NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL (NISP) FOR A NEW PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

1. **Institution:** Auburn University

2. **Date of NISP Submission:** 20 November 2023

3. **Contact Person and Title:** Dr. Jim Ryan
   - Telephone: 334-663-6460
   - E-mail: ryanjae@auburn.edu

4. **Program Identification:**
   - Award Level: Master’s Degree
   - Title: Artificial Intelligence Engineering
   - Degree nomenclature (e.g., MBA, BS): MS
   - 6-digit CIP: 11.0102

5. **Program Administration and Implementation:**
   - Name of College/ School: College of Business
   - Name of Dean: Mario Eden
   - Name of Department: Computer Science and Software Engineering
   - Name of Chairperson: N. Narayanan

   Proposed program implementation date: August 2024
   Anticipated ACHE meeting to vote on proposal: March 2024
   Anticipated date of approval from institutional governing board: November 2023
   Other considerations for timing and approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review):
6. **Program Design:**

**Brief Description of Program and Objectives:**

The Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (MS-AIE) degree is a graduate degree that is open to everyone with a baccalaureate degree from an institution of recognized standing, either in computer science, software engineering or another STEM discipline, or with relevant professional experience that provides necessary background knowledge of programming, computing, and mathematics.

The MS-AIE program encompasses four student learning outcomes (SLO 1-4).

- **SLO 1:** Students will develop algorithms and methodologies in order to engineer artificial intelligence and machine learning systems and technologies.
- **SLO 2:** Students will incorporate software engineering principles to analyze, design, and implement artificial intelligence and machine learning software.
- **SLO 3:** Students will apply artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to solve complex engineering problems and problems of societal importance.
- **SLO 4:** Students will deliver written and oral presentations to non-technical and technical audiences.

Proposed delivery format: **100% in-person, 100% online**

If hybrid, what % of program will be delivered online?

If multiple formats, which ones?

Total Credit Hours required to complete the program (if range, enter minimum): 30 credit hours

Please identify any specialized accreditation agency that may apply to this program and explain why your institution does or does not intend to seek specialized accreditation.

Will the curriculum require work-based or experiential learning (internship, practicum, etc.)? If yes, please explain. Definitions and examples of different types of work-based learning are available at [https://www.alapprentice.org/](https://www.alapprentice.org/).
Will the program be designed to meet educational requirements licensure and/or certification required for entry-level employment? If yes, please list license and/or certification(s).

7. Employment Occupational Alignment
Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, please indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found at https://www.onetcodeconnector.org/find/family/title#17. A list of Alabama’s “In-Demand Occupations” is available at https://ache.edu/Instruction.aspx

SOC 1 (required): 15-1252.00 Software Developers
SOC 2 (optional)
SOC 3 (optional)

8. Relationship to other programs within the institution:
Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings, including options within current degree programs? If yes, please explain. If this is a graduate program, please list any existing undergraduate programs which are directly or indirectly related. If this is a doctoral program, also list related master's programs.

Will this program replace any existing programs or specializations, options, or concentrations within existing programs? If yes, please explain.

9. Relationship to programs at other Alabama public institutions:
List programs at the same degree level that use the same or similar CIP codes. If no similar programs exist within Alabama, please list similar programs offered within the 16 SREB states.

If the proposed program duplicates, closely resembles, or is similar to any other offerings in the state, please provide justification for any potential duplication.
No higher education institutions in Alabama offer master’s degree programs in artificial intelligence engineering at the present time.

If you plan to explore program collaboration with other institutions, please explain.

None planned at this time.

10. Projected program demand

What is the primary methodology you will use to determine the level of student demand for this program? (Survey of current or former students, enrollments in existing programs or courses)

Justification 1 – Fast-Growing Field: The field of artificial intelligence has evolved into a fast-growing and demanding field. Organizations across a wide variety of industries seek to adopt new technologies, ranging from machine learning and natural language processing to computer vision and robotics.

Justification 2 – Demands: Artificial intelligence promises to revolutionize sectors such as business, defense, education, government, and health care. Industry sectors and organizations have a pressing demand to hire AI experts to design and deliver disruptive innovations such as self-driving cars and AI assistants in the professions.

Justification 3 - Job Opportunities: Over the past few years, AI and machine learning jobs have jumped by almost 75%. Ziprecruiter.com projects that the outlook for AI careers is excellent, and United States Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a 13% jump in computer-related occupations between 2016 and 2026. Many of these occupations fit in the AI job market.

Justification 4 – Education and Training: This graduate program aims to train professionals in the skills required to engineer (design, develop, analyze, and implement) high-quality systems for solving the complex, real-world AI and machine learning problems that exist today. Students will gain vital skills and knowledge to develop successful careers in business, defense, education, government, and health care.

What is the primary methodology you will use to determine state need for this program? (Labor market information, expert market analysis, state or regional economic development strategy)
The proposed program addresses the critical skill shortage noted in the following three documented needs.

Documented Need 1: To support Auburn University’s artificial intelligence initiative. The AI@AU Initiative will build a university-wide computational infrastructure for AI research and education and explore university-wide educational innovations in AI. One of the goals of this initiative is to create AI graduate and certificate programs to prepare students for the modern workplace.

Documented Need 2: To support AI-related education and research. AI is emerging as a priority at Auburn University and in the nation, and this program is slated to expand Auburn’s reach and build upon its already solid reputation in artificial intelligence.

Documented Need 3: To create an AI workforce in Alabama. This program will be one of the first of its kind in Alabama, thereby strengthening AI education across the the state. It will attract industries that desire an artificial intelligence workforce to move to Alabama by producing graduates who are well-prepared to design advanced solutions that meet business needs [1].

[1] $2 million investment will create artificial intelligence initiative at Auburn

Employment Opportunities:

This graduate program is expected to meet a growing need in the artificial intelligence and machine learning job marketplace. There is a shortage of talent capable of combining artificial intelligence and machine learning skill sets. Our search on indeed.com reveals that there are more than 154,898 artificial intelligence related jobs available on indeed.com’s database [2]. A similar search on ZipRecruiter.com - another tech-career website – shows that there are 263,907 jobs related to machine learning [3].

[2] Artificial intelligence jobs listed on Indeed.com
https://www.indeed.com/jobs?q=AI%2C%20artificial%2C%20machine%20learning%2C%20NLP%20&l&vjk=a1c98dabbfde4d5b

https://www.ziprecruiter.com/jobs-search?search=machine%20learning
PROPOSAL FOR A NEW DEGREE PROGRAM (Part 1: Proposal)

1. Date of Proposal Submission: 2 December 2023

   Full program name and level: Artificial Intelligence Engineering
   Degree nomenclature (e.g., MBA, BS): MS
   CIP Code: 11.0102

2. Learning Outcomes:

   Succinctly list at least four (4) but no more than seven (7) of the most prominent student learning outcomes of the program.

   SLO 1: Students will develop algorithms and methodologies in order to engineer artificial intelligence and machine learning systems and technologies.

   SLO 2: Students will incorporate software engineering principles to analyze, design, and implement artificial intelligence and machine learning software.

   SLO 3: Students will apply artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to solve complex engineering problems and problems of societal importance.

   SLO 4: Students will deliver written and oral presentations to non-technical and technical audiences.

3. Employment Outcomes and Program Demand

   Please describe how the proposed program prepares graduates to seek employment in the occupations (SOC codes) identified within the NISP. Note: you may also indicate any updates to those codes here.

   SOC 1 (required): 15-1256 Software Developers & Software Quality Assurance Analysts & Testers
   SOC 2 (optional): 15-1211.00 Computer Systems Analysts
   SOC 3 (optional): 15-1299.08 Computer Systems Engineers/Architects
Please explain whether further education/ training is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations you have selected.

No

Briefly describe how the program fulfills a specific industry or employment need for the State of Alabama. As appropriate, you should discuss alignment with Alabama’s Statewide or Regional Lists of In-Demand Occupations (available at https://ache.edu/Instruction.aspx under “Policy/Guidance”) or with emerging industries as identified by Alabama’s Innovation Commission or the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA).

Auburn University’s Biggio Center for Teaching and Learning commissioned a feasibility study of the proposed program by the educational consulting firm EAB in summer 2022 [1]. This study and our subsequent research produced the following findings:

- EAB’s labor market analysis indicated a favorable labor market for graduates of the proposed program.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming important to emerging industries identified by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), such as Aerospace, Automotive, Agriculture, Chemical, Life Sciences, and Information Technology.
- A regional analysis of 12 states (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, MO, NC, SC, TN, TX) of job postings’ skill requirements for Master’s level AI professionals showed that during a three-year period from June 2019 to May 2022, employers demonstrated sustained demand for skills that the proposed program will provide to students.
- The same regional analysis showed an average monthly demand growth of +3.72% for Master’s level AI professionals, with 6,627 average monthly job postings and 50,309 total job postings over the three year period.
- A corresponding national analysis showed an average monthly demand growth of +3.08% for Master’s level AI professionals, with 29,567 average monthly job postings and 198,788 total job postings over the three year period.
- Software Developers and Testers (SOC 15-1256 Software Developers & Software Quality Assurance Analysts & Testers) was one of top two occupations identified for potential employment of AI professionals in both the regional analysis (for the 12-state region including AL) and national analysis of employment by EAB.
- This is also the occupation listed in the “List of Alabama’s In-Demand Occupations” [2] as the occupation with the highest 2020 employment (17,220) and average annual openings (1,710) with a median annual salary of $98,524 among all information technology occupations.
• Other potential job titles for graduates of the proposed program identified in the EAB regional and national market analysis include software engineers, machine learning engineers, data engineers and data scientists.

• Searches conducted on 12-1-2023 at the four leading job posting websites revealed the following numbers of available job openings listing AI skills: LinkedIn.com (AL: 712 jobs, USA: 66,448 jobs), Indeed.com (AL: 338 jobs, USA: 29,161 jobs), Ziprecruiter.com (AL: 84 jobs, USA: 21,221 jobs), Glassdoor.com (AL: 175 jobs, USA: 16,639 jobs).

• Demand far outstrips supply: According to the EAB analysis, during the academic years 2015-2020, regional institutions in the 12-state region including Alabama reported only 32 CIP Code 11.0102 ("Artificial Intelligence and Robotics") Master’s level degree completions. The corresponding national number for this period was 1,075. Alabama produced no Master’s level degree completions in this CIP code.

• The EAB market analysis identified the following as top skills that regional and national employers are looking for: machine learning skills, AI language programming skills, data science skills, and computer science skills. Courses in the proposed program are designed to impart these skills in students.

• According to EAB’s regional market analysis, the top three regional industries advertising Master's level AI job postings are Finance and Insurance, Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services, and Manufacturing. Alabama has major concentrations of these industries in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery, where graduates of the proposed program will find employment.

• The proposed program will be one of the first of its kind in Alabama, thereby strengthening AI education across the state. It will attract industries that desire an artificial intelligence workforce to move to Alabama by producing graduates who are well-prepared to design and engineer advanced AI solutions that meet industry needs.


Please describe how you will determine whether graduates are successful in obtaining relevant employment or pursuing further study.

Annual surveys will be conducted to gather data on employment and career advancement for graduates of the program under the direction of the graduate program officer of the department.

Briefly describe evidence of student demand for the program, including enrollments in related coursework at your institution if applicable. If a survey of student interest was conducted, please briefly describe the survey instrument, number and percentage of respondents, and summary of results.
There is widespread national demand from students for advanced technical training in AI. We believe that a similar demand exists in Alabama. There is significant demand for our current course offerings in AI. For example, three courses on AI, Machine Learning, and Data mining that will be required in the proposed program had a combined undergraduate and graduate student enrollment of 297 during the 2022-23 academic year. Department administration and academic advisors have already received numerous enquiries from students about enrolling in the proposed program.

4. Specific Rationale (Strengths) for Program

What is the specific rationale for recommending approval of this proposal? List 3-5 strengths of the proposed program.

Rationale 1 – Fast-growing field: AI has evolved into a fast-growing field. A wide variety of industries seek to adopt AI-related technologies, ranging from machine learning and natural language processing to computer vision and robotics. These include emerging industries identified by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), such as Aerospace, Automotive, Agriculture, Chemical, Life Sciences, and Information Technology.

Rationale 2 – Regional workforce demand: A regional job market analysis of 12 states (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, MO, NC, SC, TN, TX) of job postings’ skill requirements for Master’s level AI professionals by the educational consultancy firm EAB showed that during a three-year period from June 2019 to May 2022, there was an average monthly demand growth of +3.72% for Master’s level AI professionals, with 6,627 average monthly job postings and 50,309 total job postings over the three year period.

Rationale 3 – Alabama workforce demand: Searches conducted at the four leading job posting websites LinkedIn, Indeed, Ziprecruiter, and Glassdoor showed an average of 327 job openings requiring AI skills for the month of December 2023. Software Developers and Testers (SOC 15-1256 Software Developers & Software Quality Assurance Analysts & Testers) was one of top two occupations identified for potential employment of Artificial Intelligence professionals in both the regional and national analyses of employment by EAB. This is also the occupation listed in the “List of Alabama’s In-Demand Occupations” as the occupation with the highest 2020 employment (17,220) and average annual openings (1,710) with a median annual salary of $98,524 among all information technology occupations.

Rationale 4 – Demand outstrips supply: According to the EAB analyses, during the academic years 2015-2020, regional institutions in a 12-state region including Alabama reported only 32 CIP Code 11.0102 ("Artificial Intelligence and Robotics") Master’s level degree completions. Alabama produced no Master’s level degree completions in this CIP code.

Rationale 5 – The proposed program will provide technical skills employers are looking for: The EAB market analysis identified the following as top skills that regional
and national employers are looking for: machine learning skills, AI language programming skills, data science skills, and computer science skills. The proposed program requires students to take courses in AI, machine learning and data mining, plus seven additional technical electives on AI topics such as natural language processing, computer vision, etc., and computer science/software engineering topics. This will provide graduates with the requisite technical skills in “engineering” AI software and systems. The proposed program on Artificial Intelligence Engineering will be the first of its kind in Alabama, thereby strengthening AI education across the state. It will attract industries that desire an artificial intelligence workforce to move to Alabama by producing graduates who are well-prepared to design and engineer advanced AI solutions that meet industry needs.

Please list any external entities that have supplied letters of support attesting to the program’s strengths, and attach letters with the proposal.

None

5. Program Resource Requirements

A. Faculty. Please provide or attach a brief summary of primary and support faculty that includes their qualifications specific to the program proposal. Note: Institutions must maintain and have current and additional primary and support faculty curriculum vitae available upon ACHE request for as long as the program is active, but you do not need to submit CVs with this proposal.

Please provide faculty counts for the proposed program:

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<tr>
<td>Additional Full-Time (to be hired)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Part-Time (to be hired)</td>
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Note: Annual compensation costs for additional faculty to be hired should be included in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3. Salary/benefits for current faculty should not be included.

Briefly describe the qualifications of any new faculty to be hired:

N/A

B. Staff. Will the program require dedicated staff? Yes ☐ No ☑
If so, indicate the number or percentage of FTEs.

Note: Annual compensation costs for staff to be hired should be included in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3.

C. Equipment. Will any special equipment be needed specifically for this program?

☐ Yes  ☒ No

If yes, please list. Their cost should be included in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3.

D. Facilities. Will any new facilities be required specifically for the program?

☐ Yes  ☒ No

If yes, please list. Only new facilities need be listed. Their cost should be included in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3.

E. Library. Will additional library resources be required to support the program?

☐ Yes  ☒ No

Please provide a brief description of the current status of the library collections supporting the proposed program.

A member of the Association of Research Libraries, the Auburn University library is fully staffed with library faculty and staff, including collections and librarians to support faculty research and educational programs to the doctoral level in fields of Engineering and Mathematics/Statistics, of which AI is a subfield. The combined collections of the Auburn University Libraries contain over 3.2 million volumes as well as 2.6 million government documents, 2.5 million microforms, and over 148,000 maps. The Libraries receive over 35,000 current periodicals, many of which are available online. The library also provides access to over 227 electronic databases and has over 10 million archival and manuscript items. The library is equipped to fully support the proposed program. As an example, a search of the library catalog with keywords “Artificial Intelligence” returned 1,994,333 items.

If yes, please briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied, and include the cost in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table.
N/A

**F. Assistantships/Fellowships.** Will you offer any assistantships specifically for this program?

☐ Yes  ☒ No

If “Yes”, how many assistantships will be offered?

The expenses associated with any *new* assistantships should be included in the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3.

**G. Other.** Please explain any other costs to be incurred with program implementation, including lab start-up expenses or specialized accreditation costs. Be sure to note these on the NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM SUMMARY table in Part 3.

No other costs will be incurred.
Name of Proposed Program: MS in Artificial Intelligence Engineering

Program Completion Requirements: (Enter a credit hour value for all applicable components, write N/A if not applicable)

- Credit hours required in program courses: 9
- Credit hours in general education or core curriculum: 9
- Credit hours required in support courses: 9
- Credit hours in required or free electives: 21
- Credit hours in required research: _______

**Total credit hours required for completion**: 30

Maximum number of credits that can be transferred in from another institution and applied to the program: 15

Intended program duration in semesters for full-time students: 4

Intended program duration in semesters for part-time students: 8

Does the program require students to demonstrate industry-validated skills, specifically through an embedded industry-recognized certification, through structured work-based learning with an employer partner, or through alignment with nationally recognized industry standards? If yes, please explain how these components fit with the required coursework.

No

Does the program include any options/concentrations? If yes, please give an overview of the options, and identify the courses for each in the table below.

The program does not include any options/concentrations.

Please indicate any prior education or work experience required for acceptance into the program:

See below.

Describe any other special admissions or curricular requirements for the program:

The Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (MS-AIE) is a graduate degree that is open to everyone with a baccalaureate degree from an institution of recognized standing, either in computer science, software engineering or another STEM
discipline, or with relevant professional experience that provides necessary background knowledge of programming, computing, and mathematics.

It entails a minimum of 30 semester graduate credit hours. All students are required to take three core courses (COMP 6130 Data Mining, 6600 Artificial Intelligence, 6630 Machine Learning) and seven technical electives from a department-prescribed list of advanced courses related to AI (and its subareas such as machine learning, computer vision, natural language processing, etc.) and Computer Science and Software Engineering. These electives may include 3 credit hours of directed studies (COMP 7930) and/or 3 credit hours of capstone engineering project (COMP 7980).

Students who have taken the 5000 level version of any 6000 level course cannot take the course in its 6000 level format. Those students must substitute other graduate courses as approved by the department. All courses required for the degree must be taken for a grade.

Please complete the table below indicating all coursework for the proposed program, identifying any new courses developed for the program, along with courses associated with each option as applicable. Include the course number, and number of credits. Coursework listed should total the number of hours required to complete the program.

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## NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY

**INSTITUTION:** Auburn University  
**PROGRAM:** Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering  
**Select Level:** Master's

### ESTIMATED *NEW* EXPENSES TO IMPLEMENT PROPOSED PROGRAM

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### *NEW* REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT

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### ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

*Note: “New Enrollment Headcount” is defined as unduplicated counts across years.*

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### DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS

*Note: Do not count Lead “0”s and Lead 0 years in computing the average annual degree completions.*

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<th>Year 3</th>
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<td>DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS</td>
<td>Year 1 - No data reporting required</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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