ACT 2526-SP-001: RESOLUTION
A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Sponsoring Committee: Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility Committee (SERC)

WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students (CGS) is the representative body of all graduate students enrolled at The Ohio State University as established by Article II Section 1 of the CGS Constitution[1]; and

WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students or its appointed representative(s) have the power to act as an advisory agent on behalf of graduate students on all matters brought before personnel, committees, or agencies of The Ohio State University involving the interest of graduate students as established in Article III Section 3 of the CGS Constitution[2]; and

WHEREAS the Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility Committee (SERC) of the Council of Graduate Students advocates for sustainability and environmentally friendly policies and procedures within CGS and across The Ohio State University[3]; and

WHEREAS The Ohio State University has introduced a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Fluency initiative which seeks to "[set] a new standard for AI-infused education"[4] by integrating generative AI across the undergraduate general education curriculum, along with new AI initiatives such as the AI$^{(x)}$ Hub, professional development certifications[5], and partnerships with Microsoft and Google[6]; and

WHEREAS The Ohio State University has stated that "[i]ntegrating AI in coursework is vital in Ohio State's 'AI Fluency'"[7], and that "[f]aculty are encouraged to develop or revise courses to thoughtfully integrate AI in partnership with their departments"[8] and "[o]ver the course of the 2025-26 academic year, Ohio State's colleges will be tasked with developing their own plans for their undergraduate programs on how the Class of 2029 and beyond will graduate AI fluent,"[9] necessitating that graduate teaching associates across departments engage with generative AI as a part of their teaching responsibilities; and

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[1] https://cgs.osu.edu/about-us/governing-documents/cgs-constitution
[2] https://cgs.osu.edu/about-us/governing-documents/cgs-constitution
[3] https://cgs.osu.edu/about-us/committees/cgss-internal-committees
[4] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency
[5] https://oaa.osu.edu/academic-excellence/ai-ohio-state
[6] https://ai.osu.edu/resources-buckeyes/approved-ai-tools
[7] https://ohiostateresearch.knowledgebase.co/article/artificial-intelligence-40;ai-41;-in-research-guidelines-126.html
[8] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency-faqs
[9] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency-faqs

WHEREAS Generative AI requires large amounts of environmental resources in both model training and inference[10]; increasing numbers of large data centers being built have resulted in vastly increased water use, with Microsoft predicting more than double the current use in the next 5 years, and overall data center water use by 2030 predicted to increase from 181 cubic meters to between 731 to 1,125 million cubic meters[11,12,13,14] as well as vastly increased e-waste[15,16] and AI-related electricity use, primarily powered by fossil fuels, estimated to increase by 2030 from 31 Terawatt hours/year to 147-326 Terawatt hours/year, resulting in 24-44 Metric tons of carbon emissions/year [17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24]; and

WHEREAS Data centers are built in areas where the local effects of the resultant air and water pollution[25,26], as well as increased costs associated with scarcity[27,28,29], often fall on marginalized

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[10] Emily M. Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell. 2021. "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜 ". In Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT '21). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 610–623. https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922

[11] Xiao, T., Nerini, F.F., Matthews, H.D. *et al.* Environmental impact and net-zero pathways for sustainable artificial intelligence servers in the USA. *Nat Sustain* **8**, 1541–1553 (2025). https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1038/s41893-025-01681-y

[12] https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/27/technology/microsoft-water-ai-data-centers.html

[13] https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/14/technology/meta-data-center-water.html

[14] https://www-cell-com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/patterns/fulltext/S2666-3899(25)00278-8

[15] https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/10/28/1106316/ai-e-waste/

[16] Wang, P.; Zhang, L.-Y.; Tzachor, A.; Chen, W.-Q. E-Waste Challenges of Generative Artificial Intelligence. *Nature Computational Science* **2024**, *4* (11), 818–823. https://doi.org/10.1038/s43588-024-00712-6.

[17] Xiao, T., Nerini, F.F., Matthews, H.D. *et al.* Environmental impact and net-zero pathways for sustainable artificial intelligence servers in the USA. *Nat Sustain* **8**, 1541–1553 (2025). https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1038/s41893-025-01681-y

[18] https://www-nature-com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/articles/d41586-025-00616-z

[19] https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/09/microsoft-ai-oil-contracts/679804/

[20] https://mit-genai.pubpub.org/pub/8ulgrckc/release/2

[21] https://fortune.com/2024/09/17/microsoft-environment-oil-fossil-fuel-expansion-climate-change/

[22] https://www.technologyreview.com/2025/05/20/1116327/ai-energy-usage-climate-footprint-big-tech/

[23] https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-releases-new-report-evaluating-increase-electricity-demand-data-centers

[24] https://www-cell-com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/patterns/fulltext/S2666-3899(25)00278-8

[25] https://news.mit.edu/2025/explained-generative-ai-environmental-impact-0117

[26] https://hbr.org/2024/07/the-uneven-distribution-of-ais-environmental-impacts

[27] https://www.wosu.org/politics-government/2025-12-23/columbus-may-see-higher-electric-gas-and-water-costs-caused-by-data-center-energy-demands

[28] https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/14/technology/meta-data-center-water.html

[29] https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/10/29/ohios-data-centers-will-impact-many-ohioans/

communities such as Black, Indigenous, low income, and rural communities locally[30,31,32,33,34] and globally[35,36,37]; and

WHEREAS in 2008 The Ohio State University signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, and OSU's Climate Action Plan committed to carbon neutrality by 2050[38,39]; and

WHEREAS the Ohio State University's Climate Action Plan states that
>*"...an institution such as Ohio State can serve as an example and living laboratory of how to achieve mission-oriented growth and success while shrinking its carbon emission footprint"* and that
>*"[a]ddressing climate change through its teaching, research, outreach, and demonstrative actions will help achieve the university's land-grant mission by providing students of all ages and backgrounds with a breadth of awareness, knowledge and skills across disciplinary boundaries to prepare them to be global citizens"*[40]; and

WHEREAS The Ohio State University, per its Climate Action Plan, tracks annual greenhouse gas emissions related to university activities on and off campus by calculating and reporting on direct emissions (Scope 1), indirect emissions (Scope 2), and emissions related to university activities (Scope 3). However, carbon emissions related to the use of university-provided generative AI platforms are not currently being reported in Scope 3 emissions, which include emissions "from sources not owned or directly controlled by the university"[41,42]; and

WHEREAS Several peer institutions consider the impacts of AI on sustainability, explore ways to mitigate the environmental harm done through their institutional policies, and educate students, faculty, and staff about the sustainability and environmental effects of AI[43,44,45,46,47]; yet, while one of the key learning outcomes of OSU's AI Fluency initiative is to "[e]xplore the implications (ethical, societal, environmental, legal, practical) of AI use cases and develop reasoned

[30] https://signalohio.org/where-are-ohio-data-centers-located-check-out-this-map/
[31] https://signalohio.org/ohio-data-centers-tax-breaks/
[32] https://signalohio.org/ohio-data-center-boom-faces-political-resistence/
[33] https://www.wosu.org/politics-government/2025-12-23/columbus-may-see-higher-electric-gas-and-water-costs-caused-by-data-center-energy-demands
[34] https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/10/29/ohios-data-centers-will-impact-many-ohioans/
[35] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/09/big-tech-datacentres-water
[36] https://www.businessinsider.com/how-data-centers-are-deepening-the-water-crisis-2025-6
[37] https://hbr.org/2024/07/the-uneven-distribution-of-ais-environmental-impacts
[38] https://si.osu.edu/sites/default/files/CAP_Final_04082020.pdf
[39] https://fod.osu.edu/carbon-footprint
[40] https://si.osu.edu/sites/default/files/CAP_Final_04082020.pdf
[41] https://si.osu.edu/sites/default/files/CAP_Final_04082020.pdf
[42] https://unhsimap.org/public/institution/461/0-48-49-50-51-52-132
[43] https://its.umich.edu/computing/ai/ai-and-sustainability
[44] https://teaching.washington.edu/course-design/ai/ai-ethical-issues/
[45] https://guides.library.illinois.edu/c.php?g=1369561&p=10997327
[46] https://teaching.ucla.edu/resources/teaching-guides/using-generative-ai-reflectively-and-responsibly-in-teaching-and-learning/
[47] https://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/c.php?g=1041101&p=10536914#s-lg-box-34565039

recommendations for responsible implementation within a field of study,"[48] the environmental impacts of AI are not currently mentioned in OSU's AI-infused Launch Seminar module series[49], responsible use guidelines[50], or instructor resources[51]; and

WHEREAS previous CGS legislation urged The Ohio State University to invest in clean renewable energy, divest from fossil fuels, and called for future projects to
> *"consider environmental impacts that may negatively affect not only Ohio residents but all other communities"; and*
> *"commit to protecting the lives of black, indigenous, ... low income and rural communities locally and globally"; and*
> *"invest in research and innovation to further improve public health ... [and] stay true to its mission and sustainability goals and consider all potential impacts of future projects"[52];* and

WHEREAS previous CGS legislation has urged that OSU
> *"should directly and proactively involve CGS in making decisions that concern graduate students, thereby ensuring the needs and considerations of the graduate student body at OSU are represented equitably and accurately at the outset of policy discussions and updates"*

and

> *"must consider and acknowledge graduate students holistically across our multiple roles as students and employees (teachers, researchers, and more) at OSU in order to properly consider and address graduate students' complex and interlinked needs with regard to education, research, professional development, and more,"[53]*

and yet, the University did not consult with graduate students while crafting the AI Fluency initiative, even though the initiative will impact graduate students in their capacities as graduate teaching associates; and

WHEREAS CGS's Academic Affairs committee recently surveyed graduate students at The Ohio State University (AY25-26) to learn more about their perspectives on generative AI and found that 85% of them were concerned about the environmental impacts of AI, 39% indicated that they had not received training on AI and teaching (only 15% reported having received formal university training), and 41% saw no benefits of AI for teaching or research.[54]

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that as The Ohio State University races to be a leader in artificial intelligence research, innovation, and education, CGS strongly urges The Ohio State

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[48] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency
[49] https://oaa.osu.edu/news/2025/08/23/introduction-ai-embedded-launch-seminar
[50] https://ai.osu.edu/resources-buckeyes/responsible-use
[51] https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/resources-instructors/teaching-support-ai-fluency
[52] RESOLUTION 2021-008 2 A RESOLUTION AGAINST FUTURE USE OF FOSSIL FUELS
https://cgs.osu.edu/cgs/documents/res-2021-008-fossil-fuel.pdf
[53] RESOLUTION 2425-FA-001: A RESOLUTION REGARDING OTDI POLICY ON LICENSING, TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY, & SOFTWARE UPDATES https://cgs.osu.edu/documents/resolution-2425-fa-001-a-resolution-regarding-otdi-policy-on-licensing-technology-accessibility-software-updates.pdf
[54] AY25-26, Council of Graduate Students Academic Affairs Committee Survey

University to uphold its Land Grant mission and sustainability commitments[55,56,57] by ensuring that generative AI adoption aligns with institutional sustainability goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS urges OSU to ask current and future AI partners—including Microsoft, Google, and other partners—for increased transparency on reporting the environmental and sustainability impacts of AI, including from model training and use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS advocates for OSU to be fully transparent and report on all environmental impacts related to the use of all university-provided generative AI platforms, including, but not limited to, electricity use and water use, and to include all greenhouse gas emissions related to university-provided generative AI platform use in Scope 3 emissions analysis and future goal setting[58]; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS urges OSU to offset all emissions related to generative AI use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS advocates for the inclusion of the environmental and social justice impacts of AI as important ethical considerations in all AI Fluency curricula[59], as well as integrating education on sustainable generative AI use practices (e.g., critical reflection on instances when generative AI may or may not be the most appropriate or efficient tool, awareness on how to limit the environmental impacts of personal generative AI use, and the sustainability impacts of OSU approved AI tools[60], etc.) into course curricula, trainings, and teaching and learning resources for students, graduate associates, faculty, and staff, including but not limited to, OSU's AI-infused Launch Seminar modules[61], AI websites[62,63], teaching resources[64], and responsible research and use guidelines[65,66]; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OSU should offer a locally-hosted, more sustainable generative AI model that students, faculty, and staff can use to limit and track their environmental impacts[67,68]; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS advocates that students, including graduate students, as well as graduate research and teaching associates, should not be required to use generative AI in

[55] https://si.osu.edu/sites/default/files/CAP_Final_04082020.pdf
[56] https://si.osu.edu/Campus
[57] https://fod.osu.edu/sustainability
[58] https://its.umich.edu/computing/ai/ai-and-sustainability
[59] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency
[60] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921344925005476
[61] https://oaa.osu.edu/news/2025/08/23/introduction-ai-embedded-launch-seminar
[62] https://ai.osu.edu
[63] https://oaa.osu.edu/ai-fluency
[64] https://ai.osu.edu/education-and-fluency/teach-ai
[65] https://ohiostateresearch.knowledgebase.co/article/artificial-intelligence-40;ai-41;-in-research-guidelines-126.html
[66] https://ai.osu.edu/resources-buckeyes/responsible-use
[67] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921344925005476
[68] https://its.umich.edu/computing/ai/ai-and-sustainability

the course of teaching—as well as in any future expansions of AI fluency initiatives to the graduate school—if they care about the environmental and social impacts of AI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CGS reiterates that The Ohio State University and its constituent units should directly and proactively involve CGS in making decisions that concern graduate students in their various roles as students and employees (teachers, researchers, and more), thereby ensuring the needs and considerations of the graduate student body at OSU are represented equitably and accurately at the outset of policy discussions and updates as institutional AI policies continue to evolve; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Council of Graduate Students directs its President to distribute this resolution to all proper leadership and authorities of The Ohio State University and its partners, including President Ravi V. Bellamkonda; the Sustainability Institute; Facilities, Operations, and Development; the Michael V. Drake Institute for Teaching and Learning; and the Office of Technology and Digital Innovation.

Day of Vote: March 13, 2026
Yay Votes: 43
Nay Votes: 1
Abstentions: 2
Approved: Yes/No

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Sabrina Durso.19, CGS President