Student Research Into How Students and Faculty Use AI:

Insights for Teaching and Learning

everylearner
everywhere

Authors:

Robert McGuire
McGuire Editorial & Consulting

Camore Fordham
Spelman College

Isabella Greene-Noble
University of Mississippi

Brayden Hamilton
Fisk University

Tessa Wolf
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Contributors:

Noel Berhanu
University of Maryland

Isra Hussain
Georgia Institute of Technology

Taniyah Taitano
Spelman College

Every Learner Everywhere is a network of partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to partner with institutions to harness digital learning technology, driving innovation in higher education to improve outcomes for every learner. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. WCET (the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies) and WICHE (the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) serve as the intermediary organizations for the Every Learner Everywhere Network. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to advance student success in higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.

Recommended Citation:

McGuire, R., Fordham, C., Greene-Noble, I., Hamilton, B., and Wolf, T. (2026). *Student Research Into How Students and Faculty Use AI: Insights for Teaching and Learning*. Every Learner Everywhere. everylearnereverywhere.org/resources/student-research-into-how-students-and-faculty-use-ai

everylearner
everywhere

Table of Contents

Introduction

Student Research Into How Students and Faculty Use AI: Insights for Teaching and Learning presents findings from two cohorts of digital learning interns at Every Learner Everywhere during the 2024–25 academic year. It offers a student-centered look at generative AI in higher education — not a guide, but a record of student inquiry and of exploration into the potential and limitations of AI.

Every Learner's paid, remote internship program is guided by the principle, "nothing about us without us," bringing students into conversations about digital learning in higher education. Five to eight interns per year typically work with Every Learner or one of its network partners on group or individual projects that advance the field of evidence-based high-impact digital learning. The 2024–25 cohorts were recruited particularly for their interest in and readiness to engage with questions about AI in college classrooms. All the interns had already used AI to some degree in their studies, and they ranged from enthusiastic to skeptical about the promise AI has to support better learning outcomes.

The first cohort in the 2024–25 academic year identified for their project the need for an environmental scan of existing AI tools, with an emphasis on what undergraduate students were actually using. Their goal was to help an audience of faculty understand the experience students were having with AI. They also hoped to create an evergreen database that could be updated continuously.

The results of this cohort's work can be reviewed in Part 1 and Part 2 of this report. Part 1 introduces the AI Toolkit Database, which initially gathered 70 distinct generative AI products into one browsable resource designed expressly for higher education contexts. The growing website supports new contributions from users. Part 2 is the interns' summary of their research on common uses of generative AI and the implications for higher education classrooms. It is organized by three broad categories of tools—for text, images, and audio. Guided by their own experiences, the interns identified common and creative use cases of AI in a variety of academic disciplines and outlined ethical, legal, environmental, accessibility, and other considerations.

The second cohort extended this environmental scan with field interviews with students and faculty about how they already use AI and their perspectives on its impact on learning. The interns developed the interview questions, recruited participants, and conducted the interviews, either in person or by soliciting written responses by email. The interviews explored personal experiences, sentiment, limitations, pedagogy, institutional policies, institutional support, and access. Part 3 of *Student Research Into How Students Use AI* presents the results of this cohort's work.

A number of interesting themes emerge while reading over the environmental scan and field interviews.

Continuous change and the need for living resources	The AI market evolves daily, so a static list becomes obsolete almost immediately without frequent updates and community input. In fact, an inevitable characteristic of a report like this is that new tools are introduced for public use faster than it can be published. The evergreen database introduced in Part 1 anticipates this problem.
Pedagogical promise vs. academic integrity risks	Tools can personalize learning and streamline feedback, yet concerns about fairness and detecting plagiarism remain front of mind.
Equity and the digital divide	The ubiquity of free AI tools can mask a digital divide. Students interviewed were alert to how free tools that also had premium versions with more advanced capabilities can exacerbate inequality. They also noted that some majors are designed with more opportunities than others for students to develop digital fluency.
A range of creative uses	The interns were eager to make faculty aware of how students are using AI. Even if faculty imagined they were banning AI, students still do use it, and not necessarily in illicit ways. For example, one pre-med student explained that, while using AI was banned for any graded work, she uses it to create practice tests for herself.
Rapid tool proliferation and fragmentation	Faculty, staff, and students now juggle dozens of generative AI products for writing, research, analytics, and administrative tasks, making curation essential. It's important to emphasize that *Student Research Into How Students Use AI* is not a playbook for faculty or a guide to how to use AI in the classroom. It reflects the work of six students, serious about digital learning, attempting to understand some of the early implications of AI in college classrooms. Likewise, this report and the database, while referencing many specific tools, is not reviewing, advocating for, or endorsing any of them.

In keeping with the spirit of experimentation with AI, the interns (and the editor) used AI at different stages while developing *Student Research Into How Students Use AI: Insights for Teaching and Learning*, with mixed success. Some of the material below is descended from drafts initially generated with AI tools.

We look forward to your feedback and to your contributions to the evergreen database introduced in Part 1.

Acknowledgment of use of generative AI

We acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence tools in the drafting process of this report. Generative AI was employed as a starting point to generate ideas and create preliminary outlines. However, the final published material is the result of a rigorous collaborative effort by the authors, editor, and reviewers. This human-led process ensures the content aligns with our educational standards, reflects current pedagogical best practices, and meets the specific needs of our learners. Each element of the report was carefully vetted, contextualized, and enhanced based on our expertise and understanding of our readers' interests and needs. The final text represents a synthesis of AI-generated ideas and human insight, creativity, and professional judgment. We believe this approach combines the potential of AI with the irreplaceable value of human expertise in education, resulting in a high-quality, engaging, and pedagogically sound publication.

Mapping the Landscape:
A Student-Led Scan of AI Tools

In summer and fall 2024, a group of three Every Learner interns conducted an environmental scan and populated a database of AI tools with a goal of helping faculty understand how college students are using AI for academic work. The interns started with two premises: a.) that college students were using AI irrespective of institutional or class policies, and b.) that AI potentially offers many interesting ways to be creative in the college classroom.

While the database was built on the experience and interests of the interns and their peers, they hoped many of their finds would inspire faculty to consider ways to use these tools creatively in their teaching.

At present, the database inventories roughly 70 publicly available generative AI products that a campus or individual faculty and students might consider. It spans multiple use cases:

- **Chatbots and coding aids using large language models** (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot)

- **Writing assistants and editors** (e.g., Lex, Microsoft Editor, Textio)

- **Classroom discussion and lesson-planning platforms** (e.g., Parlay, Curipod, Packback)

- **Quiz and study tools** (e.g., Q-Chat, Yippity)

- **Music and audio generators** (e.g., Suno, Musicfy, Loudly)

- **Image-generation tools** (e.g., Midjourney, DALL-E 3, Adobe Firefly)

The interns detailed pros, cons, and bias-related caveats that will help educators weigh pedagogical value against institutional risk. Detail to support decision making is included for each tool, including functionality, pricing, or licensing tiers (e.g., free, pay as you go, monthly subscription, one-time fees), what data powers the model, and privacy statements or links to vendor policies. It's important to note, however, that the interns did not assess any of the tools for their quality or intend to endorse specific products.

The resulting database, which can be viewed at the AI Toolkit Database, is an at-a-glance reference for generative AI tools that helps faculty and other higher education leaders become familiar with the AI tools students are using. Many of the products listed may also be useful for teaching, research, administration, and creative work. Educators, instructional designers, and campus tech teams may also find it useful to help scan, shortlist, and evaluate AI products before testing or adopting them.

Finally, the AI Toolkit Database is designed to function as a living resource. As vendors release new models or update privacy policies, we will refresh the sheet and add newcomers. Please let us know when you spot a tool or policy change that should be included. Your feedback helps the higher education community grow its capacity for digitally enabled evidence-based teaching.

Read more about the 2024–25 interns:

Camore Fordham: Commitment to Healthcare and Education Equity a Perfect Fit for Internship

Bradyn Hamilton: Quest for Educational Equity at Heart of Intern's Goals

Tessa Wolf: Intern's Mission Is to Make Learning Accessible to Everyone

Noel Berhanu: How This CompSci Major Is Working to Expand Access to AI and Digital Learning

Isra Hussein: How This Biomedical Engineering Major Is Thinking About AI Tools and Digital Learning

Taniyah Taitano: Digital Learning Intern Exploring the Impact of AI on Education Policy

Isabella Greene-Noble: Demystifying AI Can Help Level the Higher Education Playing Field

Every Learner Everywhere's Internship Program

What Students Are Doing with AI:
Use Cases Across Disciplines

This section looks at three broad types of outputs from generative AI — text, images, and audio — and identifies common use cases for students and faculty in a range of disciplines. It also outlines a number of ethical, legal, and environmental considerations.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI refers to systems that can create new content based on patterns in the data they've been trained on. Generative AI models don't just classify or predict outcomes but also produce original outputs, including text, images, video, music, or original computer code. For example, a generative model trained on artwork could create new paintings, while a language model can generate essays or stories. These systems often use neural network architectures such as generative adversarial networks or transformer models, and they use specific techniques like deep learning to process large amounts of data, recognize complex patterns, and learn and produce content in a way that feels authentic for human audiences.

Ethical and legal considerations

The use of generative AI raises important ethical and legal questions.

▶ **Datasets and bias**

Generative AI can reflect biases found in its training data. If the data is unbalanced or not representative of diverse viewpoints, the outputs may also be biased. It is crucial for developers to use varied datasets to promote fairness in what the AI generates.

▶ **Misinformation, slander, and copyright**

Generative AI risks spreading misinformation through convincingly false content and generating harmful statements about individuals. There are also concerns about copyright infringement when producing content that resembles existing works too closely.

▶ **Labor impacts**

The rise of generative AI may disrupt specific jobs by automating tasks traditionally performed by humans. However, it could also create new roles focused on ensuring the quality and accuracy of AI-generated content.

▶ **Global disparities and environmental impacts**

Access to powerful generative AI tools may widen the gap between those with technological resources and those without. Training AI models also requires significant energy consumption.

Generative AI for text

Generative AI for text is advanced artificial intelligence that can create written content that resembles human writing. It learns from analyzing large amounts of text data, allowing it to generate coherent and contextually relevant sentences and paragraphs. These tools can write articles, stories, and poems, and they can engage in conversations, translate languages, and summarize long texts.

Generative AI is commonly used to create content for marketing, provide customer service through chatbots, summarize research papers, and provide personalized recommendations based on user preferences.

In educational environments, generative AI holds the potential to revolutionize learning. It can create customized learning materials for students, generate practice questions, provide instant feedback on assignments, summarize research sources, and assist teachers in developing lesson plans tailored to their students' needs.

Text-based AI in the disciplines

In the natural sciences, generative AI that produces writing can be a powerful ally for researchers. It can generate hypotheses for experiments, summarize scientific literature, aid in writing research papers, explain complex concepts in simpler terms, and create resources that enhance understanding of scientific topics.

In the humanities, generative AI can be a source of inspiration. It can analyze literary texts, produce creative works like poetry or short stories, translate historical documents into contemporary language, generate arguments for philosophical discussions, and create narratives based on historical data.

In the social sciences, generative AI can analyze data from social media or surveys to identify trends. It can generate survey questions or interview prompts, summarize qualitative research, assist in writing reports on social issues, and create scenarios for experimental studies on human behavior.

Generative AI for images and video

Generative AI image and video tools make it possible to turn abstract concepts into vivid, interactive visuals, enable creative projects without requiring advanced technical skills, and simulate complex systems in ways that deepen understanding. Learners and faculty use AI to produce custom images, videos, and simulations across disciplines, expanding access to high-quality resources and opening new pathways for engagement, creativity, and critical thinking.

▶ **Artwork creation and style transfer**

Generative AI can create new art pieces, blend multiple styles, or apply the visual characteristics of one artwork to another, allowing artists to experiment with ideas quickly and explore cross-genre aesthetics. Style transfer, where AI applies the aesthetic of one image (such as van Gogh's painting style) to a new image, enables artists to experiment with visual concepts and apply known styles to new works.

▶ **Image editing and enhancement**

AI enhances image resolution, restores old photographs, colorizes black-and-white photos, removes noise, and applies stylistic filters to transform visuals. Photographers and designers use these tools for quality improvement and creative editing. These features are particularly popular among photographers and editors seeking to improve image quality or restore old photos with precision.

▶ **Custom design prototyping**

Graphic designers and product designers use generative AI to quickly produce prototypes, mockups, and multiple variations of logos, layouts, and other visual assets. This is especially useful in branding and graphic design, where generating different versions of a concept speeds up the creative process and provides a wider range of options for clients or projects.

▶ **3D and virtual environment generation**

Generative AI helps create realistic landscapes, cityscapes, and virtual settings, which are used in gaming, film production, and VR applications, giving creators the ability to design expansive, interactive worlds. Generative AI can design realistic textures, buildings, and nature elements, enabling creators to build immersive worlds efficiently. These tools are used to create complex scenes that would otherwise be time consuming to design manually.

▶ **Dynamic character and object creation**

Generative AI is used to produce unique characters, objects, and assets for video games and animated films. By generating characters with distinct appearances, outfits, and features, or creating objects with varying textures and shapes, AI helps add variety and richness to digital environments, making the experience more engaging for users.

▶ **Customized marketing content**

Generative AI creates tailored ads, social media posts, and other marketing visuals that adapt to brand guidelines and target specific audiences. By generating on-brand imagery and messaging, companies can personalize content more easily and reach their audience with visuals that resonate on an individual level.

▶ **Product customization**

AI can generate customized product visuals based on user preferences, allowing shoppers to see how products such as furniture, clothes, or accessories would look with personalized features or in different settings. This personalization improves the user experience and helps customers make informed choices.

Example uses of AI images and video in the classroom

▶ **Art and design projects**

Students can use AI art tools to create digital artwork, experiment with different art styles, or even blend historical art styles (like Impressionism or Cubism) with modern aesthetics. By experimenting with style transfer or generating unique compositions, students gain a better understanding of artistic concepts, such as color theory, composition, and artistic expression, without requiring advanced technical skills.

▶ **Design thinking and product prototyping**

For technology or entrepreneurship courses, generative AI tools can help students design product prototypes or mockups. Students might experiment with creating logos, packaging, or simple product designs, simulating real-world design thinking and prototyping processes. This hands-on experience helps them learn about branding, design principles, and the iterative process of product development.

▶ **Science and visualization**

In science classes, AI-generated images can help visualize abstract or complex concepts, such as cellular structures. Teachers can use AI to create custom visuals or interactive simulations that make difficult subjects more accessible and engaging, aiding comprehension and retention.

▶ **Visualizing microscopic and molecular structures**

Generative AI can create detailed visualizations of microscopic structures, such as cells, viruses, or molecules, which are often difficult to observe directly in classroom settings. These AI-generated images help students understand cellular anatomy, protein structures, or DNA configurations in biology and chemistry classes. AI can also simulate how molecules interact in processes like photosynthesis or enzyme function, allowing students to explore dynamic biological and chemical processes at a detailed level, which enriches their understanding of microscopic systems.

▶ **Modeling environmental and ecological systems**

Generative AI is capable of simulating large-scale natural environments, such as ecosystems or weather patterns, based on real-world data. For instance, students can study forest ecosystems and visualize how different variables — like temperature, rainfall, or human intervention — impact biodiversity over time. Similarly, in the earth sciences, AI can generate models of climate systems to demonstrate how changing carbon dioxide levels influence global warming or ocean acidification. These simulations allow students to experiment with different variables to see real-time environmental impacts, helping them understand complex ecological dynamics.

► **Historical and cultural exploration**

Generative AI can recreate historical scenes or artifacts, giving students a visual understanding of different time periods, locations, and cultural artifacts. For example, AI could generate realistic images of ancient civilizations, such as Roman architecture or medieval towns, based on historical records. This allows students to virtually "see" what life looked like in past eras, fostering a more immersive learning experience in history classes. By examining AI-generated visuals of ancient or historical sites, students can better connect with and analyze cultural and historical changes over time.

► **Character and setting visualization in literary studies**

In literature or creative writing classes, generative AI can help students visualize characters, settings, and scenes from novels, plays, or poetry. For instance, students studying Shakespeare plays could use AI to generate Elizabethan-era settings or character portraits, which brings the narrative world to life and enhances their understanding of the text. Additionally, for creative assignments, students can use AI to design visuals for their original stories, helping them think critically about aspects such as mood, character appearance, and thematic elements, which deepens their engagement with narrative structure and analysis.

► **Data visualization and analysis**

In courses such as sociology, political science, or economics, generative AI can analyze large datasets and create visual representations, such as graphs, charts, and infographics. For instance, students studying demographic trends could use AI to visualize population changes over time or the impact of certain policies on different communities. This helps students grasp complex datasets and understand how to interpret statistical information, enabling them to draw informed conclusions about social issues.

► **Simulating social interactions and scenarios**

Generative AI can create simulations of social interactions, political campaigns, or economic models, allowing students to explore the dynamics of human behavior in various contexts. For example, in a political science class, students could engage in AI-generated simulations of election campaigns, where they make strategic decisions based on real-time feedback from the AI. This interactive experience provides a deeper understanding of political processes, voter behavior, and campaign strategies. Additionally, sociology students could simulate group dynamics or social movements, allowing them to experiment with and observe how social factors influence group behavior and decision making. This enhances comprehension of theoretical concepts by allowing students to apply them in practical scenarios.

Special considerations of AI art and image tools

AI art and image tools present ethical and legal challenges related to copyright, bias, misinformation, labor, and global disparities. The use of copyrighted materials in training data without consent raises ownership disputes, while biased datasets risk perpetuating stereotypes and marginalizing underrepresented groups. These tools can spread misinformation through deepfakes and manipulated content, creating accountability concerns. Additionally, they threaten creative jobs and may erode the value of human artistry, particularly for smaller creators. The legal landscape remains unclear, requiring updated frameworks to address these issues and ensure responsible use of AI in art.

▶ **Datasets and bias**

AI art and image tools rely heavily on datasets to generate images. These datasets are often compiled from online repositories, which may inadvertently include biased, inappropriate, or unethically sourced material. For example, if datasets overrepresent certain cultural, racial, or gendered imagery, the outputs of AI models will reflect and perpetuate these biases, reinforcing stereotypes.

▶ **Intellectual property**

The rise of generative AI images and video has ignited debates about copyright infringement. Many AI systems are trained without explicit consent from creators, which may violate intellectual property rights and risks diminishing the original artists' work and attribution. Many artists argue that generative tools exploit their intellectual property without offering credit or compensation, raising ethical concerns about fair use and creative ownership.

▶ **Misinformation, slander, copyright**

AI-generated images have immense potential for spreading misinformation and slander. Deepfakes, for instance, can create realistic but fake visuals of individuals in compromising or harmful situations, which can lead to reputational damage or legal disputes.

▶ **Labor impacts**

The widespread adoption of AI in creative industries could significantly impact artists, designers, and other visual creators. While AI tools can enhance efficiency and lower costs, they may also reduce demand for human labor. Freelancers and independent artists, in particular, may find themselves competing with AI systems capable of producing visually compelling work at a fraction of the cost. The commercialization of AI-generated art could potentially marginalize traditional artisans, diluting the value of human creativity and reducing opportunities for creative professionals.

Generative AI for music and audio

Generative AI music and audio tools are advanced technologies that use artificial intelligence to create, modify, or enhance sound and music. These tools streamline the creative process and offer innovative ways to approach music production, audio editing, and sound design. Amateurs and professionals both can automate tasks that once required technical expertise, such as mixing or mastering, and even open new creative possibilities by generating ideas or enhancing sound in ways a human might not think of. These tools offer cost-effective and accessible options for musicians, educators, and creators who may not have access to high-end resources.

▶ **Music composition**

AI can compose entire songs or assist musicians by generating melodies, chord progressions, and rhythms. For example, it can analyze patterns from a dataset of music genres and use that knowledge to create original compositions. This can help artists overcome creative blocks, offering them a starting point or fully fleshed-out musical pieces. Moreover, AI-based composition tools are often used in film scoring or game soundtracks to produce personalized music on demand.

▶ **Audio mixing and mastering**

These tools automatically adjust sound levels and enhance the overall quality of audio. In music production, AI can apply techniques such as equalization, compression, and reverb to make tracks sound professional without requiring in-depth knowledge of sound engineering. By automating these tasks, artists and producers can focus more on creativity than technicalities.

▶ **Voice synthesis**

AI can create realistic synthetic voices, both for speaking and singing. For example, AI-generated voices can mimic famous singers or generate a new singing voice for a track. Text-to-speech systems also allow AI to read out written content with lifelike intonation and clarity. This is useful not only for creative endeavors but also in education and accessibility, where synthesized voices can be used for audiobooks or to assist those with speech impairments.

▶ **Sound effects**

AI can generate or manipulate sound effects for various media, including music, films, and video games. It can create realistic environments by synthesizing ambient noise, weather sounds, or explosions. Additionally, AI can analyze existing sounds and transform them to fit different creative needs, saving time that would be spent recording or sourcing these effects manually.

▶ **Generating ambient soundscapes**

AI tools are increasingly being used to create ambient soundscapes for environments such as relaxation apps, meditation, or gaming. These tools analyze a range of sounds and generate soothing or atmospheric audio based on specific user preferences or moods. The AI can adjust dynamically to the user's times of day, location, environment, or activity. This technology is also employed in immersive experiences such as virtual reality (VR), where the sound must adapt in real time to the virtual environment's changes.

▶ **Music emotion recognition**

AI algorithms are now capable of analyzing the emotional content of a piece of music and categorizing it based on factors such as tempo, key, harmony, and rhythm. This can be used to recommend tracks that match a listener's current mood or help film composers choose the right music for specific emotional scenes. AI models trained on large datasets can even suggest changes to the music to enhance or modify its emotional impact, making the creative process more intuitive and interactive for composers. This technology is also being explored in therapy, where AI-generated music is used to assist in emotional regulation.

Example uses of AI music and sound in the classroom

▶ **Speech-to-text for hearing-impaired students**

In classrooms, AI-powered speech-to-text technology can provide real-time transcriptions of lectures and discussions, making learning more accessible for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. These systems use sophisticated natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to convert spoken words into text with high accuracy, even in environments with background noise. With this technology, students can follow along with class lectures and save transcriptions for later review, improving access to education.

▶ **Personalized learning paths**

AI tools can analyze a student's strengths and weaknesses to personalize learning experiences. For students with disabilities or learning differences, AI can adapt content-delivery methods to meet their specific needs, whether through text, visuals, or audio. For example, a student with dyslexia might benefit from AI-generated audio versions of texts, while a student with ADHD may be presented with more interactive and engaging content. These tailored learning experiences ensure that each student receives information in the format that works best for them, improving comprehension and engagement in the classroom.

▶ **Real-time language translation for multilingual classrooms**

AI-based real-time language translation tools are transforming multilingual classrooms by breaking down language barriers between teachers and students. These tools provide instant translation of spoken or written content into a student's native language, allowing for more inclusive participation. Whether used during a lecture or a group discussion or for reading materials, AI translation makes it easier for students who are not fluent in the primary language of instruction to keep up with the pace of the class. Additionally, it can foster greater collaboration and communication between students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
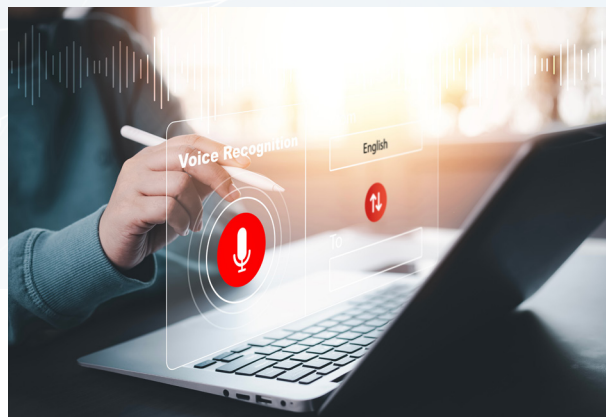
► **Music education**

Students can experiment with composing their own music using AI tools that provide real-time feedback on their choices. AI programs can demonstrate musical concepts such as harmony and rhythm, allowing students to visualize and hear the effects of changing different parameters.

► **Language learning**

AI audio tools can offer students personalized feedback on their pronunciation, helping them practice foreign languages with accurate intonation and stress patterns. AI systems simulate real conversations, giving students the chance to engage in dialogues and practice speaking in different languages.

► **Creative assignments**

Teachers can encourage students to use AI to compose music for digital storytelling, presentations, or other creative multimedia assignments, fostering a deeper understanding of both music and technology.

Generative AI for music and audio in the disciplines

- **Bioacoustics:** Analyze animal sounds for ecological research and wildlife monitoring.

- **Seismology:** Simulate and sonify earthquake data to better understand patterns.

- **Environmental monitoring:** Analyze ambient sounds in environments to detect changes in ecosystems.

- **Musicology:** Analyze historic compositions, uncover trends, and create music in classical styles.

- **Creative writing:** Generate soundtracks to enhance storytelling in literature, drama, and film.

- **Cultural studies:** Recreate audio experiences from historical eras or explore audio in different languages and dialects for linguistic studies.

- **Language and communications research:** Analyze spoken language and create audio simulations of speech patterns for research in social behavior.

- **Virtual assistants for therapy:** Simulate conversations and provide sound-based therapies like guided meditation.

- **Social sciences:** Sonify complex datasets, making patterns more apparent and distinct through sound.

Special considerations of AI art and image tools

▶ **Datasets and bias**

AI music and audio tools often rely on large datasets, which may contain inherent biases. For example, if an AI system is trained on a dataset that primarily features Western classical music, it may struggle to generate music in other cultural styles. This can lead to underrepresentation and reinforce cultural biases.

▶ **Misinformation, slander, and copyright**

Generative AI can easily produce fake audio that mimics the voices of real people, raising concerns about misinformation, slander, and privacy violations. Copyright issues also arise when AI systems sample or learn from copyrighted music. The legal frameworks around AI-generated content are still evolving, and artists are concerned about the unauthorized use of their work.

▶ **Labor impacts**

As AI systems become more advanced, they threaten to displace jobs in the music and audio industries. For example, composers, audio engineers, and voice actors could see reduced demand for their skills. On the other hand, new opportunities may arise for those who know how to work alongside AI systems to create content.

Voices from Campus:
What Students and Faculty Are Saying About AI

To better understand how AI is shaping academic life, the three student interns in this cohort conducted interviews with faculty and peers in spring 2025. These conversations explored how AI is currently being used, what concerns faculty and students have, and where expectations about responsible use remain unclear.

This section synthesizes findings from those interviews, identifying common themes and tensions in how faculty and students view AI's role in teaching and learning. Taken together, these perspectives show how AI is already reshaping academic norms and point toward practical next steps for institutions seeking to respond with clarity, consistency, and care.

Quotes from all respondents have been anonymized.

1. AI is a valuable support tool but requires human oversight

For both faculty and students, AI was often — though not universally — described as helpful for brainstorming or for simplifying or clarifying content. However, users nearly always qualified their praise with the need for human judgment.

Students

- *"AI tools have really reshaped how I approach learning. They definitely help me understand difficult topics more clearly and offer creative ways to visualize or break down complex concepts." — F.H.*

- *"As a business student ... [AI tools] help me think more creatively — like testing out business pitches or getting feedback on writing." — A.A.*

- *"AI sometimes gives incorrect or biased information, especially in questions related to mathematical reasoning. This is why it's not completely reliable to use AI without prior knowledge of the topic." — N.A.*

Faculty

- *"I've used tools like ChatGPT to help draft practice problems or reword confusing instructions — mostly to save time and avoid reinventing the wheel each semester. Sometimes I'll plug in a rough idea and ask for a few ways to reframe it. It's not perfect, but it gets the gears turning." — T.L.*

- *"In health education, accuracy matters too much to leave it to something automated." — M.S.*

- *"I design assignments that require reflection, iteration, or oral defense, which are harder to fake. I also incorporate 'show your process' tasks where students must explain how they arrived at a solution, not just provide it." — G.J.*

2. Widespread concern over overreliance and passive learning

Both groups worry that while AI can increase efficiency, it can also discourage deep thinking and reduce engagement if used improperly. Students notice that AI can provide useful shortcuts but that some shortcuts limit learning.

Students

- *"One concern I have is that as students, we might start relying on AI so heavily that we lose the habit of working through problems ourselves." — F.H.*

- *"I've used AI to break down case studies or summarize long financial reports, which saves a lot of time. But I've also noticed that when I rely on it too much, I struggle more with presenting or defending ideas in class because I didn't fully process them myself." — A.A.*

- *"It saves time by summarizing complex material and offering personalized support when I'm stuck. However, it can also make it tempting to skip important steps that stimulate critical thinking, which sometimes leads to a worse understanding of the subject." — N.A.*

- *"I think using chat has made me stupider in a sense, especially in my writing. I used to be a way better writer, but now I copy it right into chat and it gives a robotic voice that is not even my natural voice." — A.M.*

- *"AI has made my learning experience easier by breaking down complex topics, generating practice questions, and helping me study more efficiently, but it can be distracting if I start relying on it too much instead of thinking things through on my own." — H.H.*

- *"Overall, I feel AI tools have negatively impacted how I consume information, making it more passive rather than engaging. It's become easier to rely on them instead of truly interacting with the material." — T.O.*

Faculty

- *"It's made me more cautious. I've seen students use it to avoid doing the actual thinking. That's not learning." — M.S.*

- *"In my classes, students are required to write a brief report explaining how they used AI in any assignment where they did. That transparency builds trust and makes them more mindful. I also encourage them to compare AI outputs with peer-reviewed sources to see the limitations. Rather than banning AI, I teach them how to use it as a tool, not a crutch. When students reflect on their use of AI, it actually strengthens their critical thinking and ethical awareness." — M.A.*

- *"Educators cannot assume the full responsibility to be the AI catchers of the class." — B.K.*

- *"It hasn't changed the core of what I believe: thinking is hard, and shortcuts rot your brain. But it has changed the kinds of mistakes I see. Students now come in with beautifully worded, utterly incorrect answers — thank you, ChatGPT. I now emphasize why answers are correct, not just what they are. Students have to prove they understand, not just parrot syntax." — G.W.*

3. For faculty, AI is reshaping pedagogical priorities

Faculty indicated that AI is forcing them to rethink assignments, as well as the purpose and structure of learning itself. They are thinking about what is worth having students do directly, what requires human creativity, and how AI is best incorporated to support that.

- *"AI has made me reflect on the importance of critical thinking and originality." — K.J.*

- *"It's made me realize that students are coming in with way more tools at their fingertips than before. That shifts how I think about what they actually need from me. I've started focusing more on helping them build judgment — how to tell when an answer makes sense, how to dig deeper when AI gives them something superficial. I want them to learn how to think with tools, not just ask questions and copy the response."* — T.L.

- *"I encourage students to draw their own boundaries as to how much they will use AI in their thinking and writing process. I balance the benefits and concerns by appealing to students' sense of humanity and not taking being human and thinking for themselves for granted. An overreliance on AI can 'make the brain go soft.' I appeal to their sense of humanity and integrity as they navigate the changing academic AI landscape."* — C.D.

- *"AI has shifted my thinking from instructor-as-lecturer to instructor-as-curator and guide. Students now have the ability to access explanations, summaries, and examples instantly. So instead of spending time spoonfeeding information, I focus more on framing good questions, developing critical thinking, and helping students evaluate AI outputs. In a sense, AI has forced me — and hopefully my students — to become more intentional about how we use knowledge, not just memorize it."* — G.J.

- *"AI has really pushed me to think more about how students engage with knowledge, not just absorb it. In the past, I might have asked for a paper on family systems theory; now, I ask them to interact with an AI tool, use it to structure or brainstorm their paper, and then reflect on that process. It's made me more aware of the need to teach students how to critically assess sources, how to validate outputs, and how to maintain their own voice in a world where AI can generate text in seconds."* — M.A.

- *"AI might change how students study, but it won't change the logic of logic. In fact, I dare students to use AI on deep homework questions — so they can see just how lost it gets."* — G.W.

4. Students balance excitement with ethical awareness

Students acknowledge the potential of AI and are curious and optimistic about it, but their comments show some skepticism about quality, originality, and fairness. Most students felt confident they were using AI ethically, but some expressed uncertainty about acceptable use, pointing to a need for clearer institutional policies and classroom norms.

One recounted being unfairly caught in a plagiarism checker. Multiple students, while confident AI is a positive for their own learning, expressed concern that it will undermine learning for younger students.

- *"My biggest concern is originality. In business . . . you have to be able to bring your own voice . . . . A one-size-fits-all policy doesn't always work when every major uses AI differently." — A.A.*

- *"My institution should try to regulate, not penalize, the use of AI. It's the future and continuously is on an upward trend. If they understand that and begin to appreciate [that], all will be better." — H.I.*

- *"I think one of the biggest things is the younger generation using it from the beginning. For us, we started using it in college. I think that maybe even high schoolers using it is detrimental for their education and cognitive understanding." — A.M.*

- *"I've seen my younger siblings use it; they've used it on simple assignments and it hinders the basic foundation of their education." — B.A.*

5. Concerns about equal access and digital readiness

Both students and faculty raised issues related to equity in AI access, including disparities in familiarity with the tools, availability of tools, and confidence in using AI effectively. These insights suggest that integrating AI into education is not only a pedagogical or ethical question but also a matter of digital inclusion and digital fluency. Several students pointed out that the cost of premium versions of the AI tools over free versions created unequal access.

- *"I'd say access is mostly equal, especially since a lot of AI tools offer free versions or student trials. But even then, not everyone knows how to use them effectively, and that creates a different kind of gap — more about literacy than access. I think [my institution] could do more to level the playing field in that sense." — F.H.*

- *"Students in tech-heavy majors are more exposed to AI tools early on, and they usually know how to use them better. In contrast, business students — especially those focused on soft skills or management — might not even know where to begin. Access isn't just about having the tools, but also about knowing how to use them effectively and responsibly." — A.A.*

Comparison of Faculty and Student Views on AI

Theme	Faculty Perspective	Student Perspective
Sentiment	Skeptical and protective of existing standards; see AI as disruptive.	Curious, open, but reflective about drawbacks and ethical gray areas.
Purpose of use	Use AI for prep: drafting prompts and rubrics, and simplifying instructions.	Use AI directly for learning: understanding concepts, brainstorming, refining ideas.
Philosophical orientation	View AI as a challenge to academic integrity and traditional learning goals.	View AI as helpful but in need of boundaries; more ambivalent than resistant.
Risks of overreliance	Concerned about students avoiding critical thinking and submitting inauthentic work.	Worry about passivity, overuse, and developing unhealthy habits.
Institutional support	Desire strong, consistent policies from the institution.	Want course-level clarity about what is allowed and encouraged.
Equity and access	Raise concerns that AI may amplify digital inequalities, with some students having more exposure or confidence than others.	The same concerns, along with an alertness to variations in the cost for premium tools.

Conclusion:
Learning with Students

The work shared in this report reflects the curiosity, critical perspective, and creativity of students actively engaging with the emerging realities of generative AI in higher education. Across both cohorts, the interns recognized AI's rapid evolution, its complex implications for equity and pedagogy, and its potential to support learning when used intentionally. Their toolkit is not a set of instructions, but an invitation to faculty to listen, experiment, question, and collaborate.

Most importantly, the student interns challenge us to center the student experience in any discussion of educational technology. They remind us that decisions about classroom use of AI are not made in a vacuum; students are already making choices, navigating gray areas, and finding opportunities. By foregrounding the student experience, this report underscores a core principle of Every Learner Everywhere: Transformation in teaching and learning happens best when it is co-designed with those most affected.

As faculty continue to explore the role of generative AI in teaching and learning, we invite them to engage directly with students in shaping its use. By involving students in dialogue, co-creating classroom practices, and collaboratively developing policies, faculty can ensure that AI is integrated in ways that foster trust, equity, and shared responsibility. In doing so, educators not only prepare students to navigate the evolving digital landscape but also model what it means to learn together in a time of change.

Every Learner Everywhere partners with colleges and universities to leverage technology in pursuit of student-centered, faculty-powered, and institution-driven improvement in teaching and learning.

3035 Center Green Drive
Suite 200
Boulder, CO 80301
303-541-0208

every**learner**
everywhere

Subscribe to our Monthly Newsletter ➔