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Committee
Hearing on Artificial Intelligence in Education and Workforce Development
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Chairmen, Chairs, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about artificial intelligence in education and workforce
development. My name is Dr. Camille Dempsey. I am a Professor of Educational Technology at
Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest). I also serve as the inaugural Faculty Director of PennWest's
Center for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies.

PennWest, like other institutions within Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), is a
public regional university dedicated to providing affordable, accessible, and transformative educational
experiences to students across the Commonwealth.

Our institutions are the direct pathway for tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians to participate in an
economy that will look very different in the next decade. Public regional universities like PennWest can no
longer serve their mission, their students, the local workforce, and local communities effectively without
acknowledging and proactively engaging with the society-wide transformative effects of artificial
intelligence and related emerging technologies.

For PennWest and other PASSHE schools, AI serves as both a potential disruptor – and an opportunity – in
many ways.

- We must ensure that every one of our students, upon graduation, is a safe, responsible, and skillful
  user of AI and related technologies. As PASSHE Chancellor Christopher Fiorentino has noted, "AI is
  not just for technology majors. I imagine a future in which every PASSHE university graduate will
  engage with AI as a tool in their future careers."

- We must ensure that all academic programming is proactively responsive to the evolving nature of
  work in the age of AI, so that our graduates nimbly and effectively meet changing workforce
  demands and fields. PennWest's 10,500 undergraduate and graduate students, at our California,

Clarion, Edinboro, and Global Online campuses, come from all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. A high majority of our graduates remain in Pennsylvania to build and expand companies, teach, care for patients and clients, and serve as keystones in their communities in countless ways. When our graduates acquire AI skills as part of their education, we tangibly strengthen the Commonwealth's workforce and enhance their own career prospects.

- The way that our faculty members teach, train, and assess our students must evolve so that students and professors engage AI as a resource rather than as a threat or distraction.

- And we can take our expertise in AI programming, AI pedagogy, and AI-enhanced institutional practices and share it with our community partners, including  school districts, Intermediate Units, local businesses, entrepreneurs, and service providers.

PennWest is an example of how PASSHE universities, through the leadership of the Office of the Chancellor, are strategically responding to these challenges and opportunities strategically. The PennWest Center for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies was established in the fall of 2024 to support and coordinate the efforts of dozens of faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders.

**Programming**

PennWest has developed and launched AI-focused courses and content across the curriculum to ensure training in practical and ethical AI for all students at all stages.

*Courses, dual enrollment, minors, and AI endorsement*. We are building introductory AI skills into our retention-focused first-semester seminar course. We offer students a general education technical literacy course, AI for Everyone, as well as a general education course in psychology, AI, and critical thinking. (We are also offering the AI for Everyone course to local high school students for college credit.) We recently launched a minor in AI and Machine Learning that serves as a supplemental credential for students of any major. We are developing an AI endorsement pathway for K–12 teachers — a four-course sequence that will enable Pennsylvania educators to lead AI-ready classrooms and prepare their students for a world where intelligent systems are an integral part of daily life.

*Google AI for Educator Accelerator*. PASSHE recently extended its partnership with Google to bring free AI training to students, faculty, staff, and community members at five inaugural PASSHE schools, including PennWest. The new initiative, the Google AI for Education Accelerator, provides each of the five pilot universities with access to 500 licenses for online AI training. PennWest faculty members can apply to distribute these licenses to students in their classes as a form of supplemental content. Students will also have the opportunity to engage in the Google training independently and directly as a supplemental credential. We are grateful to the PASSHE Office of the Chancellor for bringing this valuable resource to our students.

*AI Tech Ambassadors*. We have launched an undergraduate AI Tech Ambassador program that already includes three dozen students across many majors. Student Tech Ambassadors receive training from

Center staff (and will soon have access to Grow with Google AI training) that prepares them to conduct their own workshops and presentations for other students as well as community stakeholders. PennWest AI Tech Ambassadors are visiting local schools to demonstrate the safe and practical use of AI, supporting PennWest events and workshops, and preparing to help small business owners in our region consider how automation and intelligent tools can enchance competitiveness. For students, this work provides valuable experiential learning; for the region, it expands AI awareness beyond our campuses.

*AI awareness and responsiveness across the curriculum* Every academic department is challenged to adapt its curricula to reflect and capitalize of the impact of AI and emerging technologies on their respective fields, including business, education, healthcare, computing, information sciences, art and design, social sciences, human services, environmental conservation, and other related fields. Many individual faculty members and programs have already made this leap; this systematic review, taking place this year, will ensure conscious and explicit adaptation across all programs.

**Professional development**

Through locally developed and PASSHE-assisted resources, PennWest faculty and staff are receiving training to model best practices in their classrooms and professional areas.

*Google AI for Education Accelerator*. PennWest employees now have access to PASSHE's Google AI for Education Accelerator partnership resources to help them develop fundamental skills in prompt design, responsible use, and integration of AI into teaching and administrative tasks.

*ACUE AI Quick Study Series*. The PASSHE Office of the Chancellor also collaborates with its universities to provide a cohort of faculty members each semester with access to training in evidence-based teaching practices offered by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE). Faculty members completing ACUE training then have access to its AI Quick Study Series. PennWest faculty members have been enthusiastic participants in the program.

*AI Forward Professional Development*. PennWest is launching an "AI Forward" professional development sequence of training to help faculty members confidently implement safe and ethical AI training and exploration in their classrooms. This sequence of professional development modules will complement the professional development training provided by our PennWest Center for Faculty Excellence. The Center for AI is also in the early stages of developing a rubric for reviewing and certifying courses as "AI Forward" in their design.

*AI Communities of Practice*. The Center for AI's five Communities of Practice provide a space for PennWest faculty, staff, and students to collaboratively explore AI's impact on research, creativity, and pedagogy, and they have hosted  a robust list of events over the past three semesters.

**Partnerships and the workforce pipeline**

Partnerships have been and will continue to be critical for institutions like PennWest to serve the region and position Pennsylvania as a national leader in AI. We are actively collaborating with Intermediate Units and K–12 districts to pilot AI-enhanced instruction and digital citizenship training, as well as provide professional development training to teachers and staff. Since the launch of the Center for AI and Emerging Technologies last year, we have initiated conversations with businesses, chambers of commerce, healthcare providers, manufacturers, nonprofits, and other universities to collaborate on internal- and external-facing programs.

We look forward to announcing the results of these conversations soon. As with any current partnership or community-facing programming that we provide, PennWest is looking to generate experiential learning, networking, and mentoring opportunities for our current students who are entering a world of work that increasingly expects AI fluency.

For PennWest graduates, the future is already here. PennWest graduates are beginning to enter schools, hospitals, clinics, businesses, and other organizations with a working knowledge of generative AI, responsible and ethical AI use, and AI tools. Our teacher preparation programs are aligning with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's evolving AI endorsement standards to ensure future teachers understand ethical guardrails, student privacy, and instructional design in AI-mediated classrooms. In business, finance, and health care, our alumni report that AI skills gained at PennWest help them streamline analysis, improve communication, and innovate responsibly in their early careers.

**Looking ahead**

With the support and encouragement of the PASSHE Office of the Chancellor, PennWest is quickly and impactfully engaging opportunities presented by a rapidly transforming learning and work environment.

Despite the speed and energy behind this work, our challenge is scale. PennWest and other public regional universities proudly serve many first-generation and place-bound students who need affordable access to AI learning but cannot always afford commercial training or high-end technology. To sustain and extend opportunities for our students and the region, we would be enthusiastic collaborators on efforts to support regional AI hubs, such as PennWest's Center, as well as initiatives to further support teacher credentialing programs and micro-credentials in the AI space. We would also be excited to participate in AI resource sharing, such as the sharing of vetted tools, secure data environments, and shared subscription agreements.

Pennsylvania has a history of responding to economic transition with education and innovation. We are again at such a moment. At PennWest, we view AI not as a threat but a way to amplify human creativity and opportunity while preserving ethical, human-centered decision-making. Our work is designed to build confidence and competence across disciplines, enabling the Commonwealth to benefit from human-centered approaches to AI. Our graduates will be ready to shape AI – and not be shaped by it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share PennWest's story – the story of a PASSHE public regional university – and for your attention to how AI can support educational and economic vitality across our Commonwealth. I would be happy to answer any questions and to continue working with the legislature on behalf of PennWest as Pennsylvania charts its course in this era of rapid technological change.

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