

Industry Council(s) AI Committee

Minutes

October 2, 2026

Singleton Hall, Room 126 on the campus of Virginia State University

8:30 a.m. to 9:55 a.m.

Attendees:

Members: Steve Farbstein, Ray Ferguson, Lenora Hughes, Mike Matthews, Sam Panicker, Aaron Smith and Will Willis. *Steve Farbstein participated remotely and Carl Johnson though he was unable to attend the meeting submitted a review electronically in advance.*

Staff: Ephrem Eyob, Shaun Gao, Leah Hall, Olumide Malomo, Venkat Mummalaneni, Hari Sharma, Ben Uzochukwu and Jonathan Young.

Students: Miracle Delk, Xavier Drewrey and Shannell Williams.

The group convened for the purpose of reviewing the Virginia State University proposal to launch a minor in Artificial Intelligence effective January, 2027. The decision to launch a minor in lieu of a major is partly attributed to the fact that a minor is more efficient to execute at VSU than a major.

A lot of conversation regarded the curriculum and course content but the consensus was that because AI is iterating so quickly it makes sense to retain somewhat ambiguous or generic course descriptions. An example regarded multiple recommendations to include focus on generative AI and retrieval.

Substantive discussion regarded specific AI tools including prioritization at least for the moment relevant to Microsoft Copilot, Claude, Open AI and Google Gemini though acknowledging that even large firms are building tools specific to their place of work. Some discussion included partnering with the leading tech firms to afford students access via seat licensing including a recommendation to incentive participation in the minor by allowing graduates of the program to retain said license for 12 months subsequent to VSU commencement.

An important element of discussion regarded content and qualification of said content. Recommendations included leveraging guest instructors, train the trainer and other recurring continuing learning opportunities for the relevant faculty.

The AI minor's customers or potential customers were discussed including that perhaps different disciplines at VSU have varying reasons to enroll in the minor and to achieve different outcomes. Conversation included the latter and building a talent pipeline that creates value-add for hiring managers.

Three students (all accounting) participated in the discussion and constituted an ad-hoc focus group. Of the three, 1 student on a scale of 1-10 advised that he was a 10 pertinent to AI knowledge and the other two students advised that they were in the middle. All three students conveyed a lot of awareness about AI and communicated some reservation about it. One student advised that she felt "guilty" using AI and the group acknowledged that the course that pertains to ethics in AI is critical.

The objective of the minor along with curriculum outside the minor aims to achieve AI literacy by the end of the freshman year and AI fluency by the senior.

It was recommended that students graduate from the minor with a portfolio of AI projects and that VSU and graduates of the program can differentiate in the market.

Some discussion regarded apprehensiveness of many persons with AI and that coursework should be in person leveraging best practices and anecdotal observation of continuing learning in the market.

Students should complete the proposed General Education AI Fundamentals class and said class could become a gateway for hundreds of students to learn AI.

Some conversation regarded if students can accommodate the AI minor in their schedule but because for business students at least all of the courses minus two are already required inclusion or addition of the minor should be relatively easy. The required courses' syllabi and content are being amended to include AI emphasis.

Benchmarking other institutions of higher learning was referenced including at VCU and at Georgetown and regarding the latter a partnership with Nvidia.

Perhaps the most salient point regarded a recognition that students need to retain their humanity and convey said humanity when applying for jobs.

The group adjourned at 9:55 a.m.