Written Testimony: Artificial Intelligence Integration at La Roche University

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Introduction
Thank you for the opportunity to testify about La Roche University's comprehensive approach to artificial intelligence integration in higher education. (Note: In this testimony, I will use GenAI and AI interchangeably.) Under the visionary leadership of President Christina Clark, our institution has developed a strategic, values-driven framework for generative AI (GenAI) implementation that serves as a model for responsible innovation in academic settings.

As VPAA and Dean of the Faculty, I have been charged by President Clark with leading La Roche University's AI initiative. My extensive experience in this field includes conducting AI workshops for Chief Academic Officers, department chairs, and division chairs through the Council of Independent Colleges at conferences in Portland, Atlanta, and online. I have presented on GenAI in higher education for the New American Colleges and Universities (NACU) consortium, delivered webinars for *The Leading Edge Thinking in Higher Education Series* through Bay Path University, and represented the Council of Independent Colleges at the National Higher Education Teaching Conference. I am also invited to lead a workshop on GenAI and vocation at the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) conference in Kansas City in March 2026.

Strategic Leadership and Institutional Commitment
President Clark's leadership has been instrumental in transforming what began as an exploratory task force into a comprehensive institutional commitment. Building on groundbreaking work initiated under former provost Howard Ishiyama and Dr. Lynn Archer, our GenAI initiative now operates under the co-leadership of myself and Professor Leigh Frederick from Nursing, ensuring both academic rigor and practical application across disciplines.

Comprehensive Implementation Framework
Our GenAI integration strategy encompasses four key pillars:

1. Curriculum Integration
AI is now embedded in our core curriculum, ensuring all students graduate with essential digital literacy skills. Each major incorporates GenAI learning outcomes in at least one required course, with departments having the flexibility to make GenAI learning "inescapable" in ways that align with their disciplinary needs.

It's crucial to understand, however, that for sound pedagogical reasons, not all courses integrate GenAI—and this intentionality is fundamental to our approach. Our faculty owns the curriculum and determines student learning outcomes based on disciplinary expertise and educational best practices. This means that in certain contexts, particularly foundational writing courses, GenAI tools may be deliberately restricted or prohibited.

We believe students must first learn to think and communicate without technological shortcuts. Writing is not merely a product but a process—a form of thinking itself. Students need to experience the cognitive work of gathering and organizing their thoughts, weighing arguments, crafting multiple drafts, and developing genuine editing skills. These fundamental competencies in critical thinking and communication require time, struggle, and sustained practice. They cannot be rushed or bypassed by prompting a large language model.

Only after students have developed these foundational skills—after they've learned to think critically, argue persuasively, and revise thoughtfully on their own—are they truly prepared to use AI tools effectively and responsibly to enhance and refine their work. This scaffolded approach ensures our graduates possess both the deep cognitive skills that define educated professionals and the technical fluency to leverage AI as a powerful tool rather than a crutch.

2. Micro-Certification Program

Our AI micro-credential, available at studentlingo.com/laroche, has been well-received by students, providing them with important skills that enhance their career readiness. This program, "AI Literacy Essentials for Students: A Micro-Credential For Maximum Impact," is a comprehensive six-part series designed to equip college students with both fundamental understanding and practical knowledge of GenAI. The program spans everything from basic AI concepts and ethical considerations to hands-on application of AI tools in academic and professional contexts. Each session is designed to build students' AI literacy in a way that prepares them for both immediate academic success and long-term career challenges.

The curriculum begins with foundational ethics and policy, grounding students in responsible AI use while connecting them directly to institutional guidelines. Students then progress through practical tool demonstrations, learning to leverage AI for personalized academic support and task management.

The series addresses specific student needs with targeted sessions on study skills and test preparation, where AI tools generate practice questions and optimize learning strategies; presentation design and delivery, featuring real-time feedback on speech clarity and audience engagement; and writing enhancement**,** which covers everything from grammar and style to maintaining academic integrity while using AI assistance.

The program culminates in critical thinking and creativity, where students learn to evaluate AI outputs for accuracy and bias, explore ethical implications, and develop innovative approaches to problem-solving. This final session ensures students become not just AI users, but thoughtful, critical evaluators of AI technology.

3. Campus-Wide Technology Access

Our institution-wide Grammarly subscription is being utilized extensively by students across all programs, demonstrating the practical value of AI- and GenAI-powered tools in academic writing and communication. Through our partnership with Grammarly for Education, students have access to a comprehensive AI communication assistant that supports them across three critical domains: academic writing, professional communication, and interpersonal communication. The platform provides real-time grammar, spelling, and fluency corrections alongside advanced features like

plagiarism detection, automatic citations, and clarity suggestions—tools that help students improve their writing over time and submit their highest-quality work.

The reason we selected Grammarly has to do with its commitment to responsible AI, which is built on five pillars: transparency, fairness and safety, user agency, accountability, and privacy and security. The platform includes an Authorship tool (in beta) that enables students to trace text origins in their writing, and an AI detector that evaluates content originality—empowering students to make informed, ethical decisions about AI use.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Innovation

We continue our partnership with the Council of Independent Colleges' AI Ready Network, participating in monthly webinars and discussions while actively engaging in Program 2: Building & Launching Together. This advanced initiative moves beyond foundational AI literacy into practical deployment, enabling our institution to pilot sophisticated AI applications in a secure, non-indexed environment before scaling campus-wide.

Through this program, we've gained access to BoodleBox, a professional-grade AI platform that serves as our testing ground for AI-enabled teaching, learning, and administrative work. Unlike consumer AI tools, BoodleBox meets rigorous security and privacy requirements while providing access to multiple leading AI models—including ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and Stable Diffusion—all within a single, secure interface.

The platform's capabilities extend far beyond basic prompting. Faculty and staff can safely upload complete data sets and institutional documents for AI analysis, create custom AI assistants (or "bots") tailored to specific departmental needs, and collaborate with colleagues both on campus and across the entire CIC network. Importantly, all prompts and uploaded documents remain private, with data handling that meets institutional security standards.

A Community of Practice Approach

What distinguishes Program 2 is its emphasis on collaborative learning and real-world deployment. Rather than isolated experimentation, we participate in a community of practice that connects us with peer institutions engaged in similar work. This community meets monthly to share actively developed applications, demonstrate innovations, and learn from collective experience. By the program's conclusion at the end of the spring semester, we will have collaborative access to over 100 AI applications and bots developed across the network.

Our faculty and staff teams are supported by senior advisors who provide guidance on use-case development, advanced prompt engineering techniques, computational thinking approaches, and bot design principles. This coaching model ensures we're not simply adopting AI tools, but thoughtfully integrating them in ways that align with our educational mission and institutional values.

Through this program, our instructors can experiment with bots that facilitate classroom discussions, group projects, or reflective exercises. In courses focused on media literacy, ethics, or critical thinking, faculty can use AI to model ethical decision-making or have students critique bias in generated content. The platform enables both modest enhancements to existing assignments and more ambitious redesigns around AI collaboration—all within a protected space for responsible experimentation.

Data-Driven Assessment and Planning
This year, we are also conducting a GenAI Curriculum Prioritization Assessment through EAB, evaluating 10-15 programs in our portfolio and mapping them against data on AI applications across industries. This custom report will guide us in identifying which programs prepare students for the most rapidly changing jobs, enabling data-driven decisions about curriculum revision priorities. Our immediate goals include developing at least one institutional bot to streamline administrative processes, with strong faculty and student support for this initiative.

Values-Driven Approach: Ethics and Humanities
As an institution grounded in the mission and values of the Sisters of Divine Providence, we pay particular attention to the ethical dimensions of AI. In response to this commitment, we have launched a parallel initiative on Reimagining the Humanities.

At a time when many institutions, including flagship universities, are cutting humanities programs, La Roche is boldly reimagining their role. We believe that in an increasingly digital and AI-dominated future, humanistic and ethical thinking becomes more essential than ever. Given our institutional context and values, La Roche is particularly well-positioned to enable students to work with AI while maintaining focus on humanistic values.

Balancing Digital Competency with Durable Human Skills
While it is undeniably important for universities to prepare students to work with generative AI in the workplace and ensure they are capable of thriving in this digital age, it is equally important to equip them with durable skills such as critical thinking, communication, and ethical reasoning. These foundational capabilities remain irreplaceable in an AI-enhanced world.

We are committed to training students to find their individual voice and sharpen their thinking—processes that writing and dialogue can uniquely facilitate. Students must learn not to outsource their thinking to a machine. Instead, we want to provide a space where students are wrestling with language, grappling with their own ideas and engaging with others' perspectives, participating in meaningful dialogue, and learning to engage respectfully with people they disagree with.

The Enduring Value of Humanities Education
This is precisely why humanities education remains so vital: the humanities teach the skills that employers continue to seek and value. Human-to-human interaction can be enhanced by technology, but it should not be replaced by algorithms. The capacity for nuanced communication, empathetic understanding, ethical reasoning, and critical analysis—skills honed through humanities disciplines—become more valuable, not less, in an AI-dominated landscape.

Civic Responsibility and Democratic Values
Furthermore, universities like La Roche have a fundamental responsibility to educate responsible citizens who are equipped to contribute to the democratic values of our society. In an era where AI can amplify both information and misinformation, where algorithmic decision-making affects countless aspects of civic life, and where technology shapes public discourse, we need graduates who can think critically about these systems, engage thoughtfully in democratic processes, and uphold the human dignity that lies at the heart of our institutional mission.

Our approach ensures that as we prepare students for an AI-enhanced future, we simultaneously strengthen their capacity for independent thought, ethical reasoning, and meaningful human connection—qualities that no algorithm can replicate and that our democracy desperately needs.

Conclusion

La Roche University's approach to AI integration demonstrates that institutions can embrace technological innovation while remaining true to their core values and mission. Under President Clark's leadership, we have created a comprehensive, ethical, and practical framework that prepares students for an AI-enhanced future while simultaneously strengthening the essential human elements of education that make us uniquely capable of democratic citizenship and ethical leadership.

Our model proves that responsible AI integration is not only possible but essential for higher education institutions committed to serving their students and society. We reject the false choice between technological advancement and humanistic education. Instead, we have shown that these elements are complementary and mutually reinforcing—that preparing students to work effectively with AI requires deepening their capacity for critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and authentic human connection.

In an era where many institutions are retreating from the humanities, La Roche is demonstrating that these disciplines are more vital than ever. We are preparing graduates who can harness the power of AI while maintaining their individual voice, who can engage with complex technologies while upholding human dignity, and who can contribute to democratic society as thoughtful, ethical citizens.

We stand ready to share our experiences and collaborate with other institutions and policymakers to ensure that AI serves the common good in educational settings—not by replacing human judgment and connection, but by enhancing our capacity to think, create, and serve together.

Thank you for your attention, and I welcome any questions about our comprehensive approach to AI integration at La Roche University.