

# Undergraduate Business Curricula and AI in the Workplace

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**Abstract:** As AI adoption accelerates in organizations and business operations, it is important that higher education continue to study its impact on teaching and learning. Following the formal introduction of two AI applications at a 23-campus university system, this work-in-progress research aimed to understand business faculty pedagogic response to AI and employer needs at one institution. Given that curricula design involves multifactorial thinking, this report is part of a larger study involving a sequenced set of data analyses. On the higher education side, for this study, current syllabi of courses in the General Management concentration in the undergraduate business program were analyzed. General Management appeared to be the most popular business concentration last year. As the technology continues to evolve, any study provides only a snapshot in time. Given higher education's role in the economic sector, at this transformative juncture, modernizing academic understanding of the workplace needs to examine pedagogical practice relating to graduate preparation for new opportunities and challenges.

**Keywords:** Graduate preparedness, AI-Readiness, Business education

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## 1. Introduction

The knowledge gap between labor market demands and graduate preparedness for Industry 5.0 is undergoing intensive academic and industry research. Meanwhile increasing AI certification programs offered by IT companies to meet the demand from across industries to upskill or reskill their employees is a reminder of the need in higher education. The study reported here is a sub-set of a larger research that will examine how business education curricula needs rethinking by exploring labor market demands and faculty adaptation to employer requirements.

Recent academic research mostly relates to students' views and experience of AI in higher education and educators' perceptions of the impact of AI on teaching and learning. A 2017 McKinsey report estimated that 47% of American jobs are at high risk of automation by 2030 (Manyika, et al, 2017). A recent report by Microsoft (June 2025) studied the overlap between AI capabilities and job tasks, highlighting where AI might change how work is done. The researchers wrote "'Our research shows that AI supports many tasks, particularly those involving research, writing, and communication, but does not indicate it can fully perform any single occupation. ... As AI adoption accelerates, it's important that we *continue to study* its societal and economic impact."

As the technology continues to evolve, any study provides only a snapshot in time. How old jobs are reconstituted, or discontinued, and what new jobs emerge need to be an ongoing research topic, because modernizing our understanding of workplace activities will be crucial as generative AI continues to change how work is done and how it impacts business, society and the economy. Given higher education's role in the economic sector, at this transformative juncture, modernizing our understanding of the workplace needs to examine graduate preparation for new opportunities and challenges.

## 2. Context

The goal of this research category work-in-progress study is to investigate how undergraduate business education curricula at one campus of a 23-campus public university aligns with the AI needs and expectations of employers who hire new 'general management' business graduates. Certainly, business schools will continue to prepare students for gainful employment as an outcome of their business education. However, some business schools also aim to achieve positive societal impact through their business education. Society in this context refers to external stakeholders of relevance to the business school. Societal impact refers to how a school makes a positive impact on the betterment of society, as identified in the school's mission. Societal impact can be at a local, regional, national, or international level. Therefore, 'to prepare career-ready students and to assist regional businesses be successful', a question arises in the context of the impact of AI on industries and jobs, how does the education curriculum align with the transformations? For this paper, briefly, do our program curricula respond to new expectations and standards in labor and markets and how?

It is therefore timely that our business programs review the new required competencies that have emerged because of advancements in AI technologies affecting both labor and industries. And to identify where existing programs need re-thinking to respond to the changing work environment. It is imperative to identify what are transferable skills and knowledge that can be applied across different situations, environments and fields while

maintaining both their relevance and impact. Early informal review of my college program indicates a somewhat episodic approach to responding to AI innovations.

Our research methodology involves a sequenced set of data analyses. For this study, on the higher education side, current syllabi of courses in the General Management program were content-analyzed. General Management appeared to be the most popular business concentration in the last year. Another study layer will survey faculty relating to their perceptions of the AI-driven workplace, and their own preparation and pedagogic adaptation. Another data set of job postings for general management positions will be analyzed. Contrasting all data sets will help us to understand better how the business curricula needs redesign to respond to the changing work environment.

### **3. Methodology**

Content analysis is a research method used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). In this paper, using content analysis via a secured AI platform, we determined and analyzed the presence, meanings, and relationships of AI-related course policy-tool use-and-skills development in current syllabi of all courses in the General Management concentration in the undergraduate Business Administration program. 'Current' refers to the last academic year. This timeline is important because it is book-ended by the commercial introduction of ChatGPT free version in November 2022 and the home campus-wide introduction of Co-Pilot in Fall 2024 followed by the CSU system-wide surprise launch of ChatGPT earlier this year (January 2025). Since ChatGPT's consumer launch in late 2022, the intervening two years saw rapid acceleration in the use of AI tools - generally speaking - including among students and faculty. Microsoft's Co-Pilot was formally offered for all-campus use in the system to ensure equity, so that no student is at a disadvantage regarding learning resources.

While not a complete indicator, course syllabi may be viewed as one reasonable window into how faculty are responding and adapting to the introduction of AI in higher education. Syllabi were analyzed for possibly including AI use policy and integrating AI tool use or AI fluency development. Assuming students' 'digital native' orientation and the availability of freely available AI software, this study is premised on advancing students AI fluency. In all 35 sample syllabi offered by different instructors - covering core/required, and elective courses - were analyzed using ChatGPT edu V5. This version of ChatGPT enables the researcher to keep the data, which AI uses, private and secure. Two sections of the same course taught by the same instructor were considered one course. Two sections of the same course taught by different instructors were considered separately to reflect instructor differences. Only syllabi that explicitly state AI use policy or/and directly integrate AI tool use or AI fluency development are analyzed further. Additionally, the syllabi and results were reviewed manually for accuracy.

Following a review of the academic literature and recent business reports from publicly-listed companies on the fore-front of AI development, AI adoption, and general business consulting-education, the following questions were selected and queried for analysis in this study. The questions address some core AI knowledge and skills that employers are seeking of undergraduate students studying "general business management"; and attempt to understand where undergraduate business academic preparation currently stands in relation to the AI-changed work environment.

- a. Which course syllabi state an AI use policy?
- b . Identify the courses whose learning outcomes integrate AI tools use or AI fluency development'
- c. Identify the courses or learning outcomes, assignments, or tasks where the student are introduced to, or learn to use AI-powered analytics to interpret datasets.
- d. Identify the courses or learning outcomes or assignments or tasks where the student are introduced to, or learn to use AI-tools to discover market trends, learn customer behavior, or improve operational performance, to help attain business goals.
- e. Identify the courses or learning outcomes or assignments where the student is alerted to be vigilant about inherent biases or errors in AI algorithms

### **4. Results**

- a. Course syllabi which explicitly state an AI use policy

Only 5 of the 35 sample syllabi examined allow or encourage AI use. The syllabi for Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 200 - core course) and Principles of Macroeconomics (ECON 205 - core course) explicitly have statements that *allow and encourage AI use as a tool, provided students take full responsibility for the accuracy and*

*appropriateness of AI-generated content.* Syllabi for Human Resources Management (HRM 312-elective) and Leadership and Management (MGMT 314-elective) taught by the same instructor contain a section titled “Generative AI (Gen-AI) Integration.” It references the CSU-system AI Commons initiative and explains that AI tools may be used to brainstorm, draft, edit, organize research, and generate practice scenarios, and emphasize that students remain responsible for their own work. Similarly, Managerial Economics & Business Strategy (ECON 380-core) includes a detailed “AI Policy” section that allows AI tools for research purposes (e.g., brainstorming, gathering sources) but prohibits their use for completing assignments, exams, or quizzes. Disclosure of AI use is required.

At the other end of the spectrum, 5 course syllabi expressly prohibit use of AI. The syllabus for Employee Relations & Employment Law (MGMT 318-elective) specifies: “AI tools may not be used for graded assignments unless I explicitly state otherwise.” Violations result in no credit and a resubmission opportunity. Similarly, Business Ethics (core) states a strict prohibition on generative AI: “The use of generative AI, including ChatGPT, is expressly prohibited. Use of these tools will be considered a violation of the CSUEB Academic Dishonesty Policy.” Likewise, Business, Government and Society (core) and International Business (core) syllabi – two different courses offered by the same instructor – states, “If you turn in a paper that has been plagiarized in any way, including use of artificial intelligence, you will automatically receive an F on the assignment. The same courses taught by another instructor outline a detailed plagiarism policy and do not reference artificial intelligence. In one section of Marketing Principles (core), the “Artificial Intelligence Statement” explicitly states that all graded work must be student-generated; AI tools cannot be used and any use constitutes violation of academic honesty. The parenthetical clause ‘unless the instructor explicitly allows it’ seems a nod to possible approved AI use in some instances but that is unclear.

Thus, at the time of this report, 25 out of 35 sample course syllabi do not have any explicit AI use policy. Only 5 of the 35 syllabi examined allow or encourage AI use and 5 course syllabi expressly prohibit use of AI. See Figure 1.

			Courses (Examples)
AI Policy	Clear Policy Statement	Explicitly allow or encourage responsible AI use	- Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 200 - core) - Principles of Macroeconomics (ECON 205-core) - HR Management (MGMT 312 -elective) - Leadership & Management (MGMT 314 -elective) - Managerial Economics & Business Strategy (ECON 380 - core)
	Ambivalent Statement / No Explicit Policy	Neither prohibit nor mention AI	25 courses (majority of sample)
	Prohibitive AI Policy Statement	Strict ban or classify AI use as plagiarism	- Employment Law (MGMT 318 - elective) - Business Ethics (MGMT 300 - core) - Business, Government & Society (MGMT 370-core)) - International Business (MGMT 385 – core option) - Marketing Principles (MKTG 300 - core)

Figure 1: Research Question

- b. Courses whose learning outcomes or content integrate AI tools use or AI fluency development

Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 200-core) includes a learning module and an essay assignment centering on “AI and the Future of Work”. There is also a discussion task designed around using microeconomic reasoning to better understand the impact of AI on industries and jobs. Cumulatively, students learn to apply microeconomic principles to analyze AI’s role in markets, labor, and productivity. In Principles of Macroeconomics (ECON 205-core), students use a required learning assistant Edvisor (an ai platform); and applying fundamental analytical methods, learn to interpret economic variables and events based in real-world issues. Consequently, the two courses develop AI literacy and critical evaluation skills, not just conceptual economics understanding.

Syllabi of Information Technology Management (ITM 300-core) sections taught by two different instructors indicate that the course outcomes and modules explicitly teach data mining, machine learning, and AI

visualization, giving students hands-on experience analyzing and interpreting data with AI tools. For example, syllabi mention explicit topics that develop AI fluency: “Introduction to Data Mining and Machine Learning”, “Data Visualization with Generative AI (DVGAI)”, “Generative AI – Prompt Engineering”, and “Personal Productivity Using AI”. Students learn prompt engineering, data visualization using AI, and applied AI in business technology contexts. Assignments in both sections also integrate direct AI skill-building. Students gain hands-on experience with applied AI tools within Excel, cloud computing, and analytics environments.

		Courses (Examples)
AI Literacy - Fluency goals	Literacy-Fluency learning outcome statement or reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles of Microeconomics (core): Develops AI literacy through tasks and “AI and the Future of Work” module.</li> <li>- Principles of Macroeconomics (core): required Edvisor platform</li> <li>- Information Technology Management (core): Hands-on AI analytics training.</li> <li>- Decision Science (core): foundational data-driven decision-making &amp; technologies</li> </ul>
	Some implicit exposure through data analytics or Excel-based modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction to Managerial Accounting (core)</li> <li>- Financial Management (core)</li> <li>- Managerial Economics &amp; Business Strategy (core)</li> </ul>
	No AI literacy or fluency goals; learning outcomes do not mention AI tools or skills.	Majority of sample

Figure 2: Research Question

In Decision Science (MGMT 350-core), students are required to use Excel spreadsheet software and quantitative modeling tools that align with data-driven decision-making frameworks that are foundational in AI analytics technologies. While not named as “AI,” the course outcomes and content focus on “Decision analysis, optimization, simulation, and forecasting” explicitly links to “data-driven decision-making technologies” and “quantitative techniques in data-driven decision-making” -- skills related to AI fluency that employers are seeking in new college business graduates.

In summary (Figure 2), only 3 courses out of 35 sample course syllabi *explicitly* integrate AI tools use and AI fluency development in its learning outcomes and instructional content. Information Technology Manage (core) explicitly teaches data mining, machine learning, and AI visualization, giving students hands-on experience analyzing and interpreting data with AI tools. Decision Science (core) develops foundational quantitative and software-based data modeling skills, which are essential for AI tool use and interpreting AI-driven analytics; but the syllabus examined at this time does not mention AI literacy or skills in outcomes or content.

- c. Course content, learning outcomes or assignments where students are introduced to or learn to use AI-powered analytics to interpret datasets

Among the 35 sample syllabi examined, only 2 course syllabi - Information Technology Management (ITM 300) and Decision Science (MGMT 350) - explicitly introduce students to and train them in the use of AI-powered analytics for interpreting datasets. In one section of ITM 300, students learn to analyze business data using Excel and similar technologies, and apply those skills to business problems. The inclusion of *Generative AI* and *machine learning* modules explicitly introduces students to AI-based data analytics, visualization, and decision-making tools. In another section of ITM 300, the course objectives and modules include understanding how AI and data analytics support managerial decision-making and interpreting data ethically in a global IT context. Students engage with Excel and cybersecurity labs while learning about how AI and analytics provide competitive advantage. In both sections, AI and analytics modules position students to address the important tasks of interpreting and managing data tasks to derive data-driven business insights.

Syllabi for both sections of MGMT 350 indicate a focus on quantitative reasoning, optimization, simulation, and forecasting using spreadsheet and software tools. Using Excel, students perform statistical analyses to model real-world problems, a precursor to AI-based analysis. In this course, students learn computational and data analysis methods that align with and prepare them to use newer AI-supported decision tools, especially those produced by the same company. Introduction to Financial Accounting (core course) and Introduction to Managerial Accounting (core course) include *data analytics* assignments through an external but these are rule-based, not AI-driven.

Briefly, Information Technology Management explicitly introduces student to data mining, machine learning, and AI visualization, giving students hands-on experience analyzing and interpreting data with select AI tools. Decision Science develops foundational quantitative and software-based data modeling skills, essential for interpreting AI-driven analytics. Given that the courses use Excel, a Microsoft product, to analyze datasets, it may not be premature to state that the Excel exposure and training may help the students quickly learn to use Microsoft's data visualization AI tool.

- d. According to a PWC report, employers hiring for general management are increasingly prioritizing candidates who can strategically integrate AI into core business functions (June 2025). Therefore, an important question framing this study is in which courses, or learning outcomes, or assignments, are students introduced to or learn to use AI-tools to discover market trends, learn customer behavior, and improve operational performance, and help attain business goals?

Learning outcomes in ITM 300 emphasize using information systems and analytical tools to “improve business processes and enhance competitiveness”. The learning modules teach how gen AI can detect market trends and customer behavior patterns through data mining and visualization. Topics on CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, introduce students to how businesses may use AI to understand and anticipate customer needs and market shifts. The modules on productivity and process improvement connect directly to operational optimization and strategic decision-making. Students use Excel for data analytics to solve problems related to organizational efficiency and market insight generation. Assignments and readings explicitly connect data analytics and AI to achieving strategic business goals.

Although not explicitly labeled “AI,” Decision Science (MGMT 350) course provides the statistical and modeling foundation for understanding how AI can help analyze market data, predict consumer behavior, and optimize operations - core components of AI-powered business analysis. As two required courses (ITM 300 and MGMT 350) for students pursuing the General Management concentration, these courses form a technical-strategic learning continuum. While ITM 300 introduces *hands-on AI tools* (machine learning, data visualization, productivity AI), MGMT 350 develops *quantitative reasoning* needed to interpret and act on analytics results. Together, they prepare students to apply AI to conduct market analysis, improve operational efficiency, and plan-implement strategic performance.

Briefly, at the time of this writing, only 2 core courses out of 16 core/required courses explicitly introduce and require students to use AI tools and concepts (such as machine learning analytics, chatbots, or AI-driven operations systems) to discover market trends, customer behavior, operational performance, to help attain business goals.

The capstone course (MGMT 499), which all undergraduate students in the Business Administration program are required to take, uses the CAPSIM package (comprising a textbook, simulation, and simulation exam). Students practice strategic planning and performance analysis in a virtual business. At the time of this study, CAPSIM is a decision-support learning tool; and does not explicitly integrate AI-tools or AI-fluency development. It is surmised that in their graduating year capstone course, students may not develop AI fluency because AI trend or forecasting tools are not introduced or AI-related skills and lessons from ITM 300 reinforced. Briefly, in the CAPSIM package, students use case studies and simulations to assess competitiveness, conceptually learning data-informed strategy, and AI is not part of the instruction

- e. “Businesses using AI responsibly are focused on fairness and mitigating any biases in the technology” (Short, 2025). Several reports this year highlight a core employer need - for managers to ensure AI is used responsibly and fairly. This includes being vigilant about possible errors and inherent biases in AI algorithms that could lead to discrimination, especially in hiring and performance reviews. Therefore, an important question framing this study is in which courses or learning outcomes or assignments are students alerted to be vigilant about inherent biases or errors in AI algorithms?

Except for three course syllabi, none of the other syllabi include learning that address biases, ethical risks, or accuracy issues in AI algorithms. The syllabus of one section of Information Technology Management (core) explicitly addresses the potential errors in AI algorithms. This course covers modules including “Artificial Intelligence: the Tech Impacting Nearly Every Industry,” “Databases, Analytics, AI and Machine Learning,” and “Information Security.” The modules include applied learning about ethical, security, and globalization issues in information technology, where bias in algorithms and ethical AI use are explicitly acknowledged as managerial responsibilities. The syllabus of the other section includes topics relating to algorithmic outputs, prompting students to engage critically with AI-driven data interpretation and visualization - areas where bias and error

awareness may arise to become an important principle of responsible AI use. In Principles of Microeconomics (core) and Managerial Economics & Business Strategy (core), detailed course policy statements alert students to *review AI output* and to be responsible for verifying AI data. Both Human Resources Management and Leadership and Management syllabi permit AI use, but they do not frame it in a critical-awareness or bias-mitigation context.

However, there are courses in which students learn and are alerted generally to be vigilant about inherent biases or errors in data analytic results, not specifically to AI-analytics. Syllabi of at least 5 out of 16 core course and 1 elective course actively cultivate student vigilance toward bias, error, and misinterpretation in data analytics and quantitative reasoning, often embedding the quality-assurance check within data-driven assignments, analytical projects, or ethical learning outcomes.

In Introduction to Managerial Accounting (core), students complete chapter-based *Data Analytics Assignments* that require a publisher-supplied learning platform and the use of Excel to interpret cost data and managerial performance metrics. The course integrates explicit learning outcomes on *ethical decision-making*, emphasizing that students must not only apply technical procedures correctly but also recognize and correct potential data classification errors, irregularities, or misleading analytic results. Syllabi of both sections of Financial Management (core) reinforce this analytical vigilance through applied financial modeling and project work. Students are required to think critically about computational results, underlying assumptions, and sources of potential error.

Similarly, both Managerial Economics and Business Strategy (core; ECON 380) and Global Economic Analysis (core option; ECON 385) further advance students' awareness of data bias through structured analytical assignments. ECON 380 emphasizes distinguishing relevant from irrelevant data in economic decision-making, developing student competence in scrutinizing the assumptions underlying quantitative models. ECON 385 extends this practice to global datasets and international policy analysis, requiring students to critically evaluate macroeconomic data. These exercises familiarize students with the limitations of real-world data sources and the interpretive biases that can emerge in economic modeling.

Altogether, students are expected not only to perform quantitative analyses but also to question the reliability, validity, and ethical implications of the data and models they employ.

## **5. Limitations of Study**

Many core and elective courses have multiple sections. As such, often times there are different instructors for the same course. Thus, for instance, two different instructors of the same course may include considerably similar syllabi content; but their methodology and/or pedagogical approach may be different. This study examined in-depth two sections of Information Technology Management (core) focusing on their stated learning outcomes and content. Examining output and impact would enrich the study.

While some courses (e.g. Managerial Economics & Business Strategy, Human Resources Management, and Leadership and Management) allow AI-tool use and even encourage AI skill development as course policy, their course content modules do not incorporate where or in which course topic contexts such use or skill development may occur. Further, while syllabi content may not mention actual or possible AI-tool use, the instructor may highlight in class discussions, their prevalent use and impact on the course topics and student learning.

This report is part of a larger study involving a sequenced set of data analyses. We looked at only one aspect of pedagogic practice – the syllabus. Another study layer will survey faculty relating to their perceptions of and any pedagogic adaptations to the AI-impacted workplace. To understand the labor market, a set of job postings will be content analyzed. Contrasting the data sets will help us to understand better graduate AI-readiness and how the business curricula needs redesign to stay relevant.

## **6. Discussion**

At the time of this writing, only 5 of the total 35 syllabi examined allow or encourage AI use, 5 course syllabi expressly prohibit use of AI, and 25 out of 35 sample course syllabi do not have any explicit AI use policy. Examining syllabi content, learning outcomes and assignments, only 3 courses (Principles of Microeconomics, Principles of Macroeconomics, and Information Technology Management), directly integrate *both* AI fluency development and AI-tools use.

The above-mentioned 3 courses are also core courses; thus, 3 out of 16 core/required courses explicitly introduce or require students to use AI tools and concepts (such as machine learning analytics) to discover market trends, improve operational performance, and learn other factors that help attain business goals. In the required capstone course, using the CAPSIM package, students use case studies and simulations to assess competitiveness, conceptually learning data-informed strategy; but AI is not part of the instruction. Therefore, it may be conjectured that in their graduating year capstone course, students may not further develop AI fluency (Bloom's taxonomy) because AI trend or forecasting tools are not introduced nor AI-related skills and lessons from learned from the aforementioned 3 core courses reinforced.

While syllabi of both Information Technology Management (core) and - Decision Science (core) courses specifically mention using Excel, this software may improve to include enhanced beta AI features. It is also likely that Microsoft's (MS) data visualization tool Power BI may be available to be explored to a limit by students using the school-licensed MS suite. Furthermore, it may be noted the Excel's data visualization does not work in Macbooks. Therefore, the College may need to consider developing AI fluency in one particular set of AI tools.

While not including specific potential biases, ethical risks, or accuracy issues in AI algorithms, at least 5 out of 16 core course and 1 elective course actively cultivate student vigilance toward bias, error, and misinterpretation in data analytics and quantitative reasoning. Collectively, at least 8 course syllabi out of 35 examined, demonstrates that the undergraduate general management concentration aims to teach students to interpret data critically. Might there be a need to intentionally increase students' attention to potential errors in AI-analytics as AI-features and stand-alone AI-analytics tools become widely available and used in industry?

Clearly, at the College-level, business faculty response to the introduction of AI tools has been mixed, perhaps more on the cautious side. Even at institution-level, an uncertain and cautious outlook is evident. Upon faculty requests, MS Co-Pilot's proposed launch in Fall 2024 was delayed until January 2025. Some key concerns included addressing student needs relating to AI use, to have a curriculum-course policy in place, environmental costs, etc. While some faculty and community members explored ChatGPT early on, it was only this year – late January 2025 – that CSU system-wide announced ChatGPT availability in March to all 23 campuses. At the time of writing this work-in-progress research paper, Senate is deliberating an AI-use policy for faculty in their courses.

Faculty continue to be divided; and many remain skeptical about the benefits of this learning resource. This work-in-progress is only a snap-shot of how faculty generally are responding to the transformations occurring in the AI-driven higher education workplace. The concerns and optimism are normal when a disruptive innovative technology appears to be transforming work and human enterprise. To conclude on an optimistic note, an observation is noteworthy. According to Harland (2025):

*AI may be growing in importance, but that doesn't mean uniquely human skills are getting any less important. In fact, 83 percent of employees and leaders globally agree that the rising use of AI will make human skills even more vital. The future isn't AI; it's human-directed AI.*

**Ethics Statement:** This research did not require IRB approval because no human subjects were involved. Copies of documents examined were anonymized and data privacy ensured in both analysis and writing.

**AI Declaration:** ChatGPT edu version available to our university was used to only analyze the study documents. Yet, given known errors in AI-analytics, the results were manually verified as well. The creation of the paper from concept to production is the faculty-author's own work.

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