

AI Strategic Compass

AI Integration Rubric and Success Metrics Framework for Higher Education

A framework to align AI decisions with your institution's mission, ethics, and strategy.

AI Strategic Compass Framework - bit.ly/aicompass

AI Strategic Compass Worksheet - bit.ly/aicompassworksheet

[Joe Sabado \(joepsabado@gmail.com\)](mailto:joepsabado@gmail.com) / [LinkedIn](#)

Why Higher Ed Needs the AI Strategic Compass Now

Institutions need a clear way to evaluate, prioritize, and measure AI initiatives.

 The Challenge	 The Gap	 The Strategic Compass Offers
Too many AI projects. Not enough strategic clarity. ✗ Scattered pilots without alignment ✗ No consistent way to prioritize ✗ Success is undefined or unmeasured ✗ Ethical blind spots go unchecked	Most institutions lack a shared, mission-aligned process to select, assess, and measure AI initiatives.	✓ A clear rubric to evaluate fit, risk, and impact ✓ A framework to define success through KPIs and OKRs ✓ A shared language to drive collaborative decisions

What You'll Take Away

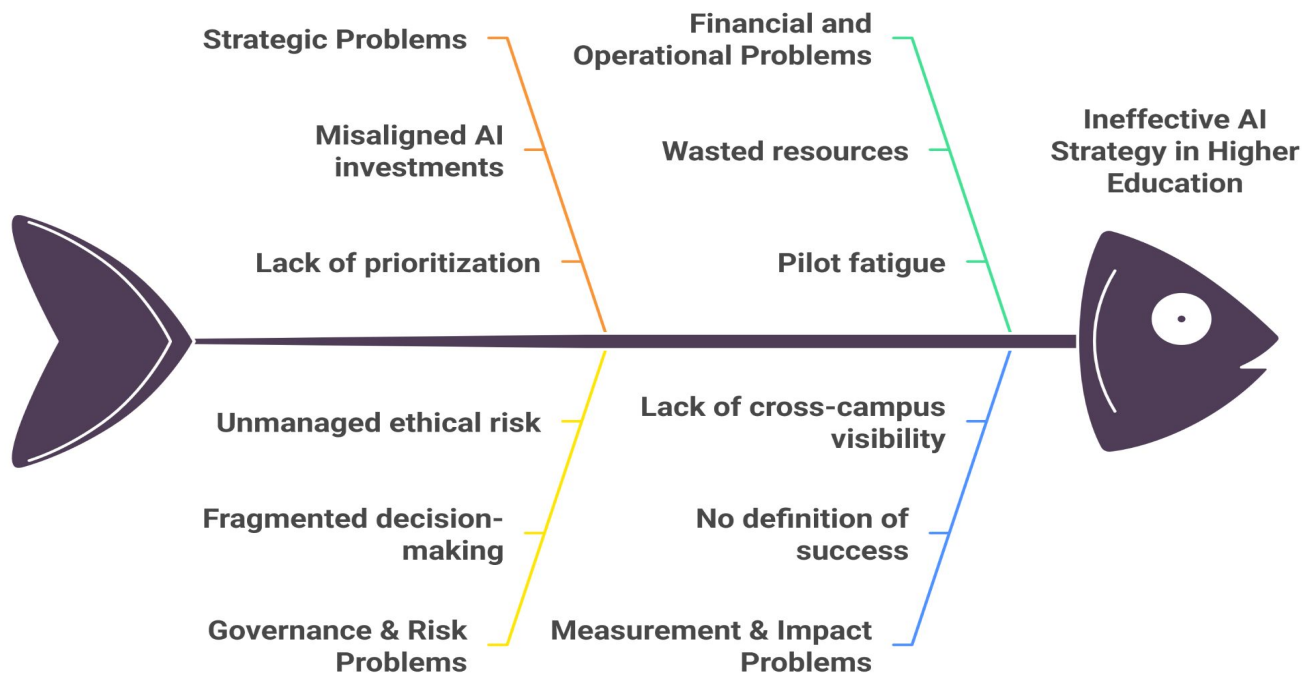
A flexible, low-barrier method to make AI integration **transparent, intentional, and mission-aligned**.

AI Integration Challenges

AI adoption is accelerating—but without shared frameworks, risks grow.

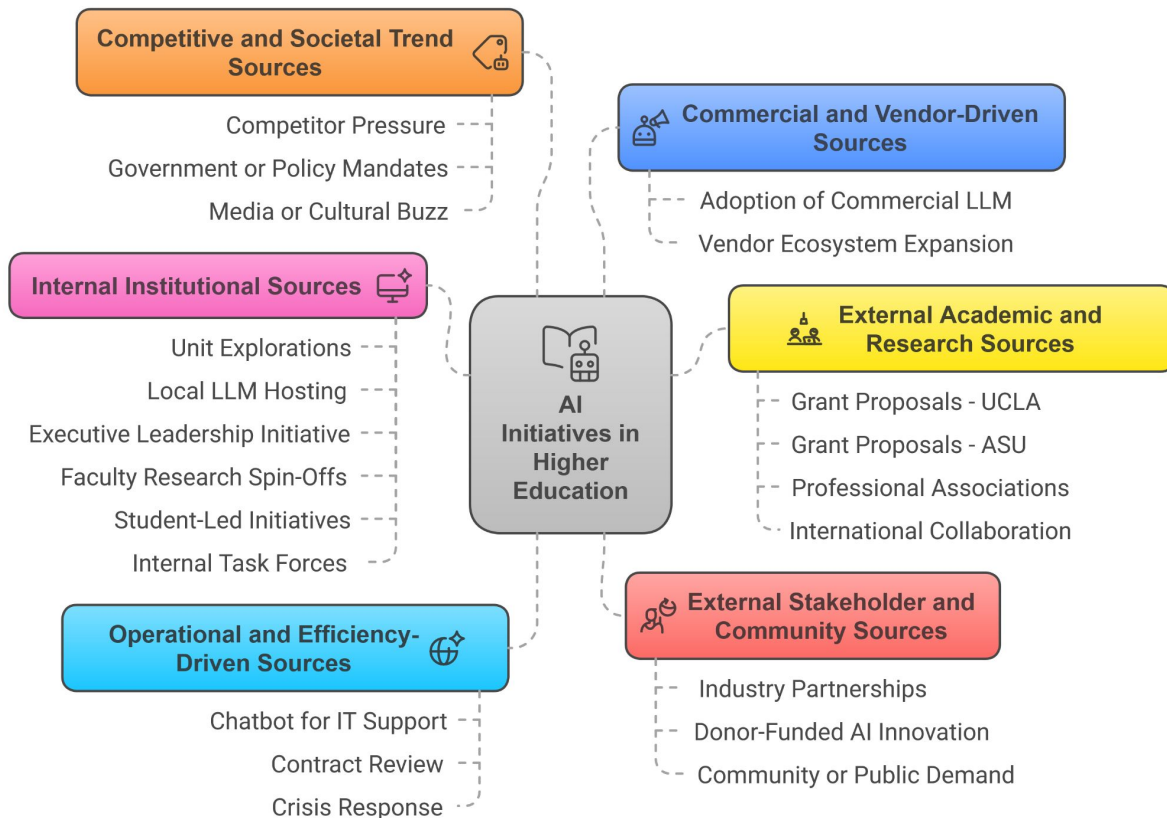
What Happens Without a Shared Evaluation Framework

Without structure, AI initiatives lead to duplication, risk, and lost trust.



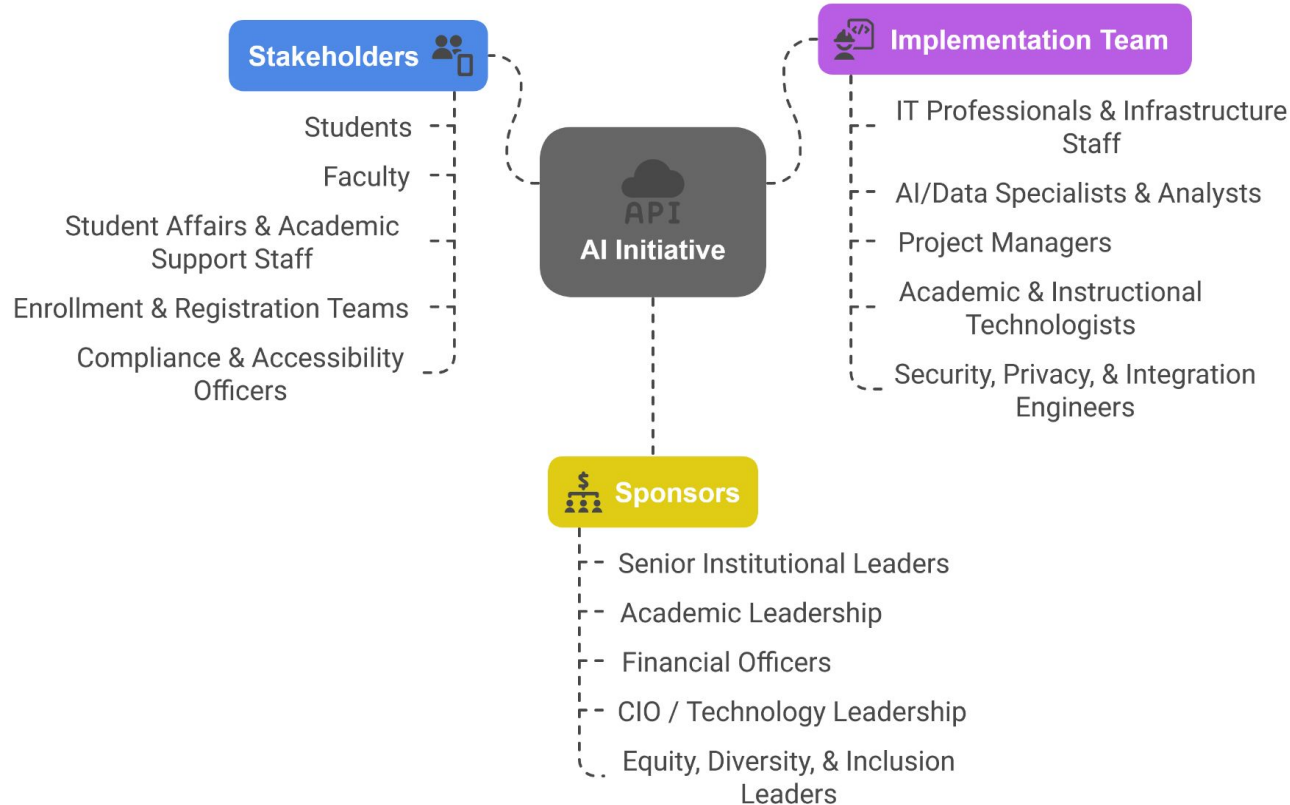
The Many Entry Points for AI Initiatives in Higher Ed

AI can emerge from anywhere—strategy requires visibility across all domains.



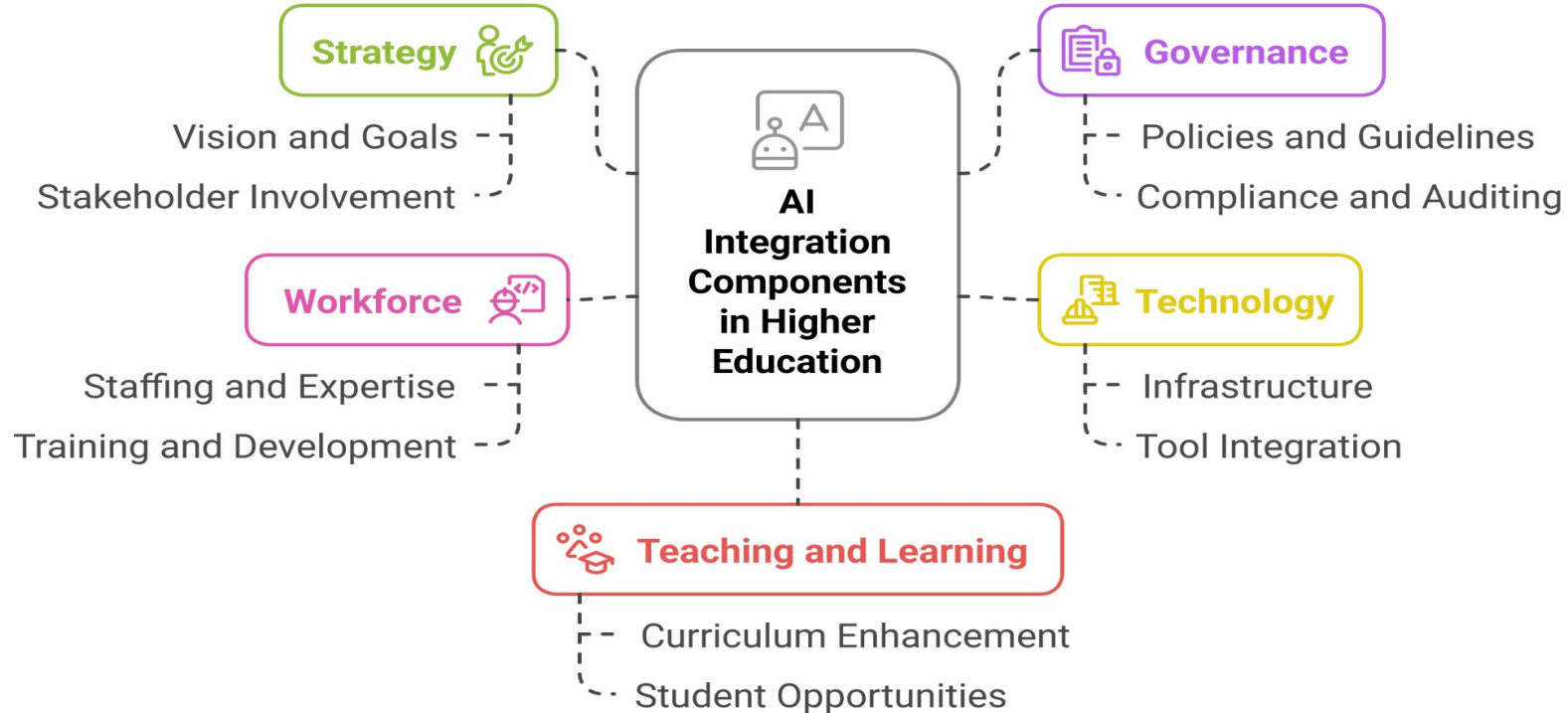
Cross-Functional Teams Behind AI Initiatives

Effective AI strategy requires collaboration across IT, academics, and operations.



Campus Readiness for Gen AI Adoption

Adoption depends on more than tech—it requires strategic, cultural readiness.



If your institution had to prioritize five AI initiatives...

Can your institution prioritize AI based on risk, value, and mission impact?

If your institution had to prioritize five AI initiatives this year, how would that decision be made—and what would be missing from that process?

AI Integration Rubric and Success Metrics Framework for Higher Education



One framework. Any mission. Every institution.

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AI Strategic Compass: Ideas to Action

The model turns ideas into implementation—helping institutions act on what matters.

“Strategy & Ambition” (The Possibility Zone)

Gartner’s AI Opportunity Radar

Helps map ambition and
categorize opportunities

Deloitte’s GenAI Adoption Roadmap

Focuses on aligning GenAI use cases
to institutional strategy

AWS “Working Backwards” Model

Starts with desired outcomes and
works toward technical design

AI Strategic Compass



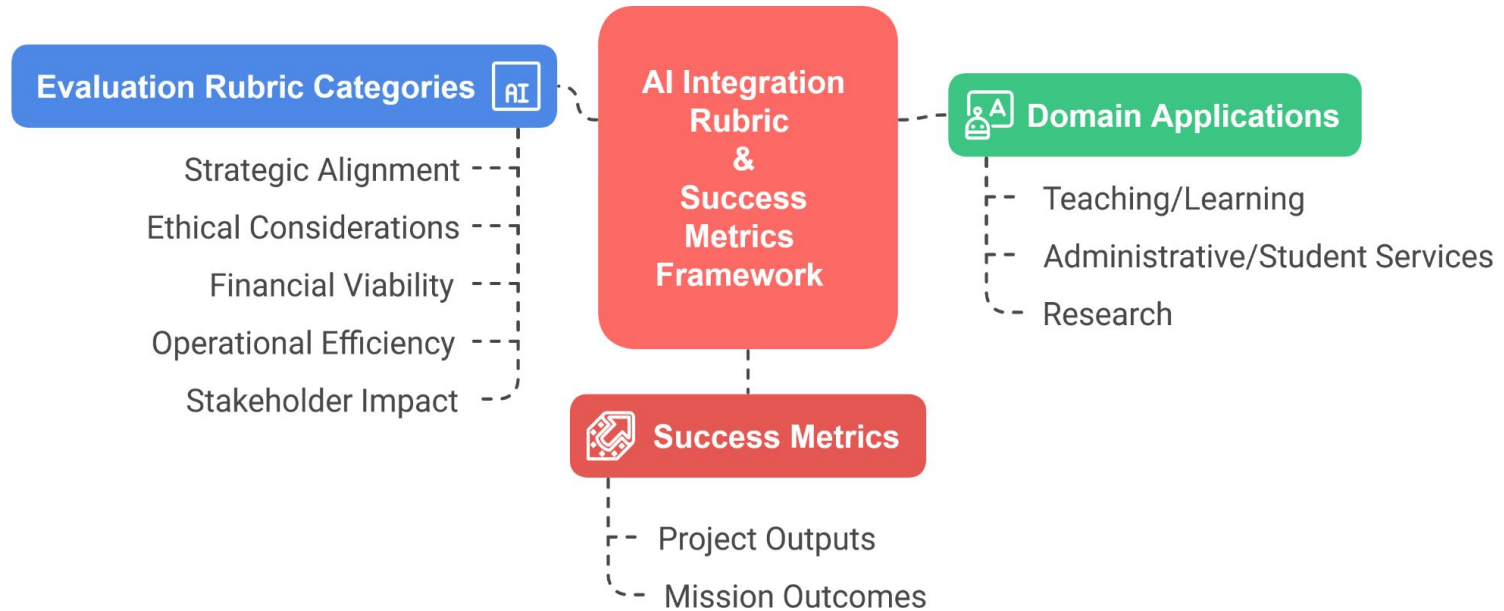
“Ideas to Action”

“Practice & Impact” (The Execution Zone)

- Prioritized AI initiatives aligned to mission
- Initiatives with clear KPIs and OKRs
- Risk and ethics proactively managed
- Strategic reporting and impact tracking
- Evidence-based decisions and governance

AI Strategic Compass: Overview

Designed for institutions at any maturity level—flexible, simple, and purpose-driven.



AI Strategic Compass: Evaluation Rubric

Five dimensions to assess every AI proposal—from vision to risk.

Strategic Alignment and Value Creation: Is the initiative aligned with institutional priorities and goals?

- 1: AI offers negligible value and does not align with strategic goals.** (dept launches internal chatbot already avail via ERP)

→

5: AI is transformative, creating substantial value and directly supporting core strategic initiatives. (AI for advising that directly supports campus-wide retention-initiative for underserved students)

Ethical, Legal, and Compliance Considerations: Are there risks around bias, transparency, data, or compliance?

- 1: No significant ethical, legal, or compliance issues; AI is straightforward to implement.** (AI for transcription of public lectures with no personal data)

→

5: Critical risk; potential for severe ethical, legal, or compliance violations that could compromise the institution's integrity. (Predictive analytics flagging “at-risk” students using opaque algorithms)

Financial Viability and Resource Allocation: Are there sufficient resources? What's the short- and long-term ROI?

- 1: Minimal costs and resource needs; negligible financial impact.** (Free GPT-powered writing assistant)

→

5: Substantial financial investment with high resource demands; critical to evaluate ROI and sustainability carefully. (Multi-million dollar grading system with new hardware, SIS integration)

Operational Efficiency and Innovation Potential: Does it improve workflows, capacity, or innovation potential?

- 1: AI offers minimal efficiency gains and little to no innovation potential.** (AI tool that reduces admin time by few mins)

→

5: AI is transformative, leading to substantial operational improvements and pioneering innovations that redefine processes. (AI scheduling system that optimizes instructor loads across depts)

Stakeholder Impact and Reputational Considerations: How does it affect students, staff, faculty, and public trust?

- 1: No noticeable impact on stakeholders; reputation remains unaffected.** (AI for sorting IT tickets invisible to the community)

→

5: Severe impact; major stakeholder backlash with potential to damage the institution's reputation significantly. (AI surveillance installed in residence halls without student consultation)

AI-Driven Early Warning System for At-Risk Students

A mission-aligned example showing how the Compass scores an AI initiative.

Dimension	Score	Score Definition	Comments
Strategic Alignment & Value Creation	4	AI significantly enhances process outcomes and is well-aligned with strategic priorities.	Strong alignment with institutional priorities such as retention and student success. Offers meaningful enhancements to intervention strategies. Could reach a 5 with full institutional integration.
Ethical, Legal & Compliance Considerations	3	Moderate risk; requires careful consideration of ethical implications and compliance.	Involves sensitive student data. Requires safeguards to ensure privacy, fairness, and transparency. Risk is manageable with strong governance.
Financial Viability & Resource Allocation	3	Moderate costs balanced by significant potential ROI; requires careful budget management.	Initial implementation is feasible. Sustained success depends on advisor bandwidth and integration with support systems. ROI hinges on improved retention metrics.
Operational Efficiency & Innovation Potential	4	AI greatly improves efficiency, reduces errors, and drives significant innovation.	Automates flagging and enables proactive advising. High potential to streamline operations if integrated with support infrastructure.
Stakeholder Impact & Reputational Considerations	3	Moderate impact; could lead to mixed reactions and requires stakeholder engagement.	Stakeholders may see value, but student trust depends on how the system is introduced and governed. Requires clear communication and opt-in trust-building.

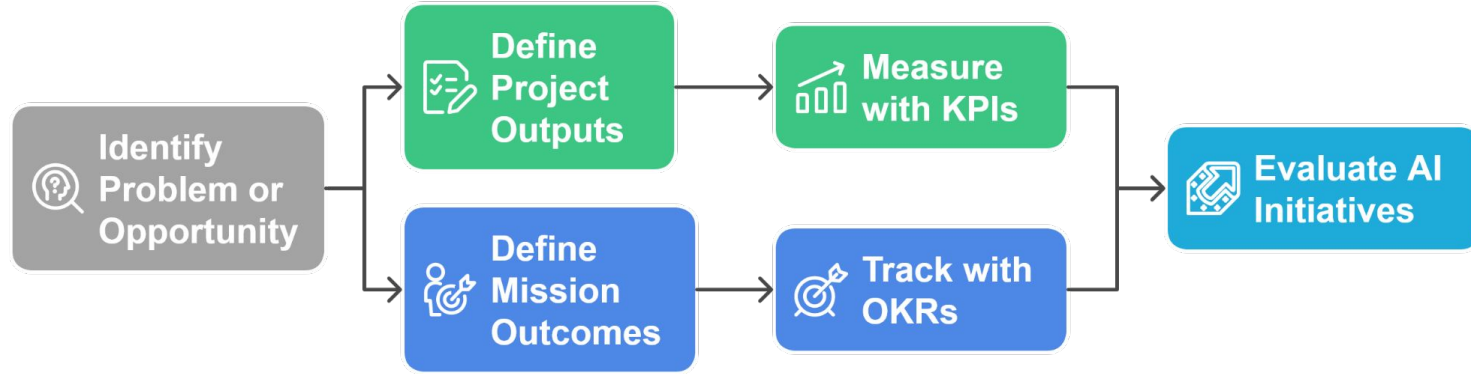
Total Score: 17

Total Score: The rubric scores each process across the five categories on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low risk/impact and 5 indicating high risk/impact.

- **5-10:** Low Risk/Impact — AI integration is low-risk and should proceed with minimal additional safeguards.
- **11-15:** Moderate Risk/Impact — AI integration is feasible but requires careful oversight and moderate risk mitigation.
- **16-20:** High Risk/Impact — Significant risks; AI integration should proceed with strong safeguards and ongoing monitoring.
- **21-25:** Critical Risk/Impact — High-risk scenario; consider alternative strategies or implement AI with extensive controls and safeguards.

SUCCESS METRICS: PROJECT OUTPUTS AND MISSION OUTCOMES

Track what you build—and what it transforms.



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs are **tangible, measurable outputs** that reflect what a project delivers.

They help track the **immediate results** of AI initiatives—such as tools implemented, actions taken, or services improved.

Objective Key Results (OKRs)

OKRs focus on **mission-aligned outcomes**—the **real-world impact** of the initiative.

They connect AI implementation to **strategic goals** like student success, equity, research excellence, or operational transformation.

Teaching/Learning Domain Example

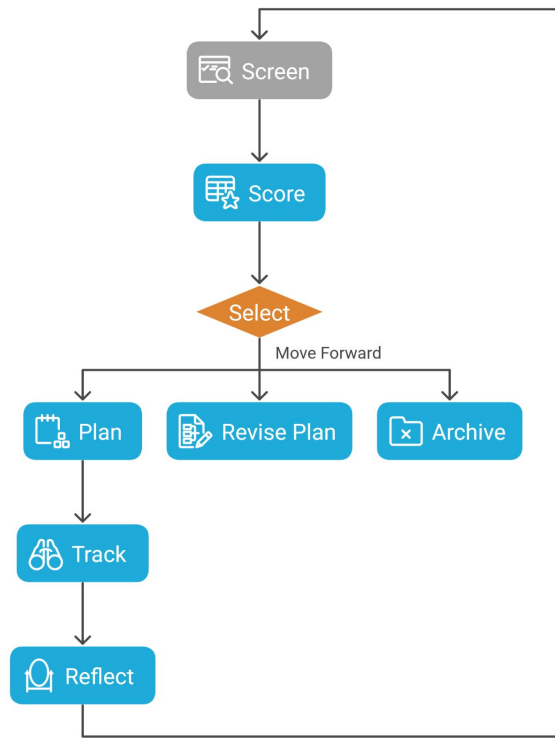
Real-world outputs and outcomes aligned with student success and equity.

AI-Driven Early Warning System for At-Risk Students

- **Mission Outcomes** (*What the institution gains*):
 - ***What problem or opportunity?*** Students at risk of failing courses often go unnoticed, leading to higher dropout rates.
 - ***What will be the outcome(s)?*** Improved student retention and academic success, supporting equitable education.
 - ***How will you know the outcomes have been realized?***
 - Objective and Key Result:
 - Objective: Enhance student retention through early AI interventions.
 - Key Result: Increase course pass rates for at-risk students by 15% within one academic year.
 - Key Result: Reduce dropout rates by 10% by the end of the academic year.
- **Project Outputs** (*What the project delivers*):
 - ***How will the project contribute?*** Analyzes student data (e.g., grades, attendance) to predict risk and recommend interventions.
 - ***What will the project produce or enable?*** An AI early warning system integrated into the learning management system.
 - ***How will you know the outputs have been achieved?***
 - Key Performance Indicator: AI system identifies 90% of at-risk students within the first four weeks of the semester.
 - Key Performance Indicator: AI System delivers intervention recommendations to 95% of identified students within 48 hours.

The Flow from Idea to Action

Use success metrics early—even imperfectly—to focus the AI conversation.



Rubric scoring helps inform decision to proceed, pause, or revise.

Hybrid Intake Flow

During intake, proposers draft intended KPIs and OKRs as a starting point.

This drives clarity and focus without requiring perfection. Formal success planning happens only after rubric evaluation and selection.

Success metrics defined upfront—but finalized after evaluation.

Screen → Score → Select → Plan → Track → Reflect

Integrating Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC)

Strategic alignment isn't enough—GRC ensures your AI delivers impact without compromise.

Compass Dimension	Governance	Risk Management	Compliance
Strategic Fit	AI initiatives reviewed by AI governance council for alignment with mission, strategy, and values	Strategic risks (e.g., reputational, equity, academic freedom) identified and assessed	Adheres to institutional planning processes, procurement policies, and strategic IT/legal standards
Ethics & Compliance	Ethics committee oversight for AI projects; documented ethical principles in policy	Algorithmic bias, fairness, explainability, and privacy risks assessed through AI risk tools	FERPA, ADA, GDPR, accessibility, DEI compliance verified; ethical audits required pre-deployment
Financial Viability	AI project proposals include governance review of business case, budget alignment, ROI justification	Contractual, IP, vendor lock-in, cost overrun, and resource dependency risks actively managed	Vendor due diligence and contract terms meet regulatory, security, and procurement compliance
Operational Efficiency & Innovation	AI implementation is governed within IT service, change management, and performance frameworks	Systemic risks (downtime, automation dependency, failure modes) proactively mitigated	Documentation, logging, model explainability, auditability, and retention policies are enforced
Stakeholder Impact	Governance includes representation from students, faculty, and staff; co-design is embedded in process	Stakeholder risks (misuse, exclusion, surveillance, over-reliance) assessed and mitigated	Tools ensure user consent, transparency, appeal processes, and accessible design for all populations

Level 1 → 3 → 5 progression

1. Strategic Fit

- **Governance:** No oversight → Some review → AI aligned via council
- **Risk:** Risks ignored → Ad hoc → Pre-launch equity & mission checks
- **Compliance:** Skips process → Inconsistent → Fully embedded in planning

2. Ethics & Compliance

- **Governance:** No ethics review → Passive principles → Ethics board oversight
- **Risk:** No tools → Inconsistent audits → Standard fairness assessments
- **Compliance:** No checks → Late-stage review → DEI, FERPA, ADA fully integrated

3. Financial Viability

- **Governance:** No fiscal oversight → Sporadic review → ROI & sustainability embedded
- **Risk:** No legal/contract review → Post-hoc → Vendor/IP risk-managed
- **Compliance:** No vetting → Checklists ignored → Full procurement controls

4. Operational Efficiency

- **Governance:** Shadow AI use → Partially governed → Integrated with ITSM & ops
- **Risk:** Unknown automation risks → Reactive → Scenario-based mitigation
- **Compliance:** No traceability → Spotty logs → Transparent, auditable systems

5. Stakeholder Impact

- **Governance:** No input → Irregular consultation → Co-governance with users
- **Risk:** No assessment → Partial visibility → Participatory risk design
- **Compliance:** No protections → Minimal safeguards → Consent + inclusive design

Want to Continue the Conversation?

Let's co-create a future of ethical, mission-aligned AI in higher education.

This is a framework in progress. Let's keep refining how we make thoughtful, aligned decisions about AI across higher education. We invite your feedback and pilots.

Framework Overview: bit.ly/aicompass

AI Strategic Compass Worksheet - bit.ly/aicompassworksheet

Contact: joepsabado@gmail.com

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