

AI-Driven Leadership in Higher Education

The ARIA Framework: A Practical Decision Architecture for University Leaders

Rina Lev Danilova · American University of Armenia · IAFOR ECE2026 · Session 108193 · aua.am



A

ASSESS

R

REDESIGN

I

IMPLEMENT

A

ADAPT

Most universities are stuck in the experimentation loop.

- Pilots that never scale
- Tools adopted without governance
- Enthusiasm without strategy

*The gap is not a technology gap. It is a **leadership gap**. Institutions need frameworks — not just tools.*

The ARIA Framework

A four-phase decision architecture for AI adoption in higher education

A

ASSESS

Where are we, really?

Understand your institutional context and AI readiness across data, workforce, governance, and culture.

R

REDESIGN

What could we do differently?

Map and reimagine workflows with AI as a design partner. Automate, augment, or accelerate.

I

IMPLEMENT

How do we roll this out safely?

Deploy with governance, ethics, and capacity building. Keep humans meaningfully in the loop.

A

ADAPT

How do we keep improving?

Build feedback loops and align AI strategy with your institution's long-term vision.

Think of ARIA not as a linear checklist — but as a thinking loop you will cycle through as your institution matures.

What We'll Cover Today

0–8 min	Opening	Context, the leadership gap, and introducing ARIA
8–20 min	A — Assess	Institutional readiness across 4 dimensions + Exercise 1
20–32 min	R — Redesign	Workflow mapping, AI integration modes + Exercise 2
32–44 min	I — Implement	Governance, ethics, capacity building + Exercise 3
44–54 min	A — Adapt	Feedback loops, long-term strategy + Exercise 4
54–60 min	Closing	Synthesis, next steps, resources



Workshop companion page:
attentoai.com/aria



A S S E S S

Phase 1 of 4

Understand your institutional context and AI readiness

The most common mistake in institutional AI adoption is **skipping assessment entirely**.

Implementation without assessment is just expensive guessing.



8:00 – 20:00

Four Dimensions of Institutional Readiness



Data Readiness

Does your institution collect, store, and manage data in ways that make AI integration feasible? Think about admissions data, student records, and course outcomes.

Is your data accessible & structured?



Workforce Readiness

Do your staff and faculty have baseline digital literacy to engage with AI tools? Do leaders understand enough to govern AI responsibly?

Can your people use & govern AI?



Governance Readiness

Do you have — or can you build — policies for AI use? Who decides what AI does? Who is accountable when something goes wrong?

Do you have policy frameworks?



Culture Readiness

Is your institution oriented toward experimentation and learning? Or is change typically resisted? This shapes your implementation strategy significantly.

Does culture support change?

Documented Example: Georgia State University

The Pounce chatbot

Launched 2016 — an SMS-based AI chatbot handling deadlines, financial aid, registration, and course requirements, 24/7.

A Brown University randomized controlled trial measured real impact before scaling:

- Grades of B or above: +16% vs. control group
- First-generation students: +11 points average grade
- Withdrawals due to outstanding balances: down 50%
- Re-registration: +3% — about 1,300 additional students retained

Key insight

\$7.6M federal grant

US Dept. of Education, Jan 2024 — to expand this model into math and English courses at Georgia State, Morgan State, and UCF.

What made it work: faculty-driven design + a randomized trial to measure real impact, not assumed impact.

Case Vignette: The Admissions Office

The situation

A mid-sized university where the admissions office manages thousands of applications manually. Staff are overwhelmed. Response times are slow. Promising students are falling through the gaps.

An AI-powered screening tool seems like an obvious solution — but before adopting it:

- What data does the algorithm train on? Is it representative?
- Does it encode historical biases?
- Who reviews the AI's recommendations?
- What happens when it is wrong?

Key insight

These are not hypothetical questions.

They are the exact questions that separate responsible adoption from reputational risk.

Assessment is not a step you can skip. It is the step that makes all other steps worthwhile.



ARIA Readiness Self-Assessment

Rate your institution across the four readiness dimensions:

Data Readiness · Workforce Readiness · Governance Readiness · Culture Readiness

Score each from 1–5 to generate your institutional readiness profile.

Complete Exercise 1 · Takes 5–7 minutes



Pause video

[Go to attentoai.com/aria](https://attentoai.com/aria) → Exercise 1

R

R E D E S I G N

Phase 2 of 4

Map and reimagine workflows with AI as a design partner

Tool-first thinking leads to adoption for adoption's sake.

Need-first thinking leads to transformation.



20:00 – 32:00

Three AI Integration Modes

Not every task should be automated. The redesign question is: which mode is right for each task?



AUTOMATE

Routine tasks with clear rules and low stakes. No human decision required at each step.

Example:

Scheduling, document sorting, form acknowledgements, standard report generation

When tasks are repetitive, rule-based, and errors are easily caught and corrected.



AUGMENT

Complex tasks where AI informs, but the human decides. AI provides analysis; leadership acts.

Example:

Advising recommendations, application scoring review, budget anomaly flagging

When human judgment, relationships, or accountability are genuinely required.



ACCELERATE

Creative or strategic work where AI drafts and the human refines. Preserves quality at speed.

Example:

Reports, proposals, grant applications, communications, research summaries

When the work requires human voice and quality, but the drafting is time-consuming.

Documented Example: Arizona State University

THE SYSTEM

eAdvisor (launched 2007)

Maps each student against their degree program, flags critical courses, and alerts advisors when a student falls off track.

The system never decides — it surfaces a flag. A human advisor decides what happens next.

THE RESULTS

Published, peer-cited outcomes



4-year graduation rate: +11.6pp (33.2% to 44.8%, 2006-2009 cohorts)



6-year graduation rate: 56.9% to 65.3%



Freshman retention: 77% to 84% (~720 additional students/year reaching year two)

Case Study: AI in Student Advising

BEFORE

The pain point

Students cannot get timely appointments. Advisors are overwhelmed with repetitive queries about degree requirements, course availability, and credit transfer.

*Result: Advisors spend 60–70% of time on tier-one queries.
High-complexity students wait weeks.*

REDESIGNED

The redesigned workflow



AI assistant handles tier-one queries (degree requirements, scheduling, credit transfer)



Advisors freed for high-complexity cases, crisis support, and strategic conversations



Human role doesn't shrink — it shifts. And becomes more meaningful.

Case Study: AI in International Collaboration

BEFORE

The pain point

Partner universities span multiple countries, time zones, and languages. Meeting notes, calendars, and recruitment materials must move across language and institutional context.

Result: Staff lose hours to manual translation and summarising. Misaligned academic calendars surface late, after commitments are already made.

REDESIGNED

The redesigned workflow



AI drafts first-pass translations and summaries of meeting notes across languages



AI flags misalignments between partner institutions' academic calendars



Human judgment refines tone, context, and cultural nuance before anything is sent — this is Accelerate, not Automate

Workflow Mapping Exercise

1

Identify a high-friction process

Something that consumes staff time and generates frustration

2

Decompose into tasks

Where are the handoffs, delays, and decision points?

3

Map AI integration points

Automate, Augment, or Accelerate — which mode fits each task?



Pause video

[Go to attentoai.com/aria](https://attentoai.com/aria) → Exercise 2

Choose a real process from your institution · 7–10 minutes

I

I M P L E M E N T

Phase 3 of 4

Roll out responsibly with governance, ethics, and capacity

Most AI projects do not fail because the technology doesn't work.

They fail because the implementation was not designed.



32:00 – 44:00

Cornell's AI Task Force: A Real Governance Blueprint

Published Jan 2024 by a 30+ stakeholder task force. Roles assigned with a RACI model:

R

Responsible — does the work (e.g. the team building or running the tool)

A

Accountable — owns the outcome, and must hold real veto power to halt a deployment

C

Consulted — input sought before deciding (legal, privacy, security, faculty)

I

Informed — updated after the decision is made

A committee without veto power is advisory, not governing.

The report also named specific risks — confabulation, regulated-data mishandling, phishing — each tied to an owner. Source: Cornell Univ. Generative AI in Administration Task Force Report, Jan 2024.

Five Governance Questions Every Institution Must Answer

Governance is not a constraint on AI adoption. It is what makes AI adoption sustainable.

01

Who has authority to approve or restrict AI use?

02

How are AI-assisted decisions documented and reviewable?

03

What is the escalation path when AI produces harmful or incorrect outputs?

04

How is student and staff data protected in AI workflows?

05

How will the institution communicate its AI practices to its community?

These are not technical questions. They are leadership questions — and the answers must come from leadership, not the IT department.

Capacity & Ethics

Capacity Building

Technology without capability is useless.

All Staff

Basic AI literacy — what AI can and can't do

Operational Roles

Applied tool training for daily workflows

Leaders & Faculty

Strategic AI leadership development

Culture is infrastructure. Create psychological safety around AI.

Three Ethical Dimensions



Equity

AI systems trained on historical data can perpetuate historical inequities. Active monitoring and correction required.



Transparency

Students and staff have a right to know when AI is involved in decisions that affect them.



Autonomy

AI should extend human capacity, not replace human judgment in high-stakes decisions.

Racial Bias in AI Admissions Screening

The finding

A 2024 peer-reviewed study examined AI algorithms used in university admissions and decision-making.

Rate of incorrectly predicting academic failure, by group:

- Black students: 19% incorrectly flagged as likely to fail
- White students: 12% incorrectly flagged
- Asian students: 6% incorrectly flagged
- The algorithm was not neutral — it amplified historical underrepresentation in its training data

Key insight

Not hypothetical. Not historical.

A flagged student may be denied admission or deprioritised for support — based on a biased prediction.

A bias audit with real authority to block rollout catches this before deployment — not after a complaint or a headline.

In-House Example: American University of Armenia

THE SYSTEM

A multi-agent AI for policy governance

Built by adjunct faculty Gagik Khalafyan and data science senior Armen Madoyan (BSDS '26), led by Dr. Habet Madoyan, Chair of Data Science at AUA's Akian College of Science and Engineering.

Tested live on AUA's spring 2026 organisational restructuring — navigating 150+ policy documents.

GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

What the system does



Answers policy questions via Retrieval-Augmented Generation over 150+ documents



Routes heterogeneous academic requests across departments with guardrail enforcement



Human-defined scope, human-reviewed output, named faculty owner accountable for the system

Draft a One-Page Implementation Plan

Pick one AI initiative at your institution and sketch out:

- ➔ Governance — who approves, who is accountable, how decisions are documented
- ➔ Training — what capacity does your team need, and how will you build it?
- ➔ Communication — how will you communicate what the AI does to your community?

The goal is to make the abstract concrete — not to write a perfect plan.

⏏ Pause video

[Go to attentoai.com/aria](https://attentoai.com/aria) ➔ Exercise 3



A D A P T

Phase 4 of 4

Build feedback loops and align with long-term strategy

Adaptation is not optional.

The institutions that build this capacity now will be significantly better positioned in five years.



44:00 – 54:00

When Institutions Don't Adapt: NYC's MyCity Chatbot

THE PROBLEM

Launched October 2023

A chatbot to help small business owners navigate city bureaucracy gave dangerously wrong guidance — including telling landlords they could refuse housing vouchers, contradicting city policy.

Despite documented inaccuracies, the chatbot stayed online.

THE MISSING MECHANISM

What Adapt is designed to prevent



No named owner with authority to pause the tool



No structured, fast channel for reporting harm



No pre-decided threshold for "when do we stop this"

Building Feedback Loops



01 Measurement

What are you tracking? Student outcomes, staff time saved, error rates. You need data to know if the AI is working.



03 Voice

Do staff, students, and faculty have structured ways to report problems and suggest improvements?



02 Review

Who reviews the data, and how often? Monthly operational reviews minimum. Annual strategic reviews essential.



04 Iteration

What is your process for modifying or discontinuing an AI tool that is not delivering? An exit strategy matters.

An exit strategy is as important as an adoption strategy.

Strategic Reflection Exercise

1

One feedback mechanism

Identify one feedback mechanism you could realistically build into an existing AI initiative

2

One strategic question

Identify one long-term strategic question your institution needs to address about AI

This is a thinking exercise. No perfect answer required.



Pause video

[Go to attentoai.com/aria](https://attentoai.com/aria) → Exercise 4

What To Do Next

ARIA gives you a decision architecture — not a checklist, not a vendor pitch.

1

Choose one process

Pick the most painful manual process. Run it through ARIA. Just one.

2

Complete all four exercises

Return to attentoai.com and finish any exercises you paused.

3

Share with one colleague

That is how institutional change begins — not with a committee, but with one leader.

"The institutions that will lead the next decade are already experimenting with AI today — in small, responsible, human-centred steps."

Thank You

Everything from today lives on the workshop page



EXPLORE MORE

All of today's materials — and more — are open on the workshop page.

You're warmly invited to explore the ARIA exercises, the readiness checklist and questionnaire, and the AI Agents extension — at your own pace, whenever it's useful.

It's all there for you to use.



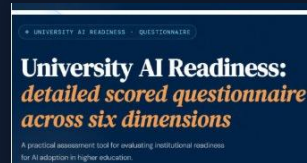
Session title



Workshop companion



Readiness checklist (6 dim.)



Readiness questionnaire (6 dim.)



AI Agents extension



Let's keep the conversation going — connect on LinkedIn: **Rina Lev Danilova**