Group 5 – Project Brief
Competitive Analysis & Market Positioning

Team Members

1. Kiruthika Ramadoss
2. Hinduja Cheela
3. Hari Chandana Bheemireddy
4. Mounika Devi Uggina
5. Naga Kavya Vidiyala

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its integration into every aspect of business operations has significantly transformed the higher education landscape. In response, academic institutions are designing hybrid programs that fuse business acumen with AI competencies. The McCoy School's proposed "X + Applied AI" program is an initiative intended to address the changing needs of students and employers alike. This document provides a comprehensive analysis of the strategic elements required to position the program effectively within a competitive education market.

This report explores how McCoy School can strategically enter the AI-integrated education space, aligning itself with academic innovation trends while serving a wide spectrum of learners and industry stakeholders. The document is framed to guide decision-makers, faculty, and partners in understanding both the opportunities and constraints tied to this effort.

2. Core Problem / "How Might We" Challenge

Challenge Statement:

How might we position the McCoy School's "X + Applied AI" program in a competitive education landscape to attract and retain graduate students?

Context:
The proliferation of AI is reshaping business education. Institutions that adapt by integrating AI into their curricula stand to gain competitive advantage. The McCoy School must not only keep pace with these changes but also carve a unique identity to remain relevant.

Importance of the Challenge:

- **Market Disruption:** The integration of AI in business is not a passing trend but a paradigm shift that demands swift and strategic academic responses.

- **Student Expectations:** Prospective learners demand programs that offer real-world, tech-enabled solutions in addition to traditional business education.

- **Employer Demand:** Organizations increasingly seek hybrid professionals fluent in both business strategy and AI competencies.

- **Strategic Timing:** Early adoption and positioning will allow McCoy to become a leader rather than a follower in this evolving domain.

3. Anticipated Outcomes and Project Goals

Primary Objectives:

- **Market Positioning:** Develop and communicate a clear, compelling identity for the "X + Applied AI" program.

- **Brand Visibility:** Enhance the program's presence in both academic and industry circles through targeted marketing and PR.

- **Enrollment Growth:** Increase application numbers through targeted outreach and differentiated value propositions that communicate the program's relevance and future-forward structure.

- **Institutional Alignment:** Ensure coherence with TXST's broader mission of promoting interdisciplinary innovation and leadership in AI.

Success Metrics:

- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Positive responses from students, faculty, alumni, and industry leaders through surveys, interviews, and advisory board input.

- **Application Volume:** Tangible increase in inquiries, applications, and enrollment figures year-over-year.

- **Visibility:** Higher rankings and mentions in AI-focused education categories and business school innovation reports.

- **Industry Partnerships:** Securing endorsements, collaborations, and internship opportunities from companies operating in data science, fintech, health tech, and AI sectors.

- **Media Presence:** Increase in earned and owned media references across academic journals, business education blogs, and industry publications.

4. Intended Beneficiaries and Target Users

Primary Users:

- **Prospective Graduate Students:** These individuals are seeking programs that prepare them for future-ready, tech-integrated roles. They are digitally savvy and place high importance on applied learning and career outcomes.

- **Mid-Career Professionals:** These users often hold undergraduate or traditional MBA degrees and seek to upskill with relevant AI and data literacy to stay competitive.

Secondary Stakeholders:

- **Employers and Recruiters:** Seeking to fill new positions that blend leadership, data literacy, automation oversight, and ethics.

- **Academic Partners:** Institutions or research groups interested in collaborative courses, dual programs, or shared AI resources.

User Needs Addressed:

- Access to ethical, flexible, and interdisciplinary programs that can accommodate part-time schedules and varied learning preferences.

- Clear pathways to career advancement and hybrid roles that combine AI fluency with executive decision-making.

- Assurance of academic credibility, global competitiveness, and real-world relevance through capstone projects, certifications, and applied internships.

5. Project Scope

Included Activities:

- **Competitor Analysis:** Evaluate direct (business schools) and indirect (online platforms, bootcamps) competitors, mapping their unique offerings and positioning strategies.

- **Positioning Strategy:** Formulate McCoy's differentiators and unique selling propositions through gap analysis, SWOT, and market-fit assessments.

- **Messaging Framework:** Develop communication strategies that resonate with target audiences through consistent themes, value articulation, and integrated content marketing.

Competitive Mapping Criteria:

- Curriculum structure and AI integration

- Delivery modes (hybrid, in-person, online)

- Career services and post-graduate outcomes

- Branding, storytelling, and digital presence

- Partnerships with tech companies and research labs

Excluded Activities:

- Curriculum development or modification

- Faculty hiring or organizational restructuring

- Accreditation or regulatory compliance processes

6. Resources

Human Resources:

- **Faculty Advisors:** Providing subject-matter expertise, validation of findings, and feedback loops during the positioning strategy design.

- **Graduate Researchers:** Assisting in data collection, competitive intelligence, and peer benchmarking.

Data Resources:

- **Publicly Available Data:** Information from academic catalogs, program websites, QS/Financial Times rankings.

- **Internal Reports:** TXST documents, curriculum proposals, surveys from current students, and insights from CADS (Center for Analytics and Data Science).

- **Third-Party Data Sources:** Use of academic consortium reports, Gartner/IBM trend studies, or NACE data.

Technology and Tools:

- Data analytics platforms (for mapping and comparison)

- Content management systems for campaign tracking

- Virtual collaboration platforms for team meetings, documentation, and dashboard reviews

7. Constraints

Time Constraints:

- Short academic terms limit execution windows and require milestones to be hit within recruitment and decision deadlines.

- Applications for the next academic year may already be underway, requiring agility in planning and execution.

Resource Constraints:

- Limited budget may restrict access to paid marketing tools, consulting services, or premium data platforms.

- Faculty and student availability may vary depending on research schedules or course loads.

Capability Constraints:

- Lack of internal expertise in branding or strategic communications may lead to reliance on external support.

- Manual competitor research may lead to incomplete datasets unless supported by automated tools or libraries.

Willpower Constraints:

- Success depends on buy-in from key stakeholders including department heads, university marketing teams, and executive leadership.

- Cultural inertia or skepticism about AI integration in business education could limit implementation of bold recommendations.

8. Assumptions

Working Assumptions:

1. **Student Demand:** There is significant interest in AI-enhanced business education, particularly in Texas and neighbouring regions.

2. **Employer Support:** Recruiters and employers see value in hiring professionals who understand both business and AI.

3. **Program Flexibility Matters:** Programs that allow asynchronous learning, micro-credentialing, or modular entry points will attract more learners.

4. **Branding is Impactful:** Strategic messaging and visual identity can meaningfully influence perceptions and drive enrollment.

5. **Reputation is Transferable:** McCoy can leverage its existing strengths in business education to extend credibility into the AI domain.

Validation Methods:

- Conducting surveys and focus groups across different user personas

- Reviewing application trends and bounce rates on marketing pages

- Benchmarking against peer institutions that have launched similar programs

- Interviewing alumni and employer advisory boards for market relevance

9. Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Potential Risks:

- **Stakeholder Misalignment:** Differing visions among leadership, faculty, and marketing teams could derail momentum or dilute messaging.

- **Rapid Market Evolution:** Competitor offerings may update features, delivery modes, or pricing models quickly, making research outdated.

- **Data Limitations:** Incomplete or outdated information could skew recommendations and reduce trust in findings.

- **Overlapping Initiatives:** Other departments or colleges may launch competing or overlapping AI offerings, causing confusion.

Mitigation Approaches:

- **Frequent Alignment Meetings:** Maintain open communication loops with all key stakeholders using steering committees and shared KPIs.

- **Flexible Strategic Planning:** Create modular positioning strategies that can pivot in response to market feedback.

- **Data Triangulation:** Cross-reference public, internal, and third-party data sources for more accurate insights.

- **Internal Coordination:** Ensure clarity and coordination between departments to minimize overlap and streamline messaging.

10. Conclusion

- The "X + Applied AI" program at the McCoy School represents a timely, strategic response to the rapid digital transformation of business and education driven by artificial intelligence. It signals the institution's commitment to preparing learners for an increasingly data-driven, automated, and interdisciplinary world. As businesses across sectors continue to adopt AI technologies, the demand for professionals who can bridge the gap between technical innovation and strategic leadership is at an all-time high. McCoy's program, if properly positioned, has the potential to serve as a model for how business schools can modernize their offerings to meet 21st-century challenges.

- This initiative is not merely about launching a new academic concentration—it is about redefining how McCoy is perceived in the national and global educational ecosystem. By focusing on strategic market research, messaging that resonates with evolving learner and employer expectations, and agile responses to the competitive landscape, the project lays the foundation for long-term success. The program will create pathways for students to excel in AI-integrated roles, helping employers meet their demand for hybrid talent while aligning closely with TXST's broader mission of interdisciplinary excellence.

- Furthermore, the comprehensive approach outlined in this strategy—from stakeholder alignment to assumption validation and risk mitigation—ensures that the project is not only innovative but also executable. By defining clear goals, identifying targeted user segments, understanding constraints, and leveraging available resources, the team has created a roadmap that is grounded in both academic rigor and strategic foresight.

- The future of higher education lies in adaptability, relevance, and leadership. Through this initiative, McCoy School positions itself not only as a participant in the future of business education but as a leader shaping its direction. With continued support, transparent evaluation, and commitment to ongoing innovation, the "X + Applied AI" program can set a benchmark in AI-powered academic excellence and contribute to a new era of graduate success.

- In conclusion, this project is a vital step toward building an academic identity that meets the demands of a technology-driven world. It will empower students, attract employers, and elevate the institution's standing in a dynamic and competitive marketplace, making the McCoy School a destination for future-focused business education.

11. References

1. Deloitte Insights. (2023). *The AI-powered organization: Unlocking the potential of AI for the future of work.* Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com

2. McKinsey & Company. (2022). *The state of AI in 2022: And a half-decade in review.* Retrieved from https://www.mckinsey.com

3. Gartner. (2023). *Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2024.* Retrieved from https://www.gartner.com

4. Texas State University. (2024). *CADS Internal Program Alignment Report.* [Internal Document]

5. World Economic Forum. (2023). *The Future of Jobs Report.* Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/reports/future-of-jobs-2023

6. Harvard Business Review. (2022). *How to Compete in the Age of AI.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org

7. Coursera. (2024). *AI for Business Specialization.* Retrieved from https://www.coursera.org

8. edX. (2024). *AI Business Programs.* Retrieved from https://www.edx.org

9. MIT Sloan School of Management. (2024). *Artificial Intelligence in Business Strategy.* Retrieved from https://executive.mit.edu

10. Wharton Online. (2024). *AI for Business Leaders.* Retrieved from https://online.wharton.upenn.edu