

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly infiltrated various sectors, revolutionizing traditional practices and reshaping the landscape of education. In an era marked by technological advancements, college classrooms are witnessing a fundamental shift as AI takes center stage in the learning environment. This article delves into the transformative impact of AI in higher education, exploring its applications, benefits, and potential challenges. From personalized learning experiences to advanced data analytics, the integration of AI in college classrooms is not just a trend but a fundamental evolution in the way we approach education. As institutions embrace these technological innovations, it prompts us to reflect on the future of learning and the role AI plays in shaping the minds of the next generation.

Artificial intelligence, while fairly new, is something that our generation has become accustomed to in our lives. In fact, ChatGPT created the introduction for this article. Mimicking human language and having the ability to create anything it is asked to, raises the question as to how AI affects the classroom environment.

In the era of online learning we have the opportunity to not only learn anything at the click of a button but also create the illusion of learning with the click of the same button.

Director of Library Services, Brigitte Bell, teaches Foundations one and two as well as College Writing. In her classroom AI is openly talked about and encouraged to be used as a tool instead of a curriculum substitute.

“I like to address the elephant in the room,” Bell said. “I pull up ChatGPT and show my classes what it can do. You guys (students) know what it can do and know it exists. I won’t pretend like it doesn’t.”

Bell acknowledges that AI can be used as a tool in the classroom, similarly to a citation generator or a calculator, and it is all a matter of how it is used like anything else.

“I am more neutral (on AI) and I thought it was really cool to see papers on both sides of a pro-con AI argument,” Bell said. “I do think we have to acknowledge that the college student model has changed, students now work twenty or thirty hours a week on top of going to school fulltime and having home commitments, so naturally students look for ways to make work easier and take some of that pressure off which is resourceful and smart.”

Bell keeps a very neutral stance on AI, while being able to appreciate the engine as a tool she also signifies the importance of not depending on technology completely.

“The process of learning how to read critically, think critically, express your thoughts in writing, build an argument and design a thesis are all skills you need to learn before you graduate,” Bell said. “And if you are using a large language model to do that for you then you’re not developing the skills you need to because you are depending on tools to do it for you.”

Vice President of Information Technology and Planning, Dr. Terrance Cottrell, is embracing AI and all that it encapsulates.

“I refrain from using the term AI,” Dr. Cottrell said. “And I never use the term AI without large language model (LLM). That’s what this is. It isn’t thinking or thought. It’s an amalgamation of language based off of statistical language models.”

Dr. Cottrell realizes this is just the beginning of the next technological advancement. People have been using Google and other similar search engines prior to the development of AI engines to ask the same questions they ask the engines now. The only difference is that AI has the ability to refine a more personalized and humanistic response whereas Google and others give the very basics of a response to any question you are asking.

Students use AI for a variety of purposes, but currently that is a grey area in the stance of overall policies and what is considered abuse of AI usage. While our university does not have an umbrella policy on AI use in classrooms, each professor does have the ability to discuss use at their discretion.