Executive Summary

COVAConnectAI:
Leading Coastal Virginia in AI Education and Integration through Design Thinking

Home to nine universities and four community colleges educating 100,000 students, and 16 K-12 school districts educating more than 255,000 students, the Hampton Roads region has demonstrated great commitment to linking together educational systems and employers to prepare, train, and retain its nearly 790,000 workers who support and help advance the regional economy. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence drive the need to develop a regional educational strategy preparing students for future careers anchored in this new technology. Bringing together representatives from K-12 school districts, higher education institutions, businesses, industry, economic development, and regional leadership organizations, anchored by a partnership between Old Dominion University (ODU) and Suffolk Public Schools (SPS), COVAConnectAI (which is short for Coastal Virginia Connecting about Artificial Intelligence) will strengthen the talent pipeline by creating a vision and plan for artificial intelligence educational pathways. The overarching purpose of the collaborative is to bring together representatives from K-12 and higher education institutions to identify, develop, implement and assess innovative strategies for promoting AI learning pathways between member institutions.

Leaders from ODU and SPS will come together to create the core team administering CoVAConnectAI. Educational leaders with expertise in design thinking, K-12 education, and higher education will coordinate with artificial intelligence researchers and instructional designers to foster interinstitutional discussions that lead to evidence-based educational pathways. Leveraging ODU's Institute for Design Thinking and Leadership Development and Suffolk Public School's (SPS) Lead SPS program, COVA Connect AI will use an advisory board approach to engage in the following activities:

- Create an organizational structure for developing a regional collaborative aimed at better understanding the impact of artificial intelligence on K-12 and higher education.
- Hold regular advisory board meetings to discuss progress of the collaborative.
- Engage in design thinking activities with regional stakeholders to identify strategies to incorporate artificial intelligence pathways between educational partners.
- Identify strategies to use existing infrastructures to strengthen pathways.
- Create a vision statement for COVA ConnectAI.
- Create and an implementation plan for COVA ConnectAI activities.
- Develop online modules teaching different regional stakeholders about artificial intelligence.
- Market the website and artificial intelligence modules to regional stakeholders.
- Host roundtables and a summit bringing together K-12 and higher education leaders and to discuss artificial intelligence pathways.

The success of these activities will be demonstrated by the following:

- The development of online modules teaching about artificial intelligence.
- The development of educational pathways between the regional educational institutions.
- The hosting of a regional summit focused on artificial intelligence and education.
- The formalization of COVA ConnectAI through the signing of an MOU.
- The development of a communications campaign to report out on the progress of the initiative, to include bi-monthly newsletters and a dedicated initiative website.