

Application: 8

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Institution: Cornell University

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Purpose:

Artificial Intelligence and Advancement Summit

Cornell University, Ithaca College, Keuka College, Skidmore College, Syracuse University, the State University of New York at Cortland, Union College, and Virginia Tech seek to sponsor and develop a one-day symposium exploring the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Institutional Advancement.

AI's moment has arrived. Thanks to innovations such as self-driving cars and to speech-based interfaces like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa, AI is finding its way into applications that seem less exotic and more accessible. The fusion of massive data sets, behavioral algorithms, predictive algorithms, new types of user interfaces, and machine learning is opening up new horizons of possibility for the practical application of AI. Many of the emerging tools and techniques have the potential to impact the core engagement, fundraising, and communications functions of Institutional Advancement offices. For example:

- Customization and personalization tools could provide online experiences tailored to users' interests and histories of interaction with the institution.
- Chatbots could be used to provide automated real-time support to constituents, drastically improving stewardship for donors and constituents of all levels.
- Natural Language Processing could be employed to screen inbound communications from constituents and prioritize the most urgent for rapid response.
- Optical Character Recognition and Automated Workflows together could dramatically improve the speed and accuracy of processing checks, pledge cards, and donor acknowledgment letters

Developments like these could become incredibly valuable for advancement offices. They could help us offer solutions and experiences that right now can only be created by increasing staffing levels or program dollars, neither of which is likely to be forthcoming in most organizations. Moreover, the efficiencies provided by AI may permit strategic refocusing of existing resources. For example, an AI solution to providing constituents with quick and easy answers to routine inquiries could free up staff time for more personal one-on-one interactions that align better with strategic audiences and priorities.

AI's fundamental attributes of speed, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness at scale have transformative potential at institutions of all sizes, degrees of complexity, and levels of resource. However, we can only unlock this potential if we understand enough about AI to know:

- (a) where it is likely to have the greatest impact, and
- (b) what aspects of AI make the most sense to explore first, given the very real constraints we all face.

This symposium has two main goals:

- 1) Provide attendees with a basic understanding of the concepts at the core of AI, the current state of the field, and emerging trends. This would position attendees to follow developments in AI from an informed perspective, recognizing opportunities and decoding the jargon that pervades media coverage and vendor pitches.
- 2) Identify and discuss advancement functions that might be enhanced or transformed by AI. This discussion would form the nucleus of a community of advancement practitioners that would grow over time, organizing itself around use cases of interest to participants.

The symposium will be open to institutions in CASE District II, as well as interested institutions from other CASE districts.

Cornell University is honored to serve as campus host for the day's events. Sponsoring institutions will collaborate to further develop the program's agenda; encourage participation within and outside New York; and to identify and recruit speakers who can introduce AI in a way that is accessible to a non-specialist audience. Registrants will be asked to pay a nominal fee (\$25 anticipated) to cover the cost of lunch and snack breaks.

An overview of the suggested program:

- 9:00–10:00 a.m.: Registration and continental breakfast
- 10:00–11:00 a.m.: Welcome and opening session: "Artificial Intelligence: Where It Came From, Where It Is Now, and Where It's Going"
- 11:00–11:15 a.m.: Break
- 11:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m.: Panel: Emerging AI Tools: What are they and how can they help? (Topics may include chatbots, natural language processing, behavioral algorithms, predictive algorithms, and automated content delivery.)
- 12:15–1:15 p.m.: Lunch
- 1:15–2:45 p.m.: Facilitated group session: How do we apply these ideas to advancement?
- 2:45–3:00 p.m.: Break
- 3:00–3:45 p.m.: Wrap-up and next steps
- 3:45 p.m.: Program concludes

Other Impact:

The planning group does not think that the proposed symposium will compete with any other CASE programs. As far as we are aware, this topic has not been featured at any conferences aimed at the advancement audience. We anticipate that this will position CASE and CASE District II to break new ground, sponsoring an initial exploration of a topic that inevitably will influence our work in years to come. We are seeking to develop a group of thought leaders whose shared experience will enable them to engage with the emergence of AI in a collaborative and proactive way, beginning a conversation that will continue well beyond this one-day event.

We also believe that AI is a tool that has transformative potential at institutions of all sizes, degrees of complexity, and levels of resource. This is reflected in the composition of the planning group, and we will devise our marketing strategy to recruit a similarly-diverse set of attendees.

Number of Institutions involved in planning: 8
Number of institutions involved in project: 8-25

Start Date: Fall 2017
End Date: Fall 2017

Amount Requested: \$3500