

Ethical and Responsible Behaviors Project

The Use of AI in Schools

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Portfolio Project

Technology has become a pillar of the college experience. Computers, the internet, and specifically the use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in schools have presented myriad challenges when ensuring the integrity of an institution's ability to ensure students are responsibly using this new and innovative technology. While the use of this new technology has many benefits that aid a student's ability to learn in a style that meets their needs, it also has many issues in regards to academic honesty, plagiarism, and violations of university policy. COVID-19 and the subsequent quarantines presented many challenges when educating students. Moving from predominantly in-person to 100% online for many years caused students to acclimate to an environment where technology and computers were staples of education instead of tools to be used as aids. The issues compounded when returning to traditional schooling presented students used to an education completely online. Acclimating to a new style of doing things is never an easy task, especially when students and educators alike have to navigate new technologies that often outpace our ability to understand them. With a severe lack of governmental regulations on the use of AI and the internet in schools, it is up to each institution to lay down requirements that promote and foster the appropriate environment for learning and academic honesty. Doing so has issues. These issues require closer study and attention. In this essay, we will examine specifics of AI in schools, when it should be allowed for students to use, some of the challenges to academic integrity and honesty it presents, and why AI poses a potential threat to academic integrity.

AI has been used in schools for many years, existing in the form of management tools for teachers and students, like Google, Canvas, and Turnitin, to help aid in assignments and make the education process easier for students and teachers alike (Abrams). AI as a concept is not new. Google, Spotify, Canvas, and even autonomous vehicles have been integrating artificial intelligence into our everyday lives for years ("The Evolution and Future of Artificial

Intelligence | CMU”). So why is AI only now becoming an issue? Platforms like ChatGPT, a chat-based AI model, have made artificial intelligence a regular part of college education for students. The models are formally known as “Generative AI” and use billions of data inputs to generate responses to queries. The models grow more intelligent, respond faster and more cohesively, and are easier to use as more and more people use them, using data inputs to grow their pool of responses. Data-based AI model systems pose ethical quandaries outside of education, which is beyond the scope of this essay, but also must be considered.

These types of models pose a particular threat to the collegiate environment when it comes to scholastic integrity and are used liberally to plagiarize and “cheat” on exams and forge papers without having to put time and effort into ensuring that effort was put into these carefully curated assignments. These models, though intuitive and expansive in their dataset, are far from perfect. And yet, it’s reported that nearly 89% of students have, at some point in their college career, used ChatGPT to complete a homework assignment (Tierney). Many educators believe this type of AI is analogous to plagiarism and should be treated with the same severity (Tierney). Though this may seem harsh, the use of AI in any form calls into question the purpose of higher education. For many, the point of college is to grow and expand as an individual, discover potential career paths, and learn the required materials to thrive in a chosen career field. Using AI to cut corners, cheat, or plagiarize undermines the very nature of college as an institution and its goals to teach and push students to be the best versions of themselves and prepare them for the workforce.

Not all AI is bad, however. Tools like Canvas and Grammarly use AI as additions or aids to a student’s work. Grammarly uses AI to help writers; it makes word change suggestions and helps teach students how to become more literate and competent writers. This is a stark

difference from ChatGPT, which is capable of using generative AI to “write” entire essays with the click of a button. Assistance tools like Mathway use AI to help teach students the appropriate steps to solve math problems, encouraging students to solve problems themselves and displaying proper steps to achieve the correct answer, rather than simply solving the problem for the student. Many believe AI does not have a place in the classroom or the college setting at all.

While this stance is understandable given the current trajectory of AI in the classroom, the use of AI as a tool rather than a crutch is key to ensuring students learn the material required, yet have the tools to learn in a style that benefits them. It’s obvious, given how quickly generative AI has taken hold, that this form of artificial intelligence isn’t going anywhere soon. With the number of students using AI, it seems a more likely solution to teach students to use AI responsibly, rather than call for its abolition.

Whether educators like it or not, AI has become a staple of college education. While ideal, the ban of AI in the classroom is far from reality. It seems a more reasonable alternative to teach students to use AI responsibly, as a tool, rather than a crutch. Instilling academic honesty, the importance of the college experience in shaping and molding character, experience for the future, and how to use tools to assist rather than take over our difficult tasks, should be integral to a generation of students dedicated to honesty, integrity, and committed to the ideals of education. While AI can be a powerful tool, it must be used carefully. Students who use AI to “get through school” are not receiving the education that prepares them to be ready and adequately trained for their desired career. The potential ramifications of AI on the workforce and worker competency have yet to be studied in depth, but require deeper consideration as we navigate these quickly evolving fields of technology.

Works Cited

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