FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

AI IN GAYLORD

GROUP ZOEY

DR. JONATHAN BORDEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Artificial Intelligence is a technological concept about which we still know relatively little. It has been integrated into classrooms, leaving a multitude of differing opinions in its wake. Some find AI a helpful tool, while others have concerns and questions about it. It raises concerns such as cheating, inaccuracy, inconsistency, and excessive reliance. On the other hand, it can be used as a tool to help students with research, creativity, generating ideas, and improving grammar, among other skills. AI policies within schools and classrooms are inconsistent because institutions and professors have conflicting opinions on how it should be used, or whether it should be used at all.

AI, also known as Artificial Intelligence, is a new technological development that has grown rapidly. It is a system that we still know little about, making it hard to navigate in the school and work fields (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). AI has already taken over many jobs, which leaves us with one question: how do we keep up with this technological advancement? Because AI is such a new concept, schools and office jobs have been having issues regarding the ethical use of AI and whether it should be used at all (Selwyn, 2019). At the University of Oklahoma, there is a vague policy in terms of AI, creating many inconsistencies within classrooms. Each professor at the university has a different perspective on AI; some classrooms allow the use, while others have no tolerance for it. Because not all professors are on the same page, some students find themselves at a loss on whether they should be using it and to what extent. OU's mass communication college, Gaylord, is one of the departments that is specifically having trouble keeping up with AI. Mass communication jobs are in line of threat when it comes to AI because of its writing ability (Huang & Rust, 2021). Professors within Gaylord are questioning whether they should start teaching students how to use AI for their advantage or to make students learn the more traditional approach to writing.

An overview from the university regarding AI states, "...Ultimately, students should learn enough about AI to become responsible practitioners and/or informed critics. Please remember that each course at OU sets its own policies for using AI tools. If you are unsure about what's allowed, refer to your syllabus statement and feel free to ask your instructor" (University of Oklahoma, 2025). Because there is no clearly stated AI policy with the university, it leaves inconsistencies across the board. With there being an inconsistency, many students are left confused about what they can and cannot do. However, the University of Oklahoma has strict standards regarding academic integrity, where students can be punished in various ways, including expulsion. If a student is under the impression that all classroom AI policies are the same, they can find themselves in a position where their integrity is questioned. This is an obstacle that the University must tackle to ensure that all students are being held to the same standard and to eliminate any confusion that may arise. AI is a new technological advancement that we learn more about each day. The policies need to discuss all aspects of AI and connect it to academic integrity. If professors and students have a set of guidelines and information, rules and regulations on AI will be more consistent.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

INTERNAL

Many students use AI to spell check, fix grammatical errors, and assist with writing. The Gaylord Writing Center allows students to seek mentorship and tutoring without the use of AI. “Our center offers one-on-one 30-minute coaching sessions with writing tutors as well as other resources for media writing success” (Gaylord, 2022). Advantages of the *Gaylord Writing Center* include that students receive hands-on mentorship, where they can learn strong writing skills. Another advantage is accuracy; actually learning and implementing strong writing skills directly from Gaylord ensures accurate and correct writing, whereas AI can be inaccurate. The Writing Center is also 100% ethical and encouraged by the school. Disadvantages of the Writing Center include inconvenience. AI is much more time-efficient, as it responds immediately at the click of a button. AI is also easily accessible, as it can be used directly from a phone or computer.

The Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication values storytelling and innovation. The college encourages students to “become storytellers, thinkers, creators, and innovators” (Gaylord, 2025). Gaylord’s website shares, “Our college is recognized as the #1 media program in the country, according to the Broadcast Education Association (BEA)” (Gaylord, 2025).

When it comes to being the #1-ranked media program, the college takes AI very seriously. The University of Oklahoma has outlined its policies on the “AI Guidance for OU Students” page. In addition, every course syllabus has specific outlines for the use of AI: “Each course at OU sets its own policies for using AI tools” (AI, 2025).

Gaylord College has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism and unethical academic misconduct. The University of Oklahoma has its own “Guide to Academic Integrity,” which Gaylord follows closely. This strength ensures ethical journalism and mass communication practices.

Gaylord is currently navigating the obstacles that come with the use of AI and AI-generated content. Because every course is entitled to set its own limits on AI, inconsistency can cause confusion and a lack of transparency among students and staff. Another obstacle is the use of innovation. Gaylord values innovation and encourages students to adapt and grow academically. This can be contradictory when a new innovative tool is surrounded by negative connotations.

EXTERNAL - COMPETITION

The University of Oklahoma faces competition from other schools in how it uses artificial intelligence. For instance, Oklahoma State University and the University of Texas have created clear guidelines for using AI in classrooms, which helps reduce confusion for students. These efforts make these universities seem more innovative and proactive compared to OU. If OU allows

each professor to decide how to use AI without a standard, it may be seen as inconsistent and less supportive of students' academic needs (University of Oklahoma AI Usage Guidelines, 2025).

OPPOSITION

Many people at OU resist the use of AI. Some faculty and staff see AI as a threat to academic integrity and choose to limit or ban it in classrooms. This reflects a trend among educators who argue that AI hurts critical thinking and encourages plagiarism. Because the use of AI is so new to our lives, let alone the classroom, some find it very threatening. Additionally, some watchdog groups and employers share these concerns, questioning whether students who rely too much on AI are developing the necessary skills for their future careers. Within OU, individual course syllabi often express this opposition, as many professors impose stricter rules than the general AI guidance from the university (OU Academic Integrity Guide, 2025).

EXTERNAL IMPEDIMENTS

Technology develops faster than universities can manage, making it hard for OU to set long-term AI policies. *The U.S. Department of Education* has issued recommendations on the ethical use of AI; however, no official regulations have been implemented. This lack of consistent guidelines at both the federal and state levels creates uncertainty for universities and their students. Furthermore, social views on AI complicate matters, with skepticism fueled by concerns about job loss and the spread of misinformation. These legal, social, and technological pressures make it challenging for the University of Oklahoma to develop a clear strategy for integrating AI as a useful tool for its students (University of Oklahoma, 2025).

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

AI gives the University of Oklahoma a chance to create policies tailored to the needs of each college, instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, the *Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication* might focus on rules about plagiarism and ethical storytelling, while the *Price College of Business* may concentrate on data analysis. Engineering and computer science programs could encourage the use of AI for coding and design. OU's handbook tells students to “use AI to improve your ability to learn and to enhance your critical thinking skills, not to replace them” (OU AI Usage Guidelines, 2025). These guidelines would help reduce confusion, support academic integrity, and show OU’s commitment to innovation in different areas of study.

PUBLICS

In Public Relations, “publics” refer to specific groups of people who share a common interest, are affected by, or can affect an organization’s goal. In the context of AI in education, specifically regarding possible policies that can be implemented in Gaylord, it is vital to identify key publics. By doing this, we can better understand the positive and negative effects that could result from the usage. The current AI policies in Gaylord and across the University as a whole are inconsistent,

causing confusion among students. Course syllabi vary when determining the appropriateness of AI usage in the classroom, which can lead to uncertainty when completing assignments. By further examining our key publics and implementing an AI policy that pertains to all audiences, Gaylord can ensure confidence and effectiveness among students in the future.

CONSUMERS

First, we must look at the primary users or recipients of the organization's services. In the context of AI usage at the University of Oklahoma, the “customers” are identified as current students who attend the University, specifically Gaylord students. The second “customers” are future students who may consider AI policies when selecting a school, and the third are parents of these students who show concern about academic integrity and technology use in higher education. According to a survey done by the Digital Education Council, in 2024, 86% of students globally are regularly using AI in their studies, with 54% of them using AI on a weekly basis (Digital Education Council, 2024). Students are regularly using AI for a variety of tasks, the most common being text generation, enhancing and editing writing, summarizing, note-taking, and quizzing university textbooks (Dean, 2025).

PRODUCERS

Next, we must consider the *producers,* who create and oversee the environment in which AI is used. This group includes faculty, administrators, and the companies that develop AI technologies. In this case, professors of Gaylord College determine how AI is implemented within their courses by setting policies and expectations on syllabi. Some faculty embrace AI as a tool for enhancing critical thinking, while others have fears that it may diminish writing skills or lead to over-reliance. These attitudes within professors can also vary depending on factors such as age, specialization, and previous education (*University Teachers' beliefs about the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence for teaching and learning*). According to Frontiers in Psychology, research suggests that teachers in STEM fields are more open to implementing AI in coursework than those in the humanities and arts. Additionally, University Administration, such as the Office of Academic Integrity, the provost, and deans, play an important role in determining the future of AI in education. They oversee academic standards and institutional policies, striving to ensure consistency across departments. Collaboration between administration and faculty is essential to develop a cohesive AI policy that aligns with Gaylord’s mission. Finally, AI technology developers also shape how AI functions in the classroom. Platforms such as OpenAI and Grammarly influence features, privacy protocols, and integration with learning management systems. Understanding their platforms can help Gaylord craft policies that are realistic and forward-thinking.

ENABLERS

Enablers also play a role as a cornerstone of student academic support. These groups, such as the *Gaylord Writing Center*, must also adapt to the rise of AI by positioning their services as complementary rather than competitive. For example, while AI may help with grammar and structure, tutors can focus on critical analysis, research strategies, and ethical decision-making in writing. By adapting to the use of AI in Gaylord academics, these groups can help Gaylord promote the ethical use of AI and support students and faculty. Similar steps can be taken by IT departments, student organizations, and professional associations to provide external ethical guidelines for journalism and media programs (Gaylord, 2025).

LIMITERS

Lastly, we can look at groups that hinder the effectiveness of AI policies. These groups are known as *limiters*, and the most significant limiter is academic dishonesty. For example, when students use AI to generate entire assignments without engaging in genuine learning, this behavior undermines both individual growth and institutional integrity (*Academic dishonesty using Generative AI*). Also, as previously discussed, another huge limiter is the faculty. While some instructors may resist AI integration altogether, the overall resistance can lead to fragmented policies and missed opportunities for innovation.

KEY PUBLICS

Key Publics for AI policies in Gaylord College are students and professors associated with the University of Oklahoma. Most of these people are located at the Norman and OKC area campuses. Between students and professors, there is a diversity of both ages and education levels. The majority of students at OU are ages eighteen to twenty-five, earning their undergraduate degree. However, there is still a large group of students above the age of twenty-five for undergraduate and graduate/professional degrees to be accounted for (University of Oklahoma, 2022). The psychographics of students at the University of Oklahoma, particularly those in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, reflect a community of creative, engaged storytellers. Gaylord students are often active in a variety of organizations and thrive in innovative, collaborative environments. These qualities are highlighted by Gaylord's recognition as the nation's top-ranked media program, an honor based on the quality and consistency of student work compared with peer institutions (OU, n.d.).Professors also have a wide age range, from graduate assistants to professors on tenure. The majority of undergraduate and graduate students identify as white, ranging from 51.2% and above. University faculty at OU are also majority white, making up 86.7% of the faculty population (College Factual, 2023). Also, according to College Factual, the population is basically evenly split between men and women. The University of Oklahoma has been reviewed as balanced between political affiliation within the student population as a whole (Niche, 2023). There was nothing on the University of Oklahoma's professors specifically regarding political affiliation, but the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs found "...1,240 Oklahoma professors made campaign contributions in 2022. Of that total, 92 percent donated to Democratic candidates and just 8 percent supported Republicans" (Carter, 2024). Overall, the

University of Oklahoma has a somewhat diverse population in terms of age, gender, education, and political affiliation.

At the University of Oklahoma, students and professors are held to a standard of excellence. Students specifically are encouraged to be successful in classes, join clubs and extracurricular activities, and work if possible/necessary. Lifestyle traits around the university vary, but one thing most students and professors have in common is the football team and its success. The Norman campus specifically rallies around the football culture: “The Oklahoma Sooners are ranked No. 10 with a valuation of $928 million. The Sooners' revenue is listed at $199 million” (Unruh, 2024). The University holds many values, according to “Lead On”, OU’s strategic plan, core values are: excellence, opportunity and success, boldness, freedom of expression, civility, and civic commitment. Professors are also expected to exemplify these values. Students at OU are usually persuaded by both facts and emotion, while professors rely more heavily on facts and evidence. Students tend to be motivated by appeals to the future, such as new opportunities and innovation, whereas professors are often influenced by proven track records and past success. Other relevant traits include the strong football culture on the Norman campus, pride in OU’s reputation, and a shared value of civic engagement and free expression.

COMMUNICATION

Communication among University of Oklahoma students varies, but most prefer digital methods for sharing information. Students mainly use email, Canvas announcements, and OU webpages for official communication. For guidance on AI policy, the university provides a page called “AI Usage Guidelines for Students.” This page outlines the guidelines for academic honesty and the responsible use of AI tools. Each course at OU sets its own rules for using AI tools. Because professors create their own standards, many students ask instructors for clarification in person or discuss it with their peers using group chats and social media like *GroupMe* and *Discord*.

Students often turn to reliable sources and professors for advice, such as professors, tutors at the Gaylord Writing Center, and student organizations. *The Gaylord Writing Center* provides coaching sessions that help students improve their writing skills without using AI, encouraging them to discuss their writing difficulties openly. At the university level, OU sees AI as a tool that needs careful use in learning. Therefore, students trust AI communication more when it comes from official OU sources, like syllabi, policy webpages, and Canvas, along with support from trusted faculty members.

OPINION RESEARCH

The majority of students are in a state of awareness regarding the incorporation of AI in the classroom, with some becoming “active” users who routinely use AI in their academic work. Although opinions among students vary, they are generally favorable. Although concerns about academic integrity and an excessive reliance on technology still exist, many see AI as a useful learning tool for brainstorming, revising, and comprehending difficult concepts. From the

standpoint of the student, the advantages of the partnership are evident. AI encourages a moderate commitment to continuous use by providing accessibility, individualized help, and efficiency in completing projects. This dedication, however, fails when students fear becoming dependent on AI, which could impair their ability to think critically, or when institutional policies limit access to AI. Students' commitment to AI integration is largely dependent on how these educational institutions define and control its usage in the classroom, but they see the main benefits as increased academic productivity and learning support.

SUMMARY

Research on AI integration at the University of Oklahoma reveals a significant gap in AI policies, leading to misunderstandings among academics and students. Even though 86% of students worldwide regularly use AI for academic tasks, OU's policy of letting individual instructors create their own AI guidelines has led to inconsistent standards across courses, which may have violated academic integrity and left students unsure of how to use AI appropriately. Although their dedication to safe use depends on clear institutional guidance, students demonstrate a high level of awareness and generally positive perceptions of AI as a learning tool, despite this potential misunderstanding.

Because of the competitive pressure from universities like Oklahoma State and the University of Texas, which have implemented extensive AI policies, OU may be falling behind in meeting the demands of its students. However, this circumstance presents OU with the opportunity to create college-specific regulations that meet the unique needs of each program while upholding the standards of academic integrity for the entire university. The main issue that OU has to deal with is the conflict between embracing new technology and maintaining its high standard of education.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
High student AI adoption (86% usage rate)	Inconsistent policies create student confusion
Flexible course-specific approach	Lack of university-wide standards
Strong academic integrity foundation	Faculty resistance and varying tech comfort
Established support services (Writing Center)	
Opportunities	**Threats**
College-specific policy development	Competitive disadvantage with other institutions
Leadership in educational AI innovation	Academic dishonesty risks
Enhanced learning support systems	Rapid tech advancement outpacing policy

Although it lacks OU-specific data, the secondary research that is now available accurately reflects current AI trends. To identify particular needs and policy preferences, primary research is crucial. This includes surveys and focus groups with OU staff and students. A comparison review of policy effectiveness across disciplines, specific examples of policy implications, and actual AI usage trends per college are among the important pieces of missing data. The connection between academic results and policy clarity should also be further evaluated through primary research.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

We decided to conduct one-on-one interviews with business students, Gaylord students, and a parent. We created questions about AI ethics, peer and social perspectives, policy gaps, and classroom confusion, humans vs AI, and the future of careers with AI becoming prominent. The purpose of these interviews was for us to gain a deeper understanding of how students and professionals feel about the rise of AI. We also wanted to learn about the different perspectives on the ethics of AI because everyone has their own perspective on what can be considered ethical and what cannot. In order to create clear guidelines and policies concerning AI use, we must first learn about the people who actively use it and why they do (Holmes et al., 2021).

METHODS

For this research, we conducted a series of qualitative interviews to explore how key publics perceive and interact with artificial intelligence, specifically in educational settings. The main goal of these interviews was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of participants' attitudes toward AI use, their ethical considerations, their awareness of institutional policies, and their predictions about AI's role in future academic and professional contexts.

By using a qualitative exploration technique, we were able to explore the topic and its associated complex feelings, beliefs, and personal experiences that cannot be fully captured through quantitative research, such as numerical data. Qualitative data collection provides us researchers with more detailed insights into how people think, feel, and behave in specific contexts, such as AI in academia (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This kind of research is essential when examining the existence of evolving technologies within universities. Through semi-structured interviews, we facilitated follow-up questions, which ultimately allowed for deeper exploration of participants' opinions.

The interview questions curated by our group were designed to address key concepts such as ethical boundaries (e.g., “Where is the line between using AI as a tool and cheating?”), policy inconsistencies (“How do your classes differ regarding AI policy?”), generational differences, and the potential impact that AI may have on future careers. We formulated an interview guide that consisted of concise open-ended questions that encouraged elaborate responses, such as how different participants define cheating when using AI. By keeping questions short yet inviting, our application of clear and concise questioning eliminated the possibility of confusing and complex questions. This tactic is essential in qualitative research because lengthy preambles or overly complex wording can lead participants off-topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Our questions were chosen because they directly connect to our research goal: understanding how different publics view and engage with AI and how these perspectives might inform future university policies.

Between September 30 and October 7, 2025, five interviews were conducted. Participants included a parent of a current OU student, three current OU students from different majors (including nursing, cybersecurity, and marketing/supply chain), and one Gaylord student. This diverse group of interviewees allowed for a range of generational, disciplinary, and professional perspectives. Participants’ ages ranged from their early 20s to mid-50s, and they identified as both male and female with diverse cultural backgrounds. Interviews were conducted both over the phone and in person, with each session lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. Participants were primarily recruited through convenience sampling, based on their relevance to the topic, scheduling accommodations, and willingness to share their perspectives. This method was effective for reaching individuals who represent different publics directly impacted by AI policy decisions in higher education (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In summary, these semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture firsthand, reflective data on how people understand and use AI. By speaking directly with participants, we gained valuable insight into their various ethical views, experiences with inconsistent policies, and expectations for AI’s future role in academia and the workforce. These findings offer essential context so we can further develop clear, inclusive, and effective AI policies at the University of Oklahoma.

FINDINGS

What are the ethical concerns of using AI at OU and in Gaylord?

The specific theme presented in the responses to this research question was the tension between ethical use and academic dishonesty. Every participant interviewed acknowledged that AI can be a helpful educational tool, but it can also make it easy to cheat.

Several participants described this boundary in nearly identical ways. One participant said it is ethical when “you use it to help you learn or get ideas,” but cheating when someone “just copies and pastes the answers or lets AI write it all for them.”(Participant Green). Another added that using AI would “get you in trouble if your teacher found out”(Participant Purple), which clearly crosses into unethical territory.

Interestingly, even the parent participant recognized this same distinction when discussing her daughter's use of AI for study guides. She noted that her child "mainly uses it to learn concepts she might not fully understand yet," but emphasized that using AI to "copy and paste answers" is not acceptable (Participant Blue).

What are the social perspectives surrounding AI at OU and in Gaylord?

The specific theme presented in the responses to this research question was the contrast between younger and older generations' comfort levels with AI. Younger participants described AI as exciting, useful, and even entertaining — frequently using it for creative or social purposes. Older participants, such as the parent interviewee, expressed hesitancy and distrust toward AI-generated information, often citing a lack of "proof of citation" and the need to "double check" everything (Participant Purple).

Younger participants emphasized that "older generations are more scared of the power AI has, while their generation sees it as a resource." (Participant Blue). This divide often appeared to mirror generational differences seen with other technologies in the past, such as smartphones and social media.

What are the policy gaps causing classroom confusion at OU and in Gaylord?

The specific theme presented in the responses to this research question was frustration with the lack of consistent AI rules between classes.

One participant remarked, "Every class is different—some let us use it for ideas, others don't want us to touch it" (Participant Green). Another said OU should "have one general guideline all professors follow" and that "professors should go over it the first week" (Participant Orange). Because of this inconsistency, participants said they review the AI policy "for every class that requires writing" to stay safe (Participant Purple). This theme suggests a strong desire for institutional clarity, consistency, and transparency about acceptable AI use.

What are people's attitudes when comparing humans to AI?

The specific theme presented in the responses to this research question was that AI will highly impact careers, some more than others. Students in technology-related majors recognized that "data analyst jobs will probably decline," but AI could "help cybersecurity analysts detect vulnerabilities" (Participant Orange). Communication and business students emphasized that AI cannot replace "human interaction, empathy, or relationships" (Participant Green). The parent agreed, saying she worries that "many jobs are now replaceable by AI," yet believes her child's field "will stay safe because it requires creativity" (Participant Blue).

Overall, participants viewed AI as both a threat and a tool—capable of efficiency but limited by its inability to replicate human emotion.

What are people's attitudes toward the impact of AI on the future of journalism and media?

The specific theme presented in the responses to this research question was that AI will play a major role in shaping the future of media and communications. They expect AI to handle many technical and repetitive aspects of content creation, such as summarizing stories, generating drafts, and producing visuals, allowing humans to focus on creativity and emotion.

Participants predicted that AI will continue to "grow and get more advanced," helping professionals "write faster, make visuals, and brainstorm ideas" (Participant Purple). Another participant said AI will "revolutionize how information is produced and shared," especially in digital marketing and journalism (Participant Green).

However, participants also expressed concern that this efficiency might lead to a loss of authenticity in the media. The parent participant worried that audiences "won't be able to tell what's real anymore" and emphasized the need for human oversight (Participant Blue).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

1. Policy Clarity Needed: OU should establish standardized AI guidelines across colleges.
2. Ethics Education: Students understand the basics but need structured discussion about gray areas.
3. Generational Gap: Faculty training may reduce fear and build shared understanding.
4. Career Preparedness: Programs should teach AI literacy to prepare students for evolving industries.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

This study provides important insights into how students and faculty at the University of Oklahoma view and respond to AI in higher education. While these insights are based on interviews with participants at OU, they do not represent all universities or departments. The study included a small but diverse group of participants, including students from different colleges and a professional parent, who shared their views on ethics, classroom experiences, and the future of AI. The interviews showed a common feeling of uncertainty and concern about the lack of clear guidance from the university. The study focused on students and educators in OU's Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication. The participants expressed thoughts that show broader worries about technology, such as distrust in technology, anxiety about job security, and confusion over ethical issues. The challenge of integrating AI in education affects not just OU but is part of a larger global issue about balancing innovation with integrity, which impacts communication, journalism, and public relations fields. The findings are in line with existing research on ethics in communication (Stroud, 2023). Similar to previous studies, participants wanted guidance that encourages responsible use of AI rather than strict rules. This

suggests that university policies on AI should focus on teaching critical thinking and ethical understanding instead of just enforcing rules.

The interviews also highlighted the emotional side of using AI. Participants often described feelings of guilt, fear, and inadequacy regarding AI in assignments or career readiness. This suggests that unclear AI policies impact not only how students act academically but also their mental health and confidence. Students worried that using AI might hurt their credibility or skill development, while others feared that not using AI could leave them professionally behind. This situation reflects a type of anxiety unique to the digital age that universities need to address with clear policies and mental health support.

In communication education, the findings stress the importance of teaching that sees AI as a tool that complements human creativity, not replaces it. Just as public relations professionals must balance technology with genuine emotion, educators need to prepare students to use AI ethically without losing their originality. Participants consistently noted that machines cannot replace human traits like empathy, interpretation, and ethical decision-making. Therefore, educators and university leaders should foster these essential qualities while helping students adapt to new technologies. The results also showed some inconsistencies in OU's policies. Each department and instructor has different rules, leading to confusion among students about expectations. This issue, known as "policy fragmentation", can harm trust in the university. A clear, flexible, and ethically sound AI policy across the university would help create fairness and understanding among students and faculty. Future research could explore how other universities manage AI policies differently. Studies could look at whether journalism and media programs develop different ethical standards compared to STEM or business programs. Long-term studies could also track how attitudes toward AI change as policies improve and technology becomes more integrated into education.

Overall, this research adds to the conversation about technology, ethics, and education. It shows that students and professionals are not against AI; they want clarity, fairness, and ethical stability. As AI continues to develop, higher education adapts by teaching how to integrate AI responsibly and thoughtfully, instead of restricting innovation.

TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

To fully find the answer to how these publics really feel about AI, we need to gather more information on a greater scale. AI is seen by both parents and students as a helpful but conflicting technology that is beneficial for productivity, creativity, and learning but also concerning for its abuse and ethical inconsistencies. Participants underlined the need for more precise guidelines and uniform standards, particularly given the vast range of expectations among instructors and different majors. Many believe that AI cannot replicate human empathy and creativity, which supports the idea that communication abilities and emotional intelligence will always be valuable.

One common conclusion is that formal education must include AI literacy, or the understanding of when and how to employ AI ethically. However, some questions still need answering. Creating AI policies that are both universal and flexible, but also structured enough to offer ethical clarity,

while also being flexible enough to accommodate the many demands of various disciplines, is an issue facing universities. Professors also need to figure out how to teach students how to distinguish between considerate help and unhealthy reliance, in addition to how to use AI efficiently. Institutions must simultaneously create guarantees for human creativity, privacy, and long-term job stability as AI continues to transform industries and creative fields. To make sure AI develops into a tool that enhances rather than replaces human intelligence and creativity, these initiatives will need constant research, collaboration, and open discussion.

SURVEY FINDINGS

In addition to individual interviews, we conducted a Qualtrics survey with questions on artificial intelligence to understand how college students feel about AI and classroom policies. We came to an understanding that each student feels differently about AI. Our class created survey questions to see whether attitudes toward AI are related to race, ethnicity, gender, age, major, etc. Research questions included: Do Gaylord students report higher levels of concern about AI replacing their future jobs compared to Business students? Do Journalism majors report lower levels of AI usage than Public Relations majors? Do Communication Media Production (CMP) students report higher confidence in detecting AI-generated content than Advertising students?

DESIGN & PARTICIPANTS

Creating a survey is a good way to examine questions for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that surveys are more time and cost-effective. Respondents can complete the survey anywhere, anytime, as long as they have a device with them. Another reason is that we can download the study into tools like IBM SPSS Statistics to analyse the data more efficiently. Going through data in Excel can be hard to read, lacks many tools, and takes a lot more time. It is also easier to make mistakes manually translating data, whereas systems like SPSS do it automatically. Surveys also allow you to collect multiple types of data at once; “Surveys are engaging because they let you gather both data types at once. You can ask people to rate things on a scale of 1 to 10 (quantitative)

and then explain why they chose that rating (qualitative)" (Naser, 2024). Methods such as interviews and focus groups primarily collect qualitative data only. Not only are surveys more convenient, but they are also more efficient as a result.

We used a Qualtrics survey to conduct our research, including both closed-ended (Likert-scale) questions and open-ended questions. Qualtrics provides respondents with a fully online, self-administered survey. The survey used a convenience sampling technique, as participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Our class sent the survey to students at the University of Oklahoma and another school in Virginia. We received 320 responses in total and collected data for about 2 weeks. The survey was short, and the timing varied for each respondent. However, the survey typically took a few minutes to complete.

The survey included 453 respondents, primarily traditional college-aged students (18–23 years old), with a few older outliers up to 57 years old. The majority were female (73% of those who responded), and most identified as White or Caucasian (90% of those who responded). About 12% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. Most participants were undergraduates with some college experience, but no degree (66%), and the majority were traditional full-time students (90%). Regarding employment, most were full-time students working part-time (54%), while 39% were full-time students not working, and a small portion balanced full-time work with part-time study (7%). Overall, the survey captured a predominantly young, female, and undergraduate student population, reflecting a diverse range of academic majors and racial/ethnic backgrounds, with a mix of work experiences.

DATA

Respondents were primarily traditional college-aged students, ages 18 to 23, though a few outliers were 28, 31, 40, 45, 51, and 57.

- Mean age: ~20.9 years
- Median age: 21 years
- Mode (most common age): 21 years
- Range: 18–57 years

Out of 453 respondents, 316 answered the question about gender. Among those who responded:

- Female: 73% (230 respondents)
- Male: 25% (79 respondents)
- Non-binary/third gender: 2% (7 respondents)
  A total of 137 respondents (30%) did not specify their gender.

Out of 453 respondents, 317 answered the question regarding Hispanic or Latino origin:

- Yes: 12% (39 respondents)
- No: 88% (278 respondents)

Out of 453 respondents, 316 answered the question about race/ethnicity. Among those who responded:

- White or Caucasian: 90% (283 respondents)
- Black or African American: 4% (13 respondents)
- American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native: 8% (24 respondents)
- Asian: 5% (15 respondents)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 1% (2 respondents)
- Other: 3% (10 respondents)
- Prefer not to say: 1% (4 respondents)
  A total of 137 respondents (30%) did not answer this question.

Out of 453 respondents, 315 answered the question about the highest education level completed:

- Some high school or less: 0% (1 respondent)
- High school diploma or GED: 17% (54 respondents)
- Some college, no degree: 66% (207 respondents)
- Associate or technical degree: 6% (18 respondents)
- Bachelor's degree: 8% (26 respondents)
- Graduate or professional degree: 2% (6 respondents)
- Prefer not to say: 1% (3 respondents)
  A total of 138 respondents (30%) did not answer this question.

Out of 453 respondents, 315 answered the question about student status:

- Traditional student (full-time straight from high school): 90% (284 respondents)
- Nontraditional student (not full-time or returning after working full-time): 5% (17 respondents)
- Not sure: 2% (7 respondents)
- Other: 2% (7 respondents)
  A total of 138 respondents (30%) did not answer this question.

Out of 453 respondents, 314 answered the question about work situation:

- No work, full-time student: 39% (123 respondents)
- Full-time student with part-time work: 54% (168 respondents)
- Full-time work, part-time student: 7% (23 respondents)
  A total of 139 respondents (31%) did not answer this question.

FINDINGS

Across both surveys, students reported being very familiar with AI tools and shared notable perceptions about how it could impact their education and future careers. Many students found that AI will have an impact on their careers in the future in some way. For example, Gaylord

students (M = 3.84, SD = 1.14) and Business students (M = 4.06, SD = 0.92) responded that being able to use AI will be a crucial skill by graduation.

On a professional impact, both Gaylord students and Business students had similar opinions on whether AI could replace their jobs. Levels of worry about job replacement were nearly identical for Gaylord (M = 3.50, SD = 1.42) and Business students (M = 3.52, SD = 1.24), showing that both majors fear job replacement to some degree. Similarly, concerns about the value of their degree with the rise of AI were consistent across both majors (Gaylord: M = 3.59, SD = 1.28; Business: M = 3.45, SD = 1.27).

Regarding coursework, students reported familiarity with AI tools and used them moderately to complete their coursework. Based on major, Public Relations majors (M = 3.00, SD = 0.89) and Journalism majors (M = 3.20, SD = 0.84) have similar results in how much they use AI to complete their coursework and assignments. Also, students believe they have a strong sense of detecting AI-generated content. For example, our survey found Journalism majors (M = 4.00, SD = 1.23) and CMP majors (M = 4.20, SD = 0.84) both believe they have a strong ability to detect AI-generated videos from real-life videos.

Our first hypothesis, which we developed, said that Gaylord students will report greater concern about AI replacing future jobs than Business students. To test this hypothesis, we conducted Independent samples t-tests to compare Gaylord and Business students on four AI-related concerns. For worry about AI replacing jobs, the results showed no significant difference, $t(119) = –0.08$, $p = .94$. Concerns about professional success also did not have a significant difference, $t(119) = –0.66$, $p = .51$. The concerns about the value of each student's degree were similar between groups, as well, $t(119) = 0.57$, $p = .57$. Finally, there was no significant difference in the students' concern about using and operating AI being a vital graduation skill, $t(119) = –1.18$, $p = .24$. For this hypothesis, there was little statistical significance, and the hypothesis was not supported.
For our second hypothesis, Journalism majors will report lower AI usage than Public Relations majors, and we found a similar result. Using a t-test, we also found no significant difference in AI use between the two majors. Although Journalism majors reported slightly higher usage (M = 3.20) than PR majors (M = 3.00), the difference was not significant, $t(27) = –0.46$, $p = .65$.

Lastly, our third hypothesis stated that CMP students will report higher confidence in detecting AI-generated content than Advertising students. By comparing three t-tests, including the student's ability to detect AI-generated video ((8) = –0.30, $p = .77$), whether they thought others would have a hard time detecting AI content, and how confident they were in trusting AI to be accurate ($t(8) = –1.50$, $p = .17$), we again found no significant statistical difference. Therefore, our hypothesis was not supported.

Because no significant statistical differences were found in our hypotheses, we were still able to find that the students' beliefs were very similar across many areas. Although our hypotheses were not supported, our client should still understand that our population is very aware of AI's capabilities and uses, and wants to make it a priority to learn how to better use AI in their education and future careers.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Students Across Majors Share Similar Levels Of Concern About AI's Professional Impact

Our survey results showed that students, regardless of their major, report similar levels of concern about the role of AI in their future careers. Gaylord and Business students expressed a significant amount of worry related to job replacement, the potential impact of AI on professional success, and the value of their degrees. Because they see the use of AI growing so much in every aspect of their life, they have a lot of fear that the growth will continue, which would impact their future careers in a negative way. The absence of significant statistical differences suggests that concerns about AI are widespread and shared within the greater population of our survey, rather than just a specific major. This demonstrates that educational initiatives focusing on AI's professional impacts

or communication within each college institution may be more successful when addressed to the whole university rather than just to certain majors.

Students Use AI Moderately in Coursework Across Majors

The survey results additionally show that students use AI in their coursework in a moderate way, with little distinct differences across majors in public relations and journalism. Similar levels of use of AI tools were observed by both groups, suggesting that students are using AI in their academic work, even though our results did not show a distinct statistical difference. This moderate use points to an important opportunity for organizations to offer more precise guidelines and more organized instructional materials on the ethical and successful use of AI. Because the use is consistent across majors, it can be similar within each college or major.

Minimal Group Differences Suggest Broadly Shared AI Attitudes and Behaviors

There were very few differences between academic groups in any inferential studies. Concerns, usage patterns, and confidence levels were all similar among the students in our survey. This consistency suggests that common cultural and technological experience, rather than academic training, shapes attitudes toward AI. This implies that cross-campus initiatives, such as AI literacy workshops, ethical norms, and other shared experiences, can be more successful for grasping the students' ideas on AI and better using that information, rather than only using major-specific strategies.

When combined, the results show that students are somewhat engaged with AI tools, moderately concerned about the impact of AI, and moderately confident when assessing information created by AI. These trends show that students are prepared for organizational direction that makes ethical AI use clear and increases their ability to evaluate AI outcomes critically. Wide-ranging programs may successfully assist students because their attitudes and behaviors pertaining to AI seem to be consistent across majors.

SUGGESTIONS

Gaylord College has a pretty big challenge right now: students are using AI tools in their work, but there’s no clear, college-wide policy, and professors each have their own rules. From interviews, surveys, and even social media insights, it’s clear that students are confused about what’s okay and what isn’t. That confusion can lead to accidental policy violations, frustration, and inconsistencies in grading.

The college should focus on being proactive and student-centered. By making AI policies clear and easy to follow, and by teaching students how to use AI responsibly, Gaylord can position itself as a college that encourages innovation while maintaining academic integrity.

Communicating with Key Publics.
Key publics include:

- Students: They need clear guidelines and support for how to use AI in their classes.
- Faculty: Professors need alignment so AI rules are consistent across the college.
- University administration: They can provide support, resources, and institutional backing.

Communication should be clear, transparent, and two-way. Students and faculty should have ways to ask questions, give feedback, and suggest improvements. Messaging should focus on trust, responsibility, and opportunity, showing that AI can help students learn, not just be a risk.

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Strategy 1: Make AI Policies Clear and Consistent

- Work with faculty to create a Gaylord-specific AI policy that fits within OU's general policy but adds examples relevant to journalism, PR, advertising, and communications.
- Create a core set of rules that all professors follow, with some flexibility for individual classes.

Strategy 2: Teach Students and Faculty How to Use AI

- Offer workshops, tutorials, and online guides showing students how to use AI ethically in assignments and projects.
- Train faculty so everyone is on the same page about what's allowed.
- Include AI guidelines in new student orientation so incoming students know the rules from day one.

Strategy 3: Engage and Gather Feedback

- Host focus groups or surveys to learn how students are using AI and what they find confusing.
- Encourage student forums or discussion boards where students can share tips and ask questions.

Channels and Media:

- Email & LMS Announcements: Send policy updates and resources straight to students.
- Social Media: Use Instagram to share short AI tips, examples of proper use, and Q&A content.
- Website: Create a dedicated AI hub with policies, tutorials, FAQs, and contact info.
- Workshops/Webinars: Offer live and recorded sessions where students can interact, ask questions, and complete mini exercises through the writing center.

Messaging:

- “AI is a tool to help you learn. Here’s how to use it responsibly.”
- “Our policies make sure everyone has a fair and consistent experience in the classroom.”
- “Have questions about AI? Check out our hub or attend a workshop at the writing center.”

The goal is to make students feel supported, not punished, and to position faculty as partners in learning.

Additional / Future Recommendations:

- Update policies regularly as AI tools and technology change.
- Ensure Gaylord professors are following the same policies when it comes to AI in the classroom.
- Utilize the writing center to help students learn how to use AI responsibly.
- Keep track of trends on social media to see how students are using AI outside of class.
- Offer AI-integrated coursework or optional assignments that teach students practical and ethical AI use.
- Assess effectiveness through yearly surveys, interviews, and class performance data.
- Work with university administration to make sure Gaylord’s policy fits OU-wide guidelines while still addressing the unique needs of communication students.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More college students are using Artificial Intelligence, but there are still no consistent rules for how it should be used in class. At the University of Oklahoma, there are some general guidelines, but each professor sets their own rules. This leaves students unsure about what is allowed and what counts as academic misconduct. This study looked at how students feel about AI, how they use it in their classes, and how they and others view current AI policies. To answer these questions, the research team used secondary research, interviews, social media observation, and a Qualtrics survey. The secondary research found that AI can help with brainstorming, editing, and clarifying ideas, but it also brings up concerns about accuracy, overuse, and academic honesty. The research showed that students and faculty are the main groups affected by decisions about AI policies.

Primary research included five one-on-one interviews with OU students from various majors and a parent of a current student. Interview findings revealed that participants generally see AI as a helpful tool but are frustrated by inconsistent classroom policies. Participants distinguished between using AI for learning support and using it to generate complete assignments, which they viewed as unethical. Many also expressed concern about AI’s impact on future careers while emphasizing that human creativity and ethical judgment cannot be replaced.

Survey results from 453 respondents showed that students across majors are familiar with AI and use it moderately in their coursework. Students reported similar levels of concern about job replacement, the value of their degree, and the importance of AI skills. Hypothesis testing found no significant differences between academic groups, suggesting that AI-related attitudes and concerns are shared across the student population. Based on these findings, this report

recommends clear and more consistent AI policies, improved communication between faculty and students, and expanded education on ethical AI use. These steps can reduce confusion, support academic integrity, and better prepare students to use AI responsibly in their academic and professional futures.

CONCLUSION

If Gaylord College creates clear AI policies, teaches students and faculty how to use AI responsibly, and communicates effectively across multiple channels, it can lead the way in responsible AI use in higher education. This approach will reduce confusion, ensure fairness, and prepare students to use AI professionally in their future careers.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ICEBREAKERS:

1) What is one item you cannot live without?
2) How would you describe AI if it had a personality?
3) What is the craziest thing you have made AI do for you?
4) Do you use AI as your personal therapist?
5) If ChatGPT were a frat/sorority on campus, which one would it be?
6) Do you think AI will take over the world one day?

TOPIC 1: AI ETHICS

1) Do you use AI in your classes?
2) Have you used AI tools? If so, which ones?
3) Is there a fine line between using AI as a tool and cheating? What does that look like?
4) Do you think you use AI ethically in accordance with OU's guidelines?

TOPIC 2: PEER & SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

1) How do your friends feel about AI?
2) How do your professors feel about AI?
3) If you had to give a number, how many of your friends would you say use AI regularly?
4) How do attitudes toward AI vary by generation?

TOPIC 3: POLICY GAPS & CLASSROOM CONFUSION

1) Do you assume that all classrooms have the same AI policy?
2) Have you ever been questioned for using AI in class? If so, how was it used?
3) Which classes do you review the AI policy before using it on assignments?
4) How can OU structure classes differently to put more emphasis on AI policy?

TOPIC 4: HUMANS VS. AI

1) Do you think AI can replace our jobs?
2) What jobs do you believe are most at stake?
3) How would you describe AI work compared to human work?
4) What characteristics does AI lack versus humans?

TOPIC 5: FUTURE OF MEDIA/JOURNALISM CAREERS WITH AI

1) Can AI make journalism and media jobs easier or harder?
2) Would you consider it to be ethical to use AI in your future career?
3) Are you fearful of any risk AI might bring to your career?
4) In what ways do you believe AI will change the future of journalism, communications, and media?

DEBRIEF/WRAP-UP

1) What's your major?
2) Where do you see yourself in five years?
3) How do you feel personally about AI?

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