

# Discernment, pedagogy, and generative AI in higher education

A Marquette community tries to figure it out together

# Who we are

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(Plus Larry Xu, Computer Science/Communication)		



# Big question

How can we “discern” how we will use, talk about, and respond to generative AI in our pedagogies?

# Agenda

- Introductory questions
- **Discerning the context** for conversations about GenAI
- **Discernment as a process** for responding to GenAI in a Community of Practice
- **Discernment as an outcome** of conversations about GenAI
- Questions and discussion

# Introductory questions

<https://www.menti.com/al4jgorukh82>



# Discerning the Context

What  
motivated our  
experiment



# The **Context**: Two senses of discernment

- As a spiritual practice, per the context of Jesuit traditions and education, and
- As sound deliberation to make good decisions.

Invoked especially in challenging times, like in figuring out—or discerning—what to do with generative AI in education.

# More on Ignatian Discernment

"Pondering and noticing interior movements of attraction and heaviness, discernment involves prayer and weighing facts and feelings about the several good choices which ultimately leads to a choice about what is the best fit for someone."

Marquette Office of Mission and Ministry

**In brief:** A formation process of learning how to respond to what the inner life and heart says with how that aligns with what the world needs.



From that  
**Context:**  
A collaborative  
disposition  
letter

Here we use the language of discernment to point toward our shared Catholic, Jesuit tradition of respect for human dignity and diversity, and our rootedness in an Ignatian pedagogical paradigm of personal formation and reflection, in service of God and in solidarity together.

We use it to remind ourselves to remain inclusive and open to individual teaching and learning differences, and of the greater context of our university mission and guiding values on campus.

We believe one size will not fit all of us, and we're all in this together; and—writing as faculty, staff, and administrators—we're all “in this” for the formation of unique, empowered, and prepared human persons, by and for others.

# Discernment and the Process: Creating a Community of Practice

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## What We Wanted:

To bring together a cross-section of faculty, staff, and administration throughout the semester to share disciplinary expertise and a willingness to be vulnerable about a tricky topic.

## What We Got:

18 participants from 17 different campus units, facilitated by 7 leaders from 6 different backgrounds.

## **Some notes:**

- [Application process](#) as small barrier to entry
- Connections to Marquette's [2031 Strategic Plan](#)
- Outcome goal was to elevate the scholarship of teaching and learning

# Discernment and the Process: Creating a Community of Practice

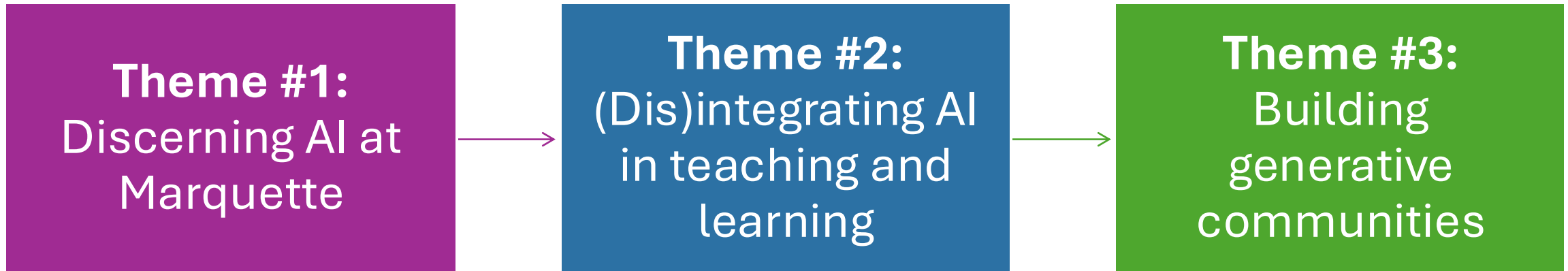
## The Structure

- Facilitators paired up to lead two sessions each
- Discernment as theme
- Opened with fun and small-group sharing



ChapGPT-produced image of animal representing AI

# The process and progress of the CoP



# Discernment as an Outcome of conversations about Generative AI

## Our Takeaways as Facilitators

- Cross-disciplinary expertise is essential
- On-going conversations are needed
- Faculty should be empowered in their teaching to make informed and important decisions about generative AI
- Likely no "one size fits all" university policy will suffice
- Institutionalizing and incentivizing communities of practice would be helpful

# Participant responses to: "How has your thinking about AI changed?"

"Before the CoP, I was particularly concerned about how AI seemed to divide us along the lines of our units and disciplines. Now, I see it as something that is bringing us together."

"Seeing how different departments and professions across the University see AI in different lights, both positively and negatively. Understanding how a writing-intensive class might have different concerns than a class that is based more on in-person interactions and discussions."

"I was entirely negative about AI, now I'm more open to see it as a tool in the classroom. Or something unavoidable, at least."

# How might you apply AI coming out of our conversations?



"I might actually slow down in many ways and reflect on not just what I'm gaining from AI, but also what I might be losing."



"I think I might revise my own weariness about AI to broadening its usage at points. Or be quite clear about my own expectations of when and where students could use it."



"This helped me think through assignments that ask students to critique AI output and how to ensure they are not overly simplistic and thus miss the mark for skeptical students."

# Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Sponsored by the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education

## Publication Opportunities

### *1. Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education*

- Short reflection on CoP takeaways for Jesuit context

### *2. Jesuit Education Quarterly*

- Conversation on Discernment and AI

### *3. Chronicle in Higher Education*

- Short article on creating CoP



# Next Steps

Participants reflected on what they'd like to see from our institution and the Center for Teaching and Learning:

- Workshops on specific tools and applications, especially as new ones emerge and develop
- More information on data security and privacy
- A share space for faculty materials, assignments, and discussion
- Regular podcast/video cast sharing instructor's classroom approaches

A 3D rendering of a tunnel formed by numerous question marks of varying sizes and orientations. The question marks are dark grey and have a metallic, reflective texture. The tunnel leads towards a bright, glowing light source at the far end, creating a strong sense of depth and perspective. The background is a gradient of purple and blue, with the light source casting a warm glow on the question marks.

# Questions and Discussion