



POLICY BRIEFING

Anticipatory Governance and Artificial Intelligence

Questions Community College Boards Should Be Asking

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping higher education, yet many institutional conversations remain focused on tools, implementation, or operational risk rather than governance. Decisions about AI are not simply technology decisions. They are also decisions about teaching and learning, student support, workforce roles, institutional identity, and public trust. Community college boards do not need to become technical experts in artificial intelligence, but they do need to ensure their institutions are asking thoughtful questions before major decisions are made. As AI adoption accelerates, governing boards have an important role in helping institutions move beyond reactive decision-making and toward a more intentional, mission-centered approach.

An anticipatory governance approach encourages institutions to examine the long-term implications of AI adoption rather than responding issue by issue as new technologies emerge. It asks colleges to consider how AI may reshape learning, workforce expectations, human relationships, and the role of the institution itself over time. The goal is not to predict the future of AI, but to strengthen institutional decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and rapid change. The following questions are intended to help governing boards frame strategic discussions about artificial intelligence and its implications for the future of community colleges.

Questions About Mission and Institutional Identity

1. Where do we see AI strengthening our mission, and where might it unintentionally weaken it?
2. Are we making decisions primarily around efficiency, or around educational purpose?
3. What assumptions about the future of higher education are embedded within our AI strategy?

Questions About Teaching and Learning

1. What assumptions about learning are embedded in the AI systems we are adopting?
 2. What does meaningful learning look like in an environment where AI can generate content instantly?
 3. How should colleges rethink teaching and learning in a world where information and content generation are increasingly automated?
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Questions About Workforce and Labor

1. How might AI reshape faculty and staff roles over time?
2. Are we using AI to augment human capacity or primarily to reduce labor costs?
3. How should colleges prepare employees for a rapidly changing work environment shaped by AI?

Questions About Governance and Decision-Making

1. Are AI decisions occurring within a coherent institutional framework or through fragmented experimentation?
2. How will the board remain informed as AI technologies and impacts evolve?
3. What governance structures are needed to ensure ongoing oversight and institutional learning?

Questions About Long-Term Strategy

1. How might today's AI decisions shape the college five or ten years from now?
2. What signals or indicators should we monitor as AI adoption accelerates?
3. How might AI reshape the economic and civic role community colleges play within their regions and communities?

The questions outlined here are not intended to produce simple or uniform answers. Different institutions may reach very different conclusions depending on their mission, communities, workforce needs, and educational philosophy. What matters is that colleges create governance processes capable of engaging these questions deliberately rather than allowing technology adoption to occur primarily through momentum, decentralization, or external pressure. AI is developing faster than many institutional decision-making structures were designed to handle, making it increasingly important for boards to create regular opportunities for strategic reflection, institutional learning, and long-term thinking about the direction in which the college is heading.