

AI Survey Summary

Executive Summary

The Spring 2024 survey aimed to understand the usage and perceptions of generative AI tools among faculty, staff, and students at UWSP. Most respondents have a basic understanding of generative AI but lack significant experience using AI tools. Reasons for non-usage vary, with faculty citing a lack of time and students showing less interest. Staff are more likely to report a lack of certainty as to how, or if, they can use generative AI in their jobs and instead use it for personal reasons. Specific concerns raised about using AI include its accuracy, data privacy, negative impacts on learning, and ethical implications.

For those using AI tools frequently, common reasons include generating ideas, saving time, and curiosity. Students mainly use AI for brainstorming, understanding concepts, and checking solutions. Faculty use AI for various tasks such as research assistance, editing text, creating course materials, and checking to see the kinds of answers AI provides for assignment prompts. Staff use AI largely for drafting emails and creating content for websites/social media sites.

Desired information/training topics include ethical AI usage, using AI to improve efficiency, and prompt writing. Faculty express a need for guidance on integrating AI into teaching and addressing plagiarism concerns.

While there was a clear desire for policy/guidance around AI usage on campus, there was no clear consensus on policy creation, with different groups suggesting varied approaches. Faculty emphasize academic freedom and disciplinary differences, while staff express concerns about data privacy and job security. All respondent groups commented on the rapidly-evolving nature of AI and that AI is here to stay.

Survey Objectives

- Learn why faculty, staff, and students are or are not using generative AI tools.
- Learn what faculty, staff, and students are using generative AI tools for.
- Determine what topics related to AI the campus would like more information on.
- Determine if there is a consensus on how to proceed with creating policy around AI usage.

Summary of Respondents

Faculty/instructor: 91 (30%)
Students: 154 (52%)
Non-teaching staff: 54 (18%)
Total respondents: 299

Summary of Major Results

Are Faculty, Staff and Student Using AI?

Across all respondent categories, the most common response was “I have a basic understanding of what generative AI can do, but I don't have any significant experience using AI tools” (56%) followed by “I used generative AI tools occasionally (once a week or less) in my personal and/or professional life” (23%) and “I have heard of generative AI, but I don't really know what it can do, nor have I used it” (13%). Fewer respondents indicated that they didn't know what generative AI was (2%), or that they “use generative AI tools more than once a week in their personal and/or professional life” (6%).

For those who report not using generative AI tools, the most common reason cited by faculty, instructors and staff, was a lack of time to learn about them, while student cited a lack of interest.

In free response questions, students reported also having concerns about the accuracy of AI, data privacy, AI having a negative impact on their learning, and concerns about getting in trouble if caught using AI. Faculty similarly expressed issues about data privacy and accuracy, however, they also expressed concerns about the implication of AI usage on creativity. Open-ended staff responses indicated uncertainty in whether AI usage was allowed and concerns about the ethics of AI.

Those who reported using AI tools once a week or more in their personal and/or professional lives reported similar reasons for using AI tools, regardless of respondent category with “to generate more ideas”, “to save time” and “out of curiosity” the top three responses.

How is AI Being Used?

Respondents who reported using AI tools once a week or more in their personal and/or professional lives were asked how they are using AI tools. Respondents were given a list of potential uses and space for free response.

Students who reported using generative AI tools most reported using them to brainstorm ideas, followed by to understand difficult concepts, check solutions, and do minor editing. More than 25% of students using AI also reported using it to summarize or paraphrase text, answer homework questions, outline papers or presentations, and analyze and interpret data. It should be noted that only 32 students answered this question.

The most cited reason for AI use among faculty and instructors was to run prompts through to see what kind of output AI would generate, to help with their research, and to edit text. Staff most commonly report using AI tools to draft or write emails, to create drafts of work-related documents, and to draft or write content for a website or social media account.

Free response from staff indicated that AI is being used largely for personal reasons, or to get quick initial feedback on work. Faculty responses were more diverse ranging from creation of course materials (i.e., to create example problems or work for students to analyze, or to create student-friendly learning outcomes), to exploring personal interests, to assessing plagiarism. Student free responses largely focused on uses such as generation of ideas to overcome writing/art block, brief summaries of concepts or ideas, creating visual representations of verbal descriptions, and to clarify rubric criteria.

What Topics Does Campus Want More Information/Training On?

The most common response across all groups was information on how to use generative AI ethically, followed by how to use it to be more efficient, and how to write good prompts. In free response, faculty indicated a desire for more information on how AI can be used in teaching including how to AI proof your assignments and AI and plagiarism.

How Should UWSP Move Forward with Creating Policy/Guidance Around AI Usage on Campus?

While only 4% of respondents indicated that no policy/guidance should be created, there was no clear preference from any respondent group on how to move forward with policy creation. None of the options offered received more than 25% of the total responses.

Faculty, instructors and students most indicated that individual instructors should decide how to use AI in their courses, but there should be no AI formal guidance/policies for other areas on campus, while staff indicated that the university should have a policy to allow AI usage by default, unless explicitly banned by a supervisor/instructor.

In free response, faculty indicated a desire to maintain academic freedom and instructor autonomy and highlighted the large differences in how different academic disciplines may use AI. Many responses noted the interplay between preparing students for a future career in which AI may be heavily utilized and emphasizing the importance of student learning and authentic assessment.

Students also noted disciplinary differences and that individual instructors may have good reasons for allowing/not allowing students to use AI. Many students also noted the difficulty in truly banning AI use or in detecting its use, while also acknowledging the ethical issues associated with its use.

Staff were more likely in free response to discuss that AI is here to stay and to express concerns about data breaches, privacy, and job loss due to AI.