AI, Changing Nature of Work, and Education

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Co-Chairs: John deVadoss, Providentia Capital; Xiaochen Zhang, AI 2030

Executive Summary

The roundtable brought together approximately 25 participants from government and policy, industry, and education, academia, and medicine to examine AI's impact on work and education.

Discussion centered on three critical needs: redesigning work itself rather than simply applying AI to existing structures, developing AI literacy programs that teach both technical skills and critical thinking about AI's capabilities and limitations, and creating national policies to address workforce displacement. Drawing upon their own work as educators, entrepreneurs, and policymakers with diverse and multi-generational stakeholders, participants highlighted immediate challenges including the need for content verification systems (where blockchain can play a role), managing the risks of over-reliance on AI for reasoning and decision-making, and bridging the digital divide. While acknowledging AI's current integration across society and its potential benefits (spanning government efficiency to healthcare data utilization) the group stressed the urgency of proactive workforce development, particularly in teaching people how to work with AI as a collaborative tool rather than a replacement for human intelligence.

One key area of debate was over the degree to which different occupations (e.g., skilled trades) would be impacted by (or insulated from) AI disruption in the near term. While considering the range of opinions on this question, participants challenged common assumptions about "safe" trades, noting that infrastructure itself will be redesigned for AI integration, from roads optimized for autonomous vehicles to buildings designed for AI-enabled maintenance. Key consensus emerged that the fundamental divide will not be between white-collar and blue-collar workers, but between those who can effectively use AI and those who cannot. On this point, the group emphasized that AI represents an "active technology" requiring fundamentally different educational approaches than previous technological waves.

From the Co-chairs:

The group was unanimous in wanting to learn more, and to further understand the implications with respect to education and the new way of work in the AI era. There was strong interest in proactively addressing the challenges as they emerge; this may be an area for follow-on collaboration.

The group viewed AI as a transformative opportunity—but one that also introduces significant challenges across multiple levels. At the policy level, there is an urgent need to design forward-looking regulations that ensure the AI-driven workforce benefits all, not just a select few. For knowledge workers, the key question is how to effectively collaborate with AI to enhance productivity and remain competitive in an increasingly automated economy. Educational institutions face a unique dilemma: as AI automates many routine and undifferentiated tasks, recent graduates have fewer opportunities to learn through traditional entry-level work. This raises a critical challenge—how can universities redesign the learning experience to prepare students to handle complex, differentiated tasks from day one? The group believes there are valuable lessons to be learned from the blockchain industry. Innovations such as using tokens to incentivize and validate learning, enabling decentralized collaboration through DAOs, and connecting talent to microtasks offer promising models. These approaches could be adapted to inspire new frameworks for education and workforce development in the emerging AI economy.