

# 2026 Annual Report: Central Connecticut State University

## Presidential Taskforce on Artificial Intelligence

May, 2026

*Respectfully Submitted by Dr. Kimberly Kostelis, Provost and co-chair & Dr. George Claffey, Vice President of Technology & Strategic Initiatives and co-chair*

### Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Central's Future

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a defining technology of our time, reshaping industries, transforming societies, and altering the way we teach, learn, and solve problems. At Central Connecticut State University (Central), we are at a pivotal moment where integrating AI into our academic and operational frameworks will redefine our institution's future. **The university is working toward teaching all students to be AI literate and AI responsible.**

Since its formation in 2024, the Presidential Taskforce on Artificial Intelligence has worked tirelessly on a multi-faceted strategy aimed at establishing a budget for AI initiatives, designing and constructing an AI corridor, developing new majors and minors focused on artificial intelligence, and implementing comprehensive AI training for students, faculty, and staff. The AI Taskforce prioritizes the ethical use and assurance of data privacy in the use of AI across the institution.

By addressing this challenge head-on and fully leveraging interdisciplinary opportunities, Central can become a leader in harnessing AI to empower students, foster innovation, and benefit society at large. This holistic approach ensures that AI is used not just as a tool for technological advancement, but as a means to improve lives, solve complex problems, and create a more equitable future.

### A Vision for AI at Central

- **In the classroom:** Students across disciplines, from business to the arts, learn how AI can solve real-world problems in their fields. New courses and certifications prepare graduates to lead in an AI-driven workforce.
- **In research labs:** Faculty and students collaborate on groundbreaking projects that harness AI to address societal challenges, from public health to climate resilience.
- **On campus:** AI systems optimize operations, enhance cybersecurity, and provide personalized support for students, helping them navigate their academic journeys.
- **In the library:** Librarians work with students, faculty, and staff to equitably build critical AI literacy in research and learning while supporting the Central community as it navigates a rapidly-evolving information ecosystem.
- **In the community:** Central becomes a hub for AI education and innovation, offering workshops for local educators, partnering with industries, and inspiring the next generation of innovators.

This vision is ambitious but achievable. It will require strategic investments, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a commitment to ethical and responsible AI use.

## Taskforce Membership

The Taskforce is composed of representatives from across the university community, including faculty from each academic school, staff from key administrative units, and student representatives. Members were appointed by the President in consultation with Faculty Senate leadership and the Student Government Association.

Name	Title / Role	Affiliation
Dr. Kimberly Kostelis (co-chair)	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	Academic Affairs
Dr. George Claffey (co-chair)	Vice President of Technology & Strategic Initiatives	Technology & Strategic Initiatives
Stacy Votto, esq.	University Counsel & Vice President of Regulatory Affairs	Office of University Counsel and Regulatory Affairs
Yvonne Kirby	Associate Vice President for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness	Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
Dr. Kimberly Meyer	Associate Professor Criminology	Chair, Faculty Senate ITC
Sharon Clapp	Digital Resources Librarian	Vice-Chair, Faculty Senate ITC Elihu Burritt Library
Dr. Ned Moore	Faculty Director, Center for Teaching & Innovation	Academic Affairs
Dr. John Tully	Interim Associate VP for Academic Affairs & Graduate Studies	Academic Affairs
Thomas King	Director of Intelligent Infrastructure & Auxiliary Services	Technology & Strategic Initiatives
Dr. Michael Gendron	Professor, Management Information Systems	Department Chair, Management Information Systems
Tina Rivera	Associate Director, IT Strategic Initiatives and Projects; Interim Director, Client Support Services	Technology & Strategic Initiatives

## Artificial Intelligence: Strategic Opportunities and Challenges

Artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving from a set of “emerging tools” into a core capability with broad implications for operations, service delivery, innovation, and competitiveness. As AI matures, organizations and our students are presented with significant opportunities to improve productivity, expand capacity, and enhance their experience via an AI-enabled tool. At the same time, these developments introduce meaningful questions related to governance, accuracy, cost control, and institutional risk.

- One of the most important developments is the rise of agentic AI. Unlike traditional AI systems that simply respond to prompts, agentic AI systems can plan, reason, and execute multi-step tasks with limited human intervention. This has the potential to automate increasingly complex workflows and extend staff capacity in

meaningful ways. Strategically, however, such capabilities require clear guardrails regarding authority, oversight, accountability, and acceptable levels of autonomy.

- At the same time, AI-powered chatbots have become mainstream tools across education, government, healthcare, and the private sector. These systems are increasingly serving as front-line platforms for communication, support, and service delivery. Their value lies in scale, responsiveness, and convenience. Their growing visibility, however, also means that errors, bias, or poor user experiences can quickly become reputational concerns.
- A continuing challenge is the issue of hallucinations, in which AI systems produce information that is inaccurate, misleading, or entirely fabricated while presenting it with confidence. Despite significant industry investment in mitigation, this remains one of the most important barriers to fully trusted AI deployment. For institutions, this reinforces the need for strong human oversight, appropriate use-case selection, and disciplined validation practices.
- The broader AI tool ecosystem is also expanding rapidly. New platforms, frameworks, and turnkey products are reducing barriers to entry and accelerating adoption across sectors. This growth creates opportunity, but it also introduces complexity around vendor selection, integration, cybersecurity, governance, and long-term sustainability. The strategic challenge is not simply whether to adopt AI, but how to do so in a disciplined, mission-aligned way.
- Another major trend is the declining cost of AI development and deployment. Advances in hardware, efficiency, and market competition are making AI capabilities more affordable and accessible. In parallel, token-based pricing models are allowing organizations to align costs more directly to usage, offering greater financial flexibility and scalability. While these shifts support experimentation and broader adoption, they also require stronger cost monitoring and governance to avoid unexpected spending.
- Finally, the emergence of white-label, multi-agent AI platforms is creating a new class of enterprise solutions. These tools allow organizations to deploy AI under their own brand while orchestrating multiple specialized agents to support complex workflows. This presents strategic opportunities for customization, process improvement, and service enhancement, but also raises important questions regarding interoperability, vendor dependence, interpretability, data stewardship, and institutional control.

Taken together, these developments make clear that AI is no longer solely technical in nature. The opportunity is substantial, but success depends on adopting AI in ways that are intentional, mission-driven, financially responsible, and anchored in trust. **As AI raises increasingly complex questions about truth, ethics, creativity, communication, and human judgment, the teaching of the liberal arts and humanities becomes even more central to the mission of the university.**

## 2025-6 Recommendations for Action Post AY Review

### 1. Expand Academic Programs: (IN PROGRESS – MID STAGE)

Develop interdisciplinary courses and micro-credentialing programs to teach students how AI applies to diverse fields. Incorporate ethics and societal impacts into the curriculum to foster responsible AI use.

- Added an AI Concentration to the BS/BA in Computer Science, **COMPLETE**
- Developing a MS in AI, approved through curriculum and awaiting BOR approval, **COMPLETE**
- Develop interdisciplinary programs (program/courses) that combine AI with fields like healthcare, business, and social sciences. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
- Offer hands-on AI labs, internships, and project-based learning opportunities. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**

### 2. Foster Research and Collaboration: (IN PROGRESS – EARLY STAGE)

- Internally, the university has broadened Clusters of Excellence faculty grants to include AI **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Additionally, the task force recommends the university work with the grants office to secure external funding for AI research and encourage interdisciplinary projects that connect faculty and students across departments. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Build partnerships with local businesses and government agencies via Central's Office of Professional Education. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Partner with industry leaders, government agencies, and other academic institutions to collaborate on AI research and development. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Seek funding opportunities for AI research through grants, industry partnerships, and government initiatives. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
3. **Enhance Campus Operations with AI: (IN PROGRESS)**  
 Implement AI-driven systems for student assistance, similar to Ivy.ai. Pilot predictive analytics tools to optimize class scheduling and resource allocation.
- Offer hands-on AI labs, internships, and project-based learning opportunities. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Creation of library-sponsored webinar / presentation on use of citations in AI. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - Informed feedback sent to CSCU CIO on development of CSCU system wide policy on AI. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**
  - October AI Conference: Hosting a university-wide conference on October 4th focused on the latest developments and applications of artificial intelligence. **COMPLETE**
4. **Engage the Community: (IN PROGRESS)**  
 Offer workshops and seminars for K-12 educators, local businesses, and the broader public. Host hackathons and competitions to promote innovation and showcase Central's leadership in AI.
- Through the Office of Professional Education, Center for Teaching and Innovation (CTI) and Library offered professional development to Connecticut's town clerks on effective and ethical AI usage in March. **COMPLETE**
  - Use current Harvard Business Press materials (much cheaper than a traditional textbook) to teach MIS202 **IN PROCESS**
  - Negotiate with the company ToolJet to provide at zero cost, a low code/no code solution to teach AI Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) application building in MIS202. **COMPLETE / Deprecated**
  - Develop a community book club that meets monthly to integrate community members into our AI Corridor. **Deferred to CTI / Fac Senate Subcommittee / COMPLETE / Adding Scholars for Life in 2026/7**
5. **Address Ethical and Resource Challenges: (IN PROGRESS – EVOLVING)**  
 Develop guidelines for AI ethics that align with CSCU system policy to guide the university's initiatives. Invest in faculty and staff training to build internal expertise. Secure funding for necessary infrastructure upgrades, such as high-performance computing resources.
- The University ACUE course program selected and purchased 250 faculty/staff on ethics of AI, creating generative AI resistant practices, adopting AI in the classroom. **COMPLETE / OnGoing**

- A core course in the AI minor, the LSC160 “Information Exploration in the AI Era” is grounded in an ethical and human-centered AI perspective. Insight into potential AI risks and harms, while keeping the human in the AI loop. A librarian-created AI research guide and tutorial highlight a student approach to AI usage that is R.E.A.L. “Responsible Ethical Accountable, and Learning-Oriented.” Librarians support students’ proper citation of AI usage. **COMPLETE**

## Community Engagement and Campus Dialogue

The Taskforce organized two campus-wide events to foster open discussion about AI in higher education. In November 2025, a panel discussion titled “AI and the Future of Learning at CCSU” drew more than 150 attendees from across the university and featured presentations from faculty, students, and an invited external speaker. In February 2026, the Taskforce hosted a half-day symposium, “Navigating AI: Ethics, Equity, and Education,” which included breakout sessions on discipline-specific applications, concerns about equity and access, and the evolving landscape of AI regulation.



In addition members of the Taskforce Participated in statewide and regional workshops/conferences including speaking engagements at the Northeast Regional Computing Network (NERCOMP) 2026 Annual Conference and University of New Haven, Pompea College of Business Research Forum.

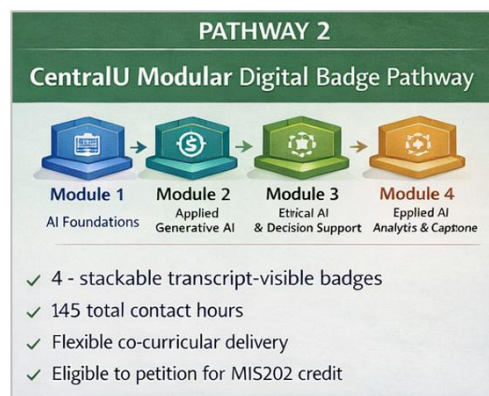


Shah, G., Claffey, G., Hess, L., & DeSilva, E. (2026, March). *Campus AI: Navigating the cloud and the clout* [Conference presentation]. NERCOMP Annual Conference, Providence, RI.

Gendron, M. (2026, March 27). *Successful AI integration: Building winning partnerships* [Conference presentation]. Research Forum AI Series, Pompea College of Business, University of New Haven, West Haven, CT.

**Management Information Systems 202** was redesigned in the School of Business to create transcript-visible digital credentials which equips all students with practical artificially intelligence capabilities. Leveraging CentralU digital badges, the four module sequence is aligned to 1EdTech’s Trusted Credential Framework (EdTech, n.d.). This plan modernized the curriculum to meet workforce demand for AI-literate graduates who can analyze data, design, prompts, and apply ethical reasoning to business decisions.

EdTech. (n.d.). *Trusted credentials: Connecting learning to opportunity*. Retrieved from <https://www.ledtech.org/program/trusted-credentials>



Additionally, Taskforce member George Claffey was appointed to the Board of the Connecticut AI Alliance, a statewide organization established to advance the adoption, coordination, and responsible diffusion of artificial intelligence across Connecticut's academic institutions and broader innovation ecosystem. This appointment reflects the university's leadership in AI strategy and growing role in shaping statewide conversations around the practical, ethical, and educational application of emerging technologies.

## Goals for Academic Year 2026-7

This includes all goals which are not yet complete and/or ongoing from AY 25-26 and additionally:

- Foster broader student engagement with artificial intelligence by facilitating structured learning opportunities, including specialty events, fireside chats, and other targeted programming designed to deepen AI literacy and awareness.
- Support the strategic onboarding and meaningful integration of students, as well as faculty across colleges/schools into the Presidential Taskforce, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and sustained participation.
- The Center for Teaching and Innovation (CTI) will organize and lead at least two faculty learning communities each term that address adapting pedagogy in light of the effects of AI on the workplace and our community.
- The CTI will assist in the creation and promotion of an asynchronous course in how to foster real learning using, or in spite of, AI.
- Work with the Office of Professional Education in the development of workforce certificate and discrete short-courses in AI.
- Work to integrate CentralU Digital badges when students demonstrate AI literacy and integrate into the Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR).
- Work in concert with Academic Affairs to determine scheduling, timing, and format of potential annual conference focusing on the nexus of Education, Artificial Intelligence (AI), workforce and policy.

## Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence offers Central an extraordinary opportunity to innovate across its mission areas. By embracing AI thoughtfully and strategically, we can empower our students, faculty, and staff to thrive in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, we can uphold our values of inclusivity and social responsibility, ensuring that our AI initiatives benefit not just our campus but also the broader community.

The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for Central to lead in the responsible adoption of AI, setting a standard for public higher education institutions. With commitment, collaboration, and strategic investment, we can make this vision a reality.

## Appendix: 2024-2025 AI Student Exemplars

### Travelers Quantum Up! Quantum Horizon

**Challenge:** CCSU Students Tyler Brown, Luis Sanchez Chiriboga, John Legge, Gjin Rexhaj and Jonathan Orlando participated in this challenge. It required the team to critically analyze cybersecurity related issues that can arise due to rapid advancements in quantum computing. Projections state that industry can expect the emergence of quantum computers capable of breaking current encryption algorithms by as early as 2029. It is imperative that organizations worldwide take this into account and begin the transition toward post-quantum cryptography (PQC) to avoid dangerous, cost-intensive attacks on critical cyber infrastructure.



**Management Information Systems AI 460:** The AI460 project is a PMBOK-style machine learning initiative designed to forecast course-level enrollments by major and semester using historical data and seasonal patterns. Its primary goal is to build an accurate, explainable model that helps universities optimize course caps, staffing, and scheduling decisions. The team developed both baseline statistical models and advanced ML approaches, validating performance through backtesting and error analysis to ensure reliability. The project emphasizes reproducibility, with deliverables including cleaned datasets, a full ML pipeline, a model card, and an APA-style report. Overall, it demonstrates how AI-driven forecasting can support data-informed decision-making in higher education.





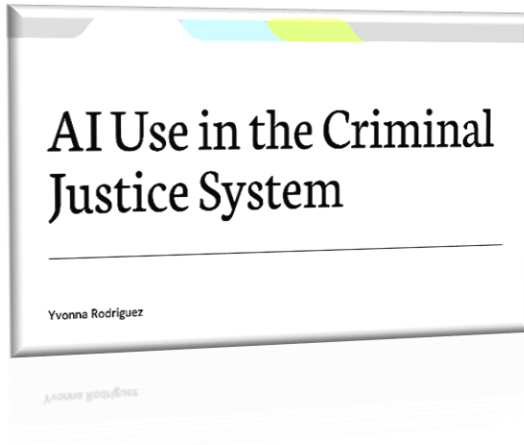
**Real or Rendered?** — In October 2025, the Artificial Intelligence and Information Systems Club hosted a live Turing Test-inspired event in Alumni Hall. Contestants were shown questions on-screen alongside answers either written by humans or generated by a variety of AI chatbots including ChatGPT, Claude, Grok, and others. Over 60 attendees tested their instincts in an elimination game—physically stepping left for AI, right for human—until a winner was crowned. The event offered an engaging opportunity to advance AI literacy and sharpen critical thinking about human and machine intelligence. The club looks forward to hosting another event in the fall.

**Benchmarking the Future:** Sadie Simek, a dual-enrolled Cybersecurity undergraduate and master’s student at Central and a former student worker in the IT Department, is leveraging IT Department resources to conduct groundbreaking AI research. When provided her with a dedicated research space and an NVIDIA DGX Spark desktop computer, it transformed her AI research—cutting model processing time from weeks on a personal laptop down to overnight runs and enabling her to benchmark 131 large language models in four months. Her research, advised by Dr.



Ramyapandian “Ramya” Vijayakanthan, investigates “AI model instability”, an emerging concern in AI security. The team’s paper was accepted for presentation at the 2nd Annual CAIA Research Symposium at the Hartford AI Conference, where they will present alongside speakers from Google and IBM, while also pursuing publication at ACM CCS — a conference with a 9-19% acceptance rate.

As Sadie noted: “We could not have hit this milestone without the momentum you helped generate by providing a research space and the extra technology.



Criminal Justice student Yvonna Rodriguez, a graduating senior, provided a project outlining how AI is being used in the criminal justice system and the approaches colleges, universities, and law schools are using to inform their students of AI in the field. Ms. Rodriguez’s research aims to enhance our current courses and develop new ones to address the many AI issues and usage in the Criminal Justice and Legal fields.

Faculty from Management Information Systems and the Library collaborated on a project to build an AI tool that can look at a large collection of photos and automatically describe what is in each image. The system would take photos, scan them with artificial intelligence, and create useful information about each one. For example, it could identify objects in the photo, generate a short written description, pull out the date or location if that information is stored in the image file, and save everything into a spreadsheet or searchable file. The goal is to make photos easier to organize, search, review, and use later.

