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**DSU to host panel discussion on impact of artificial intelligence in higher education**

**CLEVELAND, Miss. —** Delta State University will delve into the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education during an expert panel discussion on Monday, October 14, from 2-4 p.m. in the Jobe Hall Auditorium. The event, organized by the Gertrude C. Ford Center for Teaching and Learning, will bring together some of Mississippi's leading voices in AI to explore how this rapidly advancing technology is reshaping classrooms, faculty development, and educational practices.

"I have been impressed with the work that the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) is doing to advance the topic of AI in the broader community," said Dr. Leslie Griffin, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Particularly, they are providing leadership and guidance for the education sector. Delta State is pleased to be involved with this organization and to host a panel at our university to further this important conversation."

The panel discussion will feature members of MAIN, the country’s first statewide AI initiative. Panelists will share their insights on how AI is influencing education across Mississippi and beyond. Dr. Kollin Napier, the director of MAIN and one of the panelists, emphasized that the organization is focused on promoting AI awareness and providing crucial training to educators and the workforce statewide.

Napier, who earned a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Mississippi State University, leads MAIN in a unique effort that partners with all 15 of Mississippi’s community colleges and several universities. His work, which spans artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software engineering, has been published widely and serves as a foundational piece of Mississippi’s drive toward AI excellence.

Joining Napier on the panel will be Dr. Kelly Ferris Lester, Associate Provost for Faculty Success and Professor of Dance at the University of Southern Mississippi. Lester has been a prominent voice on responsible AI use in academia, particularly as it pertains to academic integrity and the creative application of AI within and beyond the classroom. Having served as the founding director of USM's Center for Faculty Development, Lester brings a wealth of knowledge about faculty empowerment and the responsible integration of AI in educational settings.

Jeremy Pittman, the Founding Honors College Director at Coahoma Community College, will also lend his expertise to the conversation. Pittman, a seasoned educator with degrees in Computer Information Systems and Business Administration from Delta State University, has long been an advocate for technology's role in enhancing educational opportunities. His leadership at Coahoma Community College has earned him recognition as a driving force behind digital learning initiatives.

The panel will also include Dr. Scott Tollison, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at Mississippi University for Women, whose extensive background in instructional systems and workforce development positions him as a leader in the conversation about AI’s role in higher education. Tollison has overseen initiatives such as launching new online programs and creating community college partnerships that focus on digital innovation and AI integration.

Rounding out the panel will be Jason Zuehlke, the Department Coordinator for Instructional Technology at Mississippi Delta Community College. Zuehlke, who has spent over 18 years in technology roles, now focuses on teaching students how to effectively use digital tools. He has led numerous technological transformations on campus, making him a key advocate for AI's potential to enhance learning environments.

Delta State University is excited to bring together these esteemed experts to engage with the university and local community on this timely issue.

The panel discussion is part of a larger series of AI-focused workshops hosted by the Gertrude C. Ford Center for Teaching and Learning. These workshops are designed to help educators and students better understand the implications of AI and how it can be harnessed effectively in educational settings.

The event is open to the public and free of charge, providing an opportunity for attendees to learn more about the transformative potential of AI in education. For more information, contact the [Gertrude C. Ford Center for Teaching and Learning at Delta State University](https://www.deltastate.edu/fordctl/).

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**About Delta State University:**Delta State University is a four-year public institution whose nearly 2,700 students come from most U.S. states and more than 45 countries. Acknowledging its beginning as a teacher’s college, the University sustains excellence in teacher education while continuing to expand offerings in traditional as well as unique fields of study. Programs such as those available through the Delta Music Institute, the Commercial Aviation Department, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Geospatial Information highlight the University’s commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the students it serves with world-leading, industry-acclaimed programs. Situated in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, Delta State offers top-notch academic programs in business, arts, sciences, nursing, education, and more. DSU Athletics has won 14 national championships, 70 conference championships, and 37 regional titles.