Group 5 – Project

Competitive Analysis & Market Positioning

Team Members

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Challenge Context

The McCoy School must understand its competitive position in the rapidly evolving landscape of AI business education. This group is responsible for analyzing direct and indirect competitors and developing clear, strategic positioning recommendations to differentiate McCoy's "X + Applied AI" program.

1.Problem Identification

McCoy is launching "X + Applied AI" — a modular, 12-credit AI enhancement to its graduate business programs. However, with elite universities, online platforms, and bootcamps already offering AI-infused business education, McCoy faces a critical question:
How can McCoy clearly and competitively position its "X + Applied AI" program to attract the right students and stand out in the market?

2. User Insights (Empathize Stage)

We interviewed:
- Graduate students (early-career & mid-career professionals)
- Employers/recruiters in tech, finance, and consulting
- Faculty and advisors at McCoy

Insights:
- Students seek career-aligned, affordable, and flexible learning with real-world application.
- Employers prefer strategic AI thinkers, not just coders.
- Faculty emphasize mission alignment and sustainability of implementation.

Tools Used:
- Empathy Maps
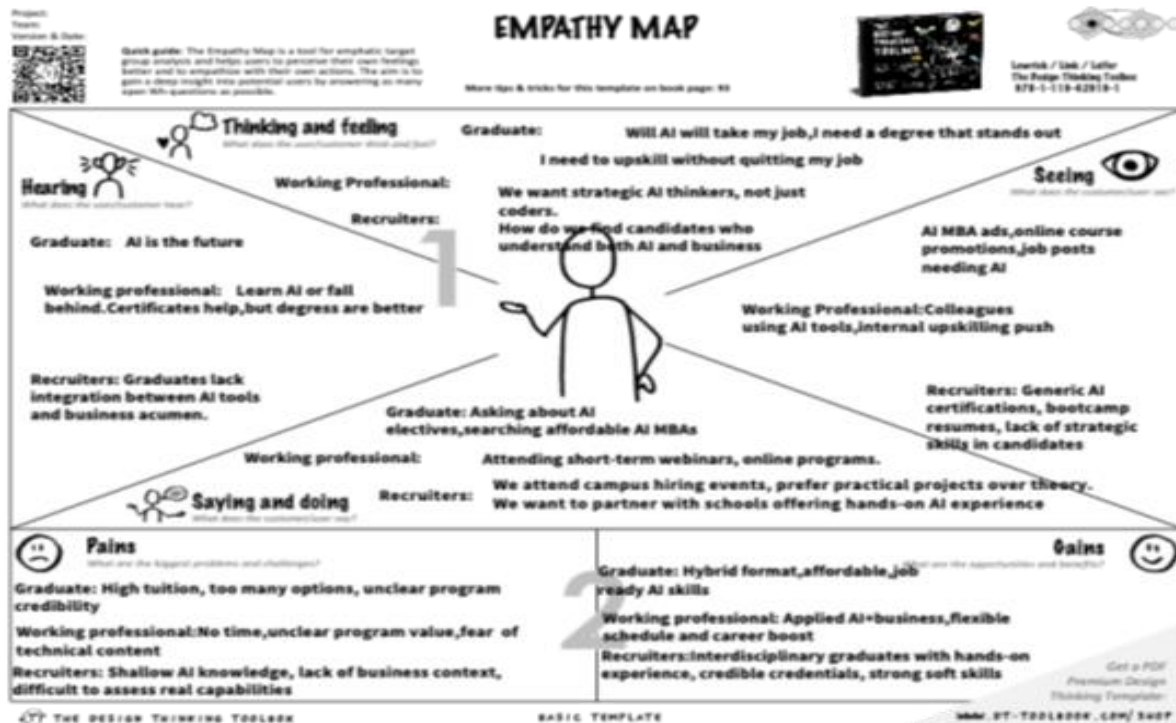
3.Define Stage

Competitive Landscape Analysis

We conducted a comprehensive scan of both direct and indirect competitors to identify gaps and opportunities:

Direct Competitors:

We studied other graduate business programs offering AI concentrations or certificates (e.g., Northwestern MBAi, Drexel). Key evaluation dimensions included:
- Program Features: Curriculum structure, delivery format, and AI integration depth
- Market Positioning: Branding strategies and messaging focus
- Student Outcomes: Career placement success, alumni profiles, and employer connections

Indirect Competitors:

We reviewed non-traditional options for AI education such as:
- Online Platforms (Coursera, edX): Flexible and affordable, but lack academic credibility or cohort experience
- Corporate Training: In-house and skill-specific, but not transferable or strategic
- Bootcamps & Intensive Programs: Focused on tech skills, but disconnected from leadership and business integration
- Industry Associations: Offer AI certifications but no structured academic paths

Tool Used: Positioning Map (2x2)
Competitor Feature Matrix
Comparative Branding Audit

1.Competitor Feature Matrix

What It Is:

A table comparing key program features across competitors to identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.

Example Format:

Feature	McCoy X+AI	Drexel MBAi	Coursera AI	Springboard
AI Integration Depth	High	High	Low	Medium
Business Context Focus	Strong	Strong	Weak	Medium
Program Cost	Medium	High	Low	Medium
Delivery Mode	Hybrid	In-person	Online	Online
Target Audience	Broad	MBA-level	Beginners	Career switchers
Career Support / Placement	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Moderate
Credibility (Academic Rigor)	High	High	Low	Medium

How It Helped:

- Identified white space where McCoy stands out (e.g., "high AI + business focus + low cost").
- Supported the placement in the 2x2 Positioning Map.
- Informed your strategic recommendation by highlighting McCoy's unique combination.

2. Positioning Map (2x2)
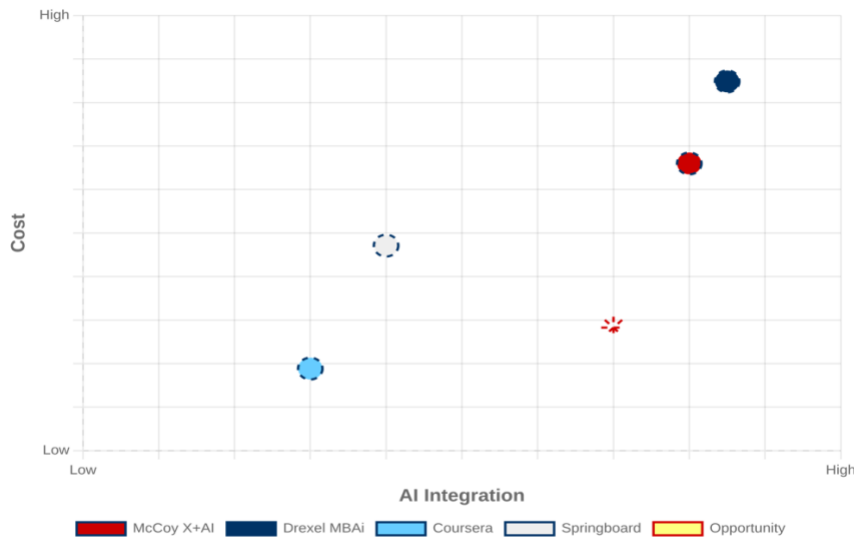
Axes Explanation:
- X-Axis (Horizontal):
  From Low AI Integration (left) to High AI Integration (right)
  → This shows how deeply Artificial Intelligence is embedded in the curriculum.
- Y-Axis (Vertical):
  From Low Cost (bottom) to High Cost (top)
  → This reflects how expensive the program is for students.

Quadrants & Competitors:
1. Top Right – High Cost & High AI Integration
   Drexel MBAi
   McCoy X + Applied AI
   - These programs are premium in pricing but offer strong AI-related content.
   - McCoy is slightly lower in cost compared to Drexel but offers comparable integration.

2. Bottom Right – Low Cost & High AI Integration
   No competitors here currently
   - Opportunity for McCoy: If McCoy can lower costs while keeping AI strong, it could dominate this quadrant.
3. Bottom Left – Low Cost & Low AI Integration
   Coursera
   - Very affordable but lacks deep AI integration.
4. Middle Left – Low AI Integration & Mid Cost
   Springboard
   - Cost-effective and faster, but less academic and AI-intensive.

Key Takeaway for McCoy
- McCoy is well-positioned as a credible and AI-rich academic program.
- But compared to online platforms, its cost is higher.
- Strategic recommendation: Maintain high AI relevance while balancing affordability to stand out even more.

3.Comparative Branding Audit

What It Is:
A qualitative review of how competitors present themselves publicly (branding tone, visuals, messaging, values).
 Example Attributes to Compare:

Attribute	Drexel MBAi	Coursera AI	McCoy X + Applied AI
Tagline / Slogan	"Lead AI innovation in business"	"Learn AI skills online"	"Business meets AI – Affordably"
Website Look/Feel	Professional, corporate	Simple, accessible	Modern, academic
Messaging Tone	Future-ready, elite	Casual, skills-driven	Practical, balanced

Attribute	Drexel MBAi	Coursera AI	McCoy X + Applied AI
Visual Identity	Blue/gold, formal images	Flat icons, white backgrounds	Red/navy, real classroom visuals
Emphasis on Outcomes	Salary bump, MBA networking	Skill certificates	Business application of AI

How It Helped:
- Showed how McCoy can brand itself differently to stand out.
- Validated the insight that McCoy balances credibility, affordability, and applied AI, unlike others.
- Helped build your final positioning message and campaign tone.

4.Ideation Process

Turning Insights into Strategic Concepts
After gathering rich insights from our empathy interviews and competitor analysis, we moved into the Ideation Phase — the creative core of Design Thinking — to identify clear opportunities for McCoy's strategic differentiation.

Gaps Identified (From Define Stage):
We framed the key challenges and market white spaces:
1. Elite AI-infused MBA programs (e.g., Drexel, Northwestern) are too expensive and inflexible for many students.
2. Online certificate platforms (e.g., Coursera, edX) offer low cost and flexibility, but lack academic recognition, strategic depth, and cohort experience.
3. Bootcamps offer strong technical skills but miss the integration of business leadership and AI strategy.

These pain points helped us reframe the problem as an opportunity to ideate targeted, high-impact solutions.

Tools Used in Ideation:

1.SCAMPER Method

We applied the SCAMPER framework to reimagine how McCoy's program could stand apart:

SCAMPER Action	Application to McCoy X+AI
Substitute	Replace generic business electives with applied AI modules.
Combine	Blend AI fundamentals + domain-specific business use cases.
Adapt	Adopt flexible hybrid delivery for working professionals.
Modify	Redesign branding/messaging for "Texas-rooted AI leadership."
Put to other use	Use CADS Labs & real case projects for hands-on learning.
Eliminate	Remove outdated lecture formats – add real-world simulations.
Rearrange	Offer modular, stackable micro-credentials alongside the degree.

2. Brainwriting & Team Pooling

Rather than debating ideas aloud, each team member independently wrote down 3–5 positioning concepts. Then, we rotated and built upon each other's ideas. This helped us:
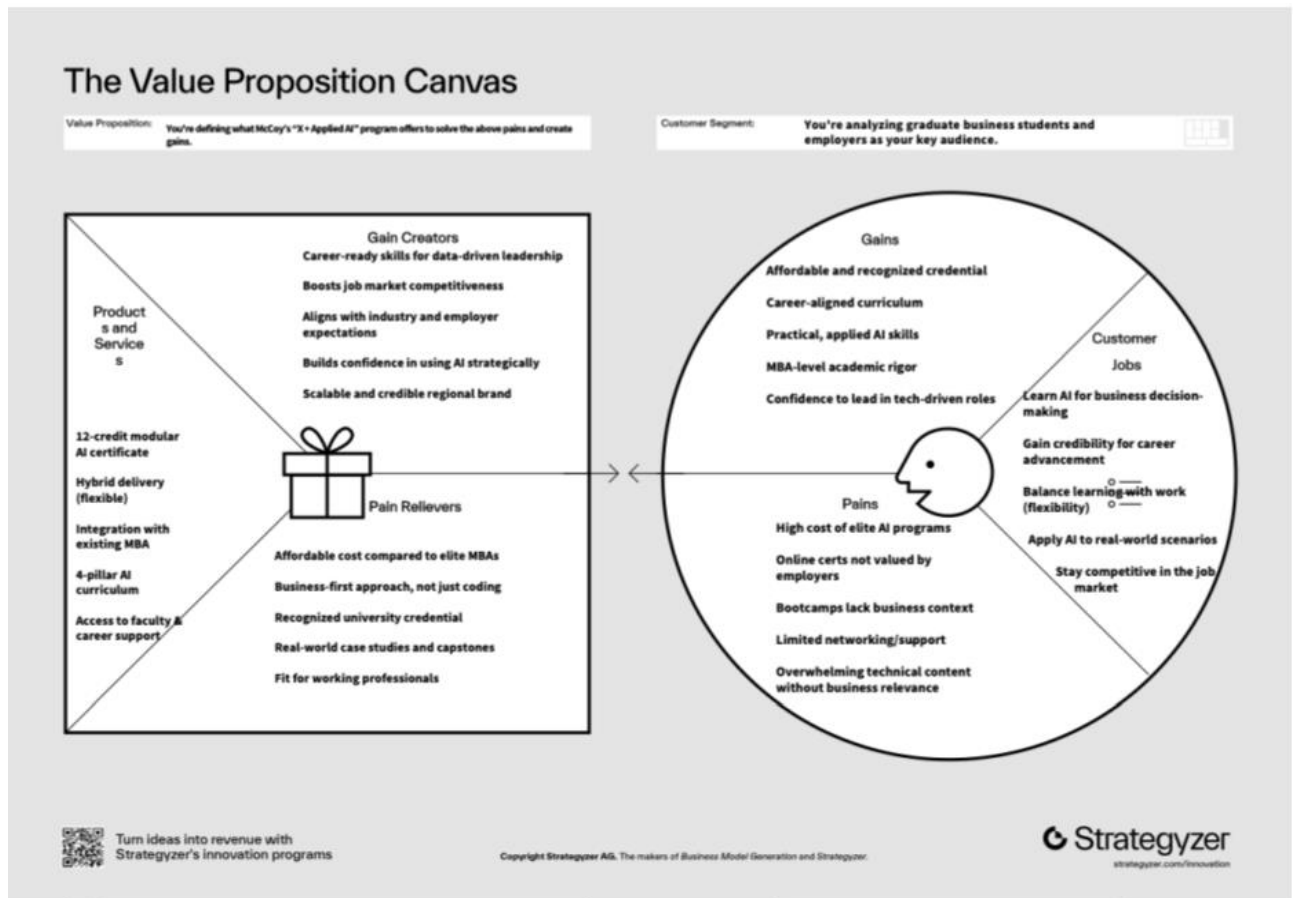- Avoid groupthink
- Generate diverse, original solutions
- Rapidly refine themes around accessibility, business relevance, and Texas branding

Example outcome:

"AI for Business. Applied to You." emerged as a refined positioning slogan during this phase.

3.Value Proposition Canvas

We used the official Strategized canvas to ensure our ideas met user needs:
- Customer Jobs: Career advancement, affordable credentials, practical skills
- Pains: High cost, lack of business integration, confusing market
- Gains: Recognized degree, hybrid access, applied learning

Result: Our ideas focused on the sweet spot: combining academic credibility, real-world AI, and affordability for professionals in Texas and beyond.

Outcome of Ideation Phase:
We focused our solution around:
- Regional credibility + affordability
- Business-first AI education
- Flexible delivery for busy professionals

These ideas became the basis for:
- Our taglines
- Landing page prototype
- Messaging tone and branding recommendations
- McCoy's strategic position: "The most accessible, applied AI business program in Texas."

5.Prototype Development

We developed multiple low-fidelity prototypes to visualize McCoy's market identity.

1.Taglines
Purpose:
To communicate the core value of the program in a memorable, emotional, and strategic way.

Why it matters:
- Taglines create instant recall and brand identity
- Helps differentiate McCoy from other AI programs
- Sets the tone for marketing materials and websites

Examples:
- "AI for Business. Applied to You." → Focuses on personalization and practicality
- "Business Ready. AI Smart." → Emphasizes dual strengths in business and AI
- "Real AI. Real Business. Real Texas." → Adds local/regional identity to credibility

2. Program One-Pager

Purpose:
To give a quick, clear, and visual summary of the program — like a brochure that informs and convinces in one page.

X + APPLIED AI
McCoy School of Business | Texas State University

THE MOST ACCESSIBLE, APPLIED AI BUSINESS PROGRAM IN TEXAS
Empowering Business Leaders with AI Skills

Program Snapshot
- **Program name:** X+Applied AI (12-credit Modular Certificate)
- **Audience:** Graduate business students (MBA MS programs)
- **Duration:** 1-2 semesters add-don
- **Format:** Hybrid (in-person + Online)

WHY THIS PROGRAM?
- **90% of recruiters want AI-literate MBAs**
- **78% of top business schools already offer AI courses**
- **Business-first AI, not coding hootcamp**

Curriculum Pillars
- **AI Foundations:** Basics of AI, Machine Learning
- **AI Essentials:** Business Analytics: Stratagy, and Predictive Tools
- **AI Applications:** NLP. Vision, AI in Markating/Finance/Operations

KEY BENEFITS
- **Career Ready:** AI Strategy, Product, Finance, Marketing roles
- **Flexible:** Fits across McCoy grad pragrams
- **Affordable:** No extra full-degree tuition

KEY BENEFITS
- **Career Ready:** Strategy, Product: Finance, Marketing
- **Flexible:** Fits across McCoy grad programs

STUDENT VOICE
"Ididn't want to become a data scientist I wanted to be a smarter business leader. This program taught me both."
—MBA + AI Student (2025)

Next Steps: Visit: mccoy,txst edu | QR Code to Land

Why it matters:
- Useful for recruiters, students, and advisors
- Easy to share digitally or in meetings
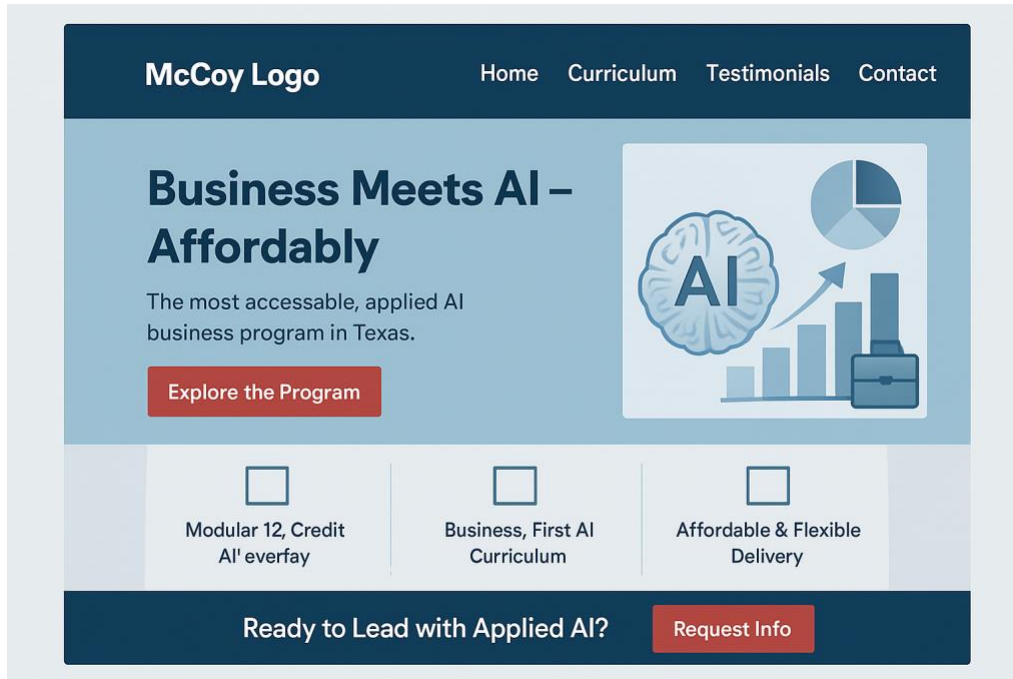- Makes complex program elements easy to understand

Contents to include:
- Program overview (What is "X + Applied AI"?)
- 4 Curriculum Pillars
- Benefits (affordable, applied, hybrid delivery)
- Target audience
- Career outcomes or testimonials

3. Landing Page Wireframe

Purpose:

To visualize what the actual website page for McCoy's program might look like.

Why it matters:

- Helps stakeholders imagine real-world implementation
- Guides future web development and marketing
- Shows how storytelling, visuals, and calls to action work together

Sections to show:

- Hero image + tagline
- What makes McCoy different (value props)
- Curriculum structure
- Testimonials or recruiter quotes
- Apply Now or Learn More buttons

6.Testing & Feedback

We tested prototypes with:

- 6 graduate students
- 3 academic advisors
- 2 employers

FEEDBACK CAPTURE GRID

Quick guide: The Feedback Capture Grid supports the testing of ideas with prototypes, for example, by offering a possibility to document test results in a very simple form. It is mainly used when it comes to finding out how well an idea solves a previously identified user problem.

More tips & tricks for this template on book page: 217

Lewrick / Link / Leifer
The Design Thinking Toolbox
978-1-119-62919-1

I like ...
Things you like or find remarkable.

Students: Clear visuals and 4 pillar struture, Focus on real-world AI use, Strong Texas branding

Working Professionals: Applying learning, not just theory, Hybrid delivery model, Career focused messaging and capstone

Recruiters: Strong balance of business + AI, Clear program outcomes and 4 pillar skills, Texas rooted, credible brand

I wish ...
Things that need to be changed or improved. (constructive criticism)

Students: It were even more affordable than elite MBAs, I could personalize it to my career track, There were Internship tie-ins

Working Professionals: It had weekend only or self paced options, There was credit for prior experience or skills, It were stackable for long term credential building

Recruiters: There was searchable talent directory for alumni, It included soft skill training, The program had a way to validate real-world project quality

Questions
questions that have arisen

Students: Will this be recognized by top employers, Will this delay my graduation timeline, Is thsi offered online too

Working Professionals: Is this flexible enough for full-time workers?, How does this compare to Coursera/edX?, Can I finish this in under 6 months?

Recruiters: Will students be ready to lead AI projects or just assist?, How hands-on are the capstone projects?, Is this better than a bootcamp or a certification?

Ideas ...
Ideas that have arisen from the experience or presentation

Students: Add transcript badge or certificate for visibility, Include peer cohorts or student groups, Provide simulation-based AI learning modules

Working Professionals: Offer employer-sponsored tuition or discounts, Introduce fast-track completion plans (4–6 months), Allow credit transfers from prior work/learning

Recruiters: Add live project showcases with industry feedback, Build recruiter portal to view student portfolios, Host employer-student networking events

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BASIC TEMPLATE

WWW.DT-TOOLBOOK.COM/SHOP

7. Final Solution Concept

Strategic Position:

The most accessible, applied AI business program in Texas — combining credibility, business strategy, and real-world AI tools.

Key Differentiators:
- Modular AI overlay on existing degrees
- 4 Pillar Curriculum:
  1. AI Basics
  2. Strategic AI Applications
  3. Domain-Specific Integration
  4. Real-World Capstone
- Strong local brand, scalable national reach

- Tailored to working professionals & tech-curious MBA students

Sample Messaging:
- "AI-Powered Leaders Start Here."
- "Business Ready. AI Smart."

8. Future Recommendations

Marketing:
- Launch branded webpage with video explainers
- Promote via LinkedIn & email with tested messaging

Recruiter Engagement:
- Host employer info sessions
- Share alumni and student success stories

Faculty Collaboration:
- Partner with Ingram Engineering
- Use CADS labs for hands-on workshops

Long-Term Differentiation:
- Introduce stackable badges/micro-credentials
- Build an alumni ambassador network

9. Team Reflection

Through Design Thinking, our team:
- Shifted from assumption-based ideas to evidence-based strategy
- Created market-focused messaging tools
- Learned that competitive advantage comes not from being the biggest, but from being meaningfully different.

McCoy's "X + Applied AI" is now positioned to be that difference.