as well as launch new ones.

Another important development during this period of time was the conclusion of the work of the university-wide committees discussing AI policies. Each of those committees produced guidelines for uses of AI in research (University of Rochester, n.d. a), instruction (University of Rochester, n.d. b), clinical practice, and communications, respectively, that were adopted by the university and made publicly accessible on the University webpage – along with a commitment of on-going review and updating.

Spring 2025 "Revival"

With the support of the interim dean, Spring 2025 saw a renewed attention to AI implications at the school level, focusing on two main goals: (1) supporting the implementation of the university-wide guidelines about uses of AI in instruction, and (2) preparing a proposal for a new Advanced Certificate in AI for Educators and Helping Professionals. Later in the semester, a rethinking of the support provided to Warner students for their academic writing in the age of AI was also initiated. Although efforts towards faculty professional learning and grant writing, as well as the post-doc explorations of new GenAI applications to education, also continued during this time period, in what follows, we chose to report only on each of these three key initiatives.

Developing and Communicating Expectations for Student Uses of AI in Courses

The university-wide guidelines for AI use in education (University of Rochester, n.d. b), as first published at the end of Fall 2024, required each instructor to make explicit to students what uses of AI may be allowed in each of their courses, as well as to take responsibility for promoting their students' AI literacy.

Develop Clear Course GenAI Policies

Instructors should create and communicate student GenAI course policies. The GenAI course policy should state when students must, may, or cannot use GenAI throughout the course

as a whole and, if applicable, any deviations from the overall GenAI course policy for specific course activities. The course policy should be communicated to students in writing and, for courses with a synchronous element, in class. When students are permitted to use GenAI, instructors should communicate in their course and assignment policy how students should document their use, verify the GenAI output, and attribute their GenAI use.

Foster GenAI Literacy and Ethical Use

In all teaching and learning contexts, instructors should not assume GenAI literacy but should provide GenAI literacy instruction to students and course staff such as peer educators and lab managers. Such instruction should include modeling responsible, discipline-specific use and discussing the strengths and limitations of GenAI, paying particular attention to inaccuracies, bias, and ethics. Instructors and students should recognize that GenAI outputs carry inherent biases due to the data used to train them and should take steps to avoid incorporating these biases into their work.

The need to follow these university-wide guidelines spurred new interest and urgency among the Warner faculty to get training and support for making and communicating decisions about the use of AI in their courses. Once again, some time was devoted at a faculty meeting for small group sharing and brainstorming around the topic of students' possible uses of AI in coursework and dissertations, with notes taken by a LiDA-affiliated faculty or staff member in each group, and then publicly shared. As a follow-up to these conversations, and in response to a specific request from several faculty members to get more guidance and support, the LiDA Center produced the following suggested language to include in course syllabi, which was first vetted with the AI Task Force and then presented to the faculty at the April 2025 faculty meeting. It would include a common statement and the identification of the approach to how AI can be used in the course, based on one of three options.

Common Statement

Consistent with UR guidelines for the use of AI in education, at Warner, we recognize that AI could provide valuable tools for our students, as long as it is used in ways that assist/ enhance rather than replace learning. We also believe it is our responsibility to prepare future educators who can use AI effectively, safely, and ethically in their work, and who can promote such use of AI for the students they serve. This needs to start with ensuring that AI is used in appropriate ways by Warner students in all our courses, while also recognizing that what constitutes appropriate use will depend on the specific tasks students are asked to perform. Therefore, each course instructor is expected to determine when and how AI can be used in their course, and to make this expectation explicit to students.

> OPTION 1: In this course, given its scope and learning goals, we chose to ask students to **refrain from using any AI tools unless explicitly allowed by the instructor for specific tasks**.
>
> OPTION 2: In this course, given its scope and learning goals, students are **welcome to use AI tools to support their learning and completion of course assignments UNLESS specifically prohibited by the instructor for a specific task**. We expect students to use their judgment to ensure that their chosen use of AI supports rather than

replace/reduce their learning, and also ask that students disclose their use of AI in specific assignments, briefly describing how AI was used.

OPTION 3: **The use of AI in this course will depend on the specific nature and goals of each assignment**. Therefore, pay attention to the directions provided by the instructor for each assignment about whether and how AI can be used, and how that use may need to be disclosed and documented.

In addition, the LiDA Center also suggested a set of questions for instructors to consider when deciding which uses of AI to allow or even promote for specific assignments.

1. What are the learning goals for this assignment?
2. What are some ways we can imagine students could use AI to complete this assignment?
3. How would specific uses of AI affect the achievement of the learning goals for this assignment–and thus which of these uses would you want to encourage/discourage and why?
4. What directions would you like to give students about the possible use of AI in this specific assignment, and how?

A few written examples about how these questions had been used to make decisions about specific assignments were also provided. A customized chatbot was also created by a LiDA faculty to enable instructors to input their directions for a specific assignment, along with its goals and any additional considerations, and then interact with the chatbot to brainstorm and evaluate possible options in terms of possible uses of AI in that assignment, to eventually produce a text that could be used to communicate the decided-upon expectations to students. We thought that this customized chatbot might not only make this specific task less intimidating, but also provide some faculty with an authentic "experience as AI user"—which has been suggested by several K-12 leaders in the NSF RAPID project as one of the most powerful ways to enable educators to personally appreciate the potential, as well as risks and limitations, of GenAI (Miller et al., 2025).

The conversations around possible student uses of AI in their own courses were instrumental in renewing faculty interest to learn more about AI and its implications, as well as in questioning whether our current programs were still adequate to prepare students for their future jobs.

Launching a New Advanced Certificate and Its Curricular Implications

At the same time, mindful of how launching the Advanced Certificate in Online Teaching had been instrumental to developing internal capacity in the previous Online Startup initiative, it also seemed important to evaluate whether a similar program focusing on AI would be beneficial, and what it would take to develop one.

It was clear from the beginning that, in order to be successful, the launch of a new certificate, as well as a critical evaluation of our current programs preparing education practitioners and researchers in various fields, would need considerable faculty input and buy-in. Therefore, a key step was to organize a 1.5-hour faculty forum dedicated to these topics, which took place in March 2025. The agenda for this event was strategically designed to include a few inspirational presentations from key faculty in each program area who had made creative uses of AI in their courses, as well as facilitated group discussions by program area.

Faculty Forum's Plan*:*

- Framing & agenda overview
- Inspirational examples – brief sharing of specific examples of AI activity/ module already implemented in one of our regular courses (with speakers identified in advance)
- Facilitated small group discussions by program about: What students in that program should know about AI and its potential uses? Which of these goals could be achieved within existing courses? Which goals may require some "schoolwide" learning opportunities?
- Reporting back to the whole group
- Introduction to some initial ideas about an Advanced Certificate in AI for Education
- Small groups by program area to discuss these initial ideas as well as provide additional input about a possible Advanced Certificate
- Reporting back to the whole group

To identify a complementary set of examples of uses of AI in Warner courses to be presented at the faculty forum, interested faculty were first invited to participate in a preliminary 1-hour Zoom sharing session. A few faculty known to be exploring uses of AI with their students were individually solicited by the AI Task Force chair to come to this event and share their experiences. Concurrently, the AI Task Force chair secured the commitment of all program chairs to facilitate the small group discussion with faculty in their program that would be taking place as part of this Faculty Forum.

The faculty forum, which was held virtually on Zoom, was attended by about half of the Warner faculty, including all the program chairs. It generated thought-provoking conversations within each program about the potential implications of AI for the specific professions that the programs prepared students for. It was also instrumental to support and further refine the goals and structure for an Advanced Certificate in AI for Educators and Helping Professionals, leading to a proposal that was discussed and approved with a faculty vote at the April 2025 faculty meeting.

Proposal to the Faculty for a New Advanced Certificate in AI for Education

We are proposing a **new Advanced Certificate in Artificial Intelligence for Educators and Helping Professionals,** designed to prepare professionals across the various sub-fields of education and human development to become critical users of AI and to take a leadership role in ensuring that AI is applied in appropriate as well as effective ways in their field. […]

In designing this new Advanced Certificate, we took into consideration the need to provide BOTH some common "foundations" that could be relevant to all Warner students, regardless of their specializations, AND opportunities to examine how AI may be applied in the context of one's profession/field. We kept the number of credit hours to a minimum to make it more appealing to Warner students interested in adding this credential to their current program as well as to potential new students. […]

The proposed new Advanced Certificate will involve a total of 10 credits to meet the following requirements:

1. One NEW required "foundational" course about AI & education (3 credits)

2. At least one courses relevant to their field of specialization that include significant components about AI and other electives related to AI (for a total of 6 credits)

3. A Capstone Experience, involving a project of the student's choice where AI is applied to one's field of specialization (1 credit)

The faculty vote was followed by a series of meetings involving the chair and selected groups of faculty in each program area, led by the AI Task Force chair, to gather information about possible AI electives within each program. As agreed, the AI electives would be existing courses to be redesigned to take into consideration the implications of AI for the topics covered in that course. These meetings were instrumental not only to identify a first set of AI electives to include in the new program application to the state, but even more importantly, to begin a deeper curriculum revision process within each program area.

The proposal for the Advanced Certificate in Artificial Education for Educators was submitted in summer 2025 to the New York State Education Department, approved in late Fall 2025, and launched in Spring 2026. The new required AI foundational course was designed and offered in Spring 2026 by the AI Task Force chair and the former post-doc, and 16 Warner students across multiple programs enrolled in this first offering.

Rethinking Support for Academic Writing

From the very beginning, Warner students' use of AI in academic writing emerged as one of the most challenging and controversial topics. It was exciting when the Director of the Warner School's Writing Support Services (WWS)—the entity supporting student academic writing at Warner through a combination of workshops and individual consulting sessions—reached out to the LiDA Center to collaboratively rethink how to best support academic writing in the age of AI.

Key players within LiDA and WSS gathered during the summer of 2025 to plan how the WWS workshop series may be revised in light of possible AI uses, informed by the reading of seminal works on AI and academic writing. They decided to create a new workshop to develop a general mindset about how to use AI to support academic writing in effective and ethical ways, as well as to redesign each of the existing WWS workshops to include considerations about appropriate uses of AI tools specific to the workshop topic. The redesigned WWS workshop series was offered over the following academic year.

Planning for Sustainability

As we are still at the initial stages of the AI Initiative and a dean search was taking place during the 2025-26 academic year, formal plans for sustainability have not been developed yet. However, the initial investments made towards developing the faculty's own AI literacy and hiring a clinical faculty with special responsibilities towards that goal, along with university-wide expectations and guidelines regarding the use of AI in instruction, are important foundations to ensure the continuation of this initiative.

As an important step towards sustainability planning, though, a survey of the faculty was conducted in summer 2025 to gather information about faculty perspectives on school activities and plans for AI, their experience with using AI in their teaching and research, and feedback about what they liked most and what could be improved regarding the Warner School's AI Initiative. While this effort was undertaken as a quality improvement initiative, not a formal research study, it did yield interesting data, with 64% of Warner faculty members responding. There was very strong agreement from faculty on the following, which suggests support for the AI Initiative's plan. (Note - Strongly Agree and Agree responses are combined for ease of reporting and discussion.)

- (96%) It was important for the school to develop a strategy and plan related to AI.
- (96%) It is important for Warner to develop internal capacity for AI applications for education
- (96%) It is important for the school to provide professional development and support to faculty.
- (100%) It is important for our students to develop skills and experiences with AI as future educators.
- (86%) It is important for faculty to consider adjusting the curriculum and their courses, given the impact of AI in their field.
- (82%) The sharing of syllabus statements regarding AI was helpful and resulted in a change to the syllabus for my course.

There were more balanced responses with respect to concerns regarding applications of AI for Teaching and AI for Research.

- (18% agreement vs 52% disagreement) I have concerns about using AI tools in my teaching.
- (25% agreement vs 43% disagreement) I have concerns about using AI tools in my research.

Faculty also reported on their preferences for the types of support they needed to integrate AI into their work. The top responses were "examples of how to use AI to support research efforts," "training workshops," "acquisition and implementation of technologies and tools," and "examples of lesson plans, assignments, or interactive activities." In a nutshell, the faculty responses to the open-ended questions were quite positive about the school's initiative, and they appreciated the inclusive process.

Discussion

There are a few lessons to be learned from the story of the AI Initiative at the Warner School that may be of value for other schools of education grappling with the implications of AI for their organization—and possibly also for dealing with other future disruptive innovations.

The Importance of Considering and Managing "Missing the Boat" as Well as "Sinking The Boat" Risks

As it had been the case for the Online Startup a decade earlier, pursuing the ambitious goal of "Warner becoming the place to go for AI in education" involved a sizable risk of failing, considering the many uncertainties around the emerging field of GenAI, the small size of the Warner School, and the lack of experts in this area within the faculty at the time. However, the risk of "missing the boat" by ignoring AI's implications for the field of education (because of not preparing our students well for the future and soon finding ourselves behind other schools that did make that investment) weighed more in the final decision of launching the AI Initiative than any "sinking the boat" risks we could identify. In making this decision, it helped to consider that an investment in AI was needed and would pay dividends in the future anyway, even if the goal of "becoming the place to go for AI in education" was not achieved. At the same time, awareness of possible "sinking the boat" risks led to strategic decisions to manage those risks such as hiring first a post-doc and then a clinical faculty member instead of establishing and searching for a new tenure-track position at first, as well as leveraging university-wide initiatives regarding AI.

The Challenges of Making Decisions and Setting Policies in a Time of Uncertainty

While online technologies for teaching and learning had been well established at the time the Warner School launched its Online Startup, the AI Initiative presented additional challenges because GenAI was so new, and technology advances were happening at such a rapid pace, that there were no established models to refer to, and even more importantly it was difficult to predict what AI tools may be available and what could be their affordances and limitations – and, thus, what could be the right decisions regarding what AI uses should be allowed by students and faculty. At the same time, it was clear that waiting to make any decision about such uses was not an option, as AI tools were already easily accessible to students as well as faculty. Therefore, it was important for the Warner School leadership to accept the necessity to make decisions about AI uses with incomplete information, which could potentially turn out to be wrong, and to

communicate the expectation that decisions about AI would need to be "temporary" and subject to change to all stakeholders. Equally important was the recognition that any of these decisions would need to be monitored and adjusted on an ongoing basis, and that the AI Task Force would be charged with doing so.

The Value of Addressing the Challenges Presented by New Technologies by Asking How Similar Situations Would Be Addressed Without Technology

In making several of the needed decisions around acceptable uses of AI, it helped to explicitly use the approach of asking more general questions about how the issue under consideration would be approached in the absence of the new technology. For example, turning the question of "is it acceptable for faculty to use AI as they develop content and activities for their courses?" to "what kind of help/support is acceptable for faculty to get as they develop contents and activities for their courses?" led to very fruitful conversations at a faculty meeting about how it is common and even encouraged for a faculty member to ask a colleague for advice about course design, although it would be considered unprofessional to ask a friend or teaching assistant to design a full course. This approach had some additional benefits, as it led faculty to share practices and assumptions about aspects of their practices that had not been discussed before, and in some cases, revealed conflicting beliefs as well as existing issues we had not even been aware of before.

Critical Roles Are Played by the "Champion" as Well as Other Key Decision-Makers

The story of the AI Initiative provides new insights about the role of the "champion" of an innovation as well as other key players—since in this case the champion was not in a position to make and implement many key decisions about the initiative (unlike what happened in the case of the Online Startup, where the "champion" was also the dean of the school, with a lot of autonomy about decisions about priorities and resources given the very decentralized nature of the institution). While the "champion" continued to play a very important role in moving the AI Initiative forward and designing opportunities for other players to engage in informed decision-making, policy decisions about how AI could be used in instruction were ultimately the dean's (as long as they would be consistent with university-wide policies), and curriculum decisions about what students in specific programs should learn about AI, and how, were to be made by faculty in those programs. How meeting time should be used in school-wide and program-level faculty meetings was also decided by the Faculty Steering Committee and each program chair, respectively, so securing the support and involvement of these key players was needed. The commitment of the dean was especially critical, as made even more evident in this case by the "pause" caused by changes in leadership, even though both deans supported the initiative. It is also worth noting the important roles played by the LiDA Center (given its mission) and the AI Task Force appointed by the dean (which included members in critical positions to move the initiative forward, such as the LiDA director, the chair of the Faculty Steering Committee, the Associate Vice-President for online learning for the entire university, and the school IT director). In other words, we could observe much more of a "distributed leadership" model in the AI Initiative than had been the case in the Online Startup, which in turn made faculty buy-in of even greater importance.

Connections Between Gaining Faculty and Students' Buy-In and Developing AI Literacy

In the case of the AI Initiative, securing faculty and students' buy-in was not only critical (as it would be when introducing any instructional innovation), but also went hand-in-hand with the need to develop AI literacy *across the school* to allow for individuals' informed decisions as well as meaningful input for school-wide decisions. As previously described as part of the "story" of the AI Initiative, "developing internal capacity around AI" was identified early on as a key goal, on which the successful implementation of all the other components of the initiative would depend. A purposeful effort was made to provide multiple opportunities for professional development that would be appropriate for faculty at different stages of Roger's classic diffusion of innovation theory (e.g., Halton, 2023), from early adopters (through the GenAI Study Group meetings), to faculty who were interested but very new to the topic (through various *optional* presentations and workshops, as well as faculty forums), to faculty who were hesitant and even fearful of AI (and could only be reached at required faculty and program meetings). Across all these professional learning opportunities, the main goal was to make faculty aware of the affordances, limitations, and risks of AI for education, so they could develop informed attitudes that were both open and critical about this new technology. Multiple opportunities for faculty to express their hopes and fears about AI, as well as discuss implications of AI for their practices and their students, were also offered before presenting specific proposals, so as to ensure that those proposals would be informed by what the faculty had shared. Student buy-in was also considered very important, especially after hearing our students' conflicting opinions about AI from their responses to the 2024 survey, yet, looking back, this is a constituency that did not get as much attention as needed in the AI Initiative so far.

Developing Internal Capacity in an Emerging Area Requires Creative Solutions

Both the Online Startup and the AI Initiative have in common the decision to become excellent in an area where the current faculty did not have much expertise at the time – an example of "not being deterred by the lack of resources in hand," while putting in place strategies to deal with this limitation. The situation was different in these two cases, though, as while in 2013 online teaching and learning was a well-established field (so we were able to hire some external "experts" to lead the initiative and support the rest of the faculty), the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, and the rapid advances in GenAI technologies and their applications to education since, meant that there were not many experts anywhere, and everyone had to develop the needed expertise at about the same time. As hiring an expert in AI was not an option, a key decision was to invest in a post-doc position to "keep up with AI advancements" and report back to the faculty interested in being pioneers/ early adopters, as well as play a key role in providing professional learning opportunities to the rest of the faculty. This (relatively minor) investment proved to be instrumental to the success of the AI Initiative. In both the Online Startup and the AI Initiative, the Warner School also made a strategic investment in developing some of our doctoral students' capacity to be "dual experts"–in new technology AND their field of specialization. We expected that doing so would not only benefit the field but also develop valuable resources to assist our faculty in both teaching and research applications of AI.

Value of Launching an Advanced Certificate as a Catalyst

In the case of the Online Startup, a key motivation behind launching an Advanced Certificate in Online Teaching was to quickly develop a cadre of high-quality online instructors for our own online courses, in addition to attracting students interested in this specialization to all other Warner programs. In the case of the AI initiative, we did not have the same need to develop

AI experts to perform direct services in the short term, but the second motivation held. What we did not fully appreciate until we started to discuss possible AI electives with program chairs and faculty, though, was that developing these AI electives could provide a very valuable catalyst for concrete discussions and actions around broader curricular changes in each of our key programs preparing education professionals in specific fields. In a sense, this mechanism served a role in providing non-threatening ways for faculty to consider adopting the new innovation, similar to the decision in the Online Startup to not impose teaching online to any faculty but rather start with just offering online sections for electives and courses with multiple sections.

Synergy Between Research and Instructional Decisions/Interventions

Finally, we would like to highlight the synergy that resulted from having LiDA staff and other faculty involved in exploratory research around AI applications to education, as well as considering instructional innovations related to AI. Engaging in this research served as a unique form of professional development for these faculty, which in turn impacted their contributions to school-wide discussions about curricular and instructional implications. For example, what the team involved in the NSF RAPID project learned about perceptions and uses of AI in K-12 schools provided many valuable insights about the potential and challenges of AI for K-12 education, which in turn informed the evaluation of what the K-12 teachers and administrators prepared at Warner should know, be able to do, and come to appreciate about AI (and how this could be best achieved in specific programs). Several of these insights could also be generalized to our own higher education setting, and were complemented by findings from the student affairs professionals' interview study that another group of faculty members engaged in. Participation in the AI Horizons planning grant also gave the many faculty who participated a better understanding of how GenAI works, its current limitations and issues, and the ethical and societal questions around its use.

Conclusions

The case of the Warner AI Initiative, as reported in detail in this article, shows that responding to the recent developments of AI will require schools of education to do much more than make decisions about whether or not to allow students to use AI in their schoolwork. Rather, it calls for questioning what appropriate uses of AI are for students *within specific courses and assignments*, as well as how faculty can be prepared to effectively and responsibly use these new technologies, along with the potential impact of doing so on current teaching and research practices, as well as professional identities.

This is not dissimilar to what happened with online technologies, so there are lessons that we can learn from the recent past. However, there are also some elements that are unique to AI, which will need to be taken into consideration. First, unlike most other instructional technologies in the past (including online technologies), in the case of AI, instructors do not really have control over whether or not *their students* may use it, given that AI tools are now easily accessible to everyone. As AI is affecting the workplace in almost all professions (including those within the field of education), schools of education are also called to re-examine how we prepare those professionals, which will involve not only pedagogical changes, but also curriculum changes—and we know that the latter tend to create greater challenges and resistance. Finally, the unprecedented rapid pace of development in AI technologies requires a different approach to decisions and policies.

From the study of the Warner AI Initiative, we have identified a few key conditions for success that we want to share with other schools of education—and possibly programs in other fields as well—to inform their respective plans for dealing with the implications of AI for their programs and organizations:

- The AI initiative should be explicitly identified as a priority for the school by the dean, whether or not the dean will act as the "champion" of the initiative.

- It is helpful to create an AI Task Force chaired by the "champion," and give the chair sufficient autonomy and authority to implement the initiative, with clear backing from the dean.

- It is critical to engage ALL faculty in providing input to key decisions, to be informed by professional learning opportunities about AI that target faculty with different levels of interest and involvement, this should include providing some time at faculty meetings for professional learning and discussions, to ensure that even the most resistant faculty members are involved and informed.

- The investment in a post-doc or clinical faculty position, with significant time to be devoted to "keeping up" with advances in AI applications to the field and reporting back selected information to the rest of the faculty, will pay high dividends.

- Surveying students & faculty is valuable to get a pulse on the situation, and will need to be repeated over time, given the rapid changes.

- There can be great synergy between engaging in research to explore AI implications for education and leveraging AI for instructional innovations.

Finally, we encourage that all these suggestions be framed in an open and inclusive process. When we welcome faculty input and the corresponding variety of opinions and perspectives, we believe we will ultimately end up in a better place with these types of innovative initiatives.

Declarations

Institutional Review Board Statement This project was undertaken as a QI initiative, and, as per the University of Rochester's Guidelines for Determining Human Subject Research, it did not meet the definition of research under 45CFR46.

Conflicts of Interest The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

A**cknowledgments** The authors acknowledge and appreciate the encouragement of the current Dean of the Warner School for her enthusiasm and support of this article. We are also grateful to our faculty for their contributions to the Warner AI Initiative and for their input on this article.

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