KEY TAKEAWAYS

Faculty Perspectives on AI

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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AI Is Raising New Questions for Higher Education

AI is moving faster than most institutions can adapt, and it's prompting important questions across higher education:

- How should AI be used in the classroom?
- What does assessment look like when AI can generate work instantly?
- How can institutions encourage innovation while preserving faculty autonomy in the classroom?

What gives me optimism is that educators are approaching this moment thoughtfully: creating frameworks, fostering dialogue, and designing learning to prioritize critical thinking and real understanding.

At **Kyron Learning,** we believe AI should make learning more human, not less. Our AI-powered instruction helps institutions deliver more active, personalized learning experiences while keeping educators firmly in control. The result: more engaged students and stronger outcomes.

I invite you to **learn more** about Kyron Learning and explore how institutions are partnering with us to create more impactful student experiences in the age of AI.

Rajen Sheth
CEO and Co-Founder
Kyron Learning

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Key Takeaways From a Virtual Forum
Presented by *The Chronicle* and Kyron Learning

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Use of artificial intelligence is now widespread in higher ed — and not just among students. Many faculty members are turning to it to create course materials, including writing prompts, in-class activities, quizzes, and rubrics. Yet colleges are still working through how — or even whether — they should set policies and guidance for this use.

To explore how faculty members are navigating the AI landscape — and how they can be responsible, effective, and transparent in their use of the technology — *The Chronicle* held a virtual forum on April 27. The following comments, edited for clarity and length, represent key takeaways from the event. To hear the full discussion, watch the recorded webinar here.

"The biggest thing faculty want is to be heard — to be validated in their fear and grief over what they feel they and their students might be losing to AI. They want guidance and support."

Beth McMurtrie: How are faculty members talking about AI — and their relationship to it — at your institutions?

Chris Hakala: At Springfield, we created a presidential task force on AI, as many institutions did. Then we put together guidance for faculty who wanted clarity, support, and access to workshops to better understand these tools — how to use them, how not to use them, how to leverage them — to make their lives more efficient. It's led to some deep conversations about what faculty are doing in their classrooms and how AI can support, not replace, learning.

Susan Purrington: The biggest thing faculty want is to be heard — to be validated in their fear and grief over what they feel they and their students might be losing to AI. They want guidance and support.

Evan Silberman: From where I sit at CUNY, I see faculty asking for guidance as well as what tools we can purchase that are safe and appropriate to use. They're also looking for a technical infrastructure in which they can play with these tools without doing any harm. They want funding to be able to experiment in varied ways.

Flower Darby: There's so much variation. Many faculty members want a safe space to critique and resist AI — to keep it out of their classes. What they need most of all is time.

Higher education often fails to provide structural or systemic support instead of leaving it up to individual faculty members to figure out what to do.

McMurtrie: What's the best way to foster productive conversation about AI that incorporates people with different perspectives, including those who are excited about the technology and those who think it's dangerous?

Purrington: At Connecticut College, we try to have consistent messaging that we want you to be part of the conversation regardless of your perspective.

Silberman: We've had an AI task force with a representative from every college discussing where those colleges stand on AI. It's really useful to have people who are against it — or who are skeptical — as well as people who are for it.

Hakala: We've offered workshops through our teaching center on how to teach without AI as well as ways to engage with students using technology. We're trying to provide a balance. It's important to have dissenters who help you think about things you might not have considered.

McMurtrie: The idea of "AI literacy" is still somewhat controversial. Some faculty say it's not the role of a college to promote that. How do each of you think colleges should think about it?

Darby: I believe we have an opportunity to develop tomorrow's engaged citizens. That's what drives me in all the work that I do. I see value in lots of approaches — required courses for all first-year students, individual faculty members looking at how to weave this into their disciplines.

Silberman: We debate this issue. Some believe "digital literacy" is what's necessary, not just "AI literacy," and they believe you need a framework to think about the choices you make using technology. I think "AI literacy" needs a hands-on component — learning through use. If you don't understand how AI works — and how it can be used irresponsibly — it can be very dangerous. It needs to be integrated not just into the classroom but into hiring and onboarding processes for students and administration. Eventually we'd like to see something students can use for credit as part of the curriculum to help them prepare for the work force.

Purrington: It's also about reminding folks that we need lifelong learning for this type of literacy, since AI is constantly evolving.

McMurtrie: What does appropriate faculty use of AI look like — and when should faculty members disclose their use?

Darby: More communication and transparency helps build more trust. As difficult as it may be to do so, I believe we can and should reconsider our syllabi and assignments. Can we cut some content to make more time for this conversation? "Students, here's what I'm asking you to do and why. Here's how I'm using AI."

"It helps students to see that we're learning, too, and technology may be evolving as a course is evolving."

McMurtrie: Should that conversation take place on the first day of class or be ongoing throughout a course?

Darby: It should be ongoing. In an English composition course, for example, an instructor may not want students to use AI for the first six weeks and then talk about what's appropriate, modeling effective use, and pointing out the technology's flaws. This is worthy of being a learning objective in any course.

Purrington: It helps students to see that we're learning, too, and technology may be evolving as a course is evolving. I send messages to students from previous semesters and keep tabs on where they are with their AI literacy.

McMurtrie: Say you use AI to create presentation slides, quiz questions, rubrics, or to redesign a course. Should you disclose that use in your syllabus?

Purrington: Yes, I think that's important, although it may vary based on the level of use. If you're giving students materials created with AI, they should know. This is a new practice for faculty — learning how to disclose what you're doing. On our campus — and on some other liberal-arts campuses — there's been no guidance on exactly how and when to do that.

Hakala: We ask our students to be honest, ethical, and transparent. It's incumbent on faculty to do the same. I talk to our faculty all the time about "meta teaching" — talking about how they constructed their materials and telling students what's expected of them and why. On our campus and others, faculty need to have some kind of statement on their syllabi about student use of AI. Having something about faculty use, too, might be interesting. We don't often see that as of now.

McMurtrie: Should colleges be giving faculty members directions on this matter — or explicit guidance on what to say on syllabi?

Silberman: No. Faculty have agency, and it's not appropriate, at the system level, to make those decisions. I've heard stories about faculty members letting students choose whether to use AI and having discussions about it that built trust.

Darby: Many students hate AI just as much as many faculty members do. They want nothing to do with it. You can invite students to articulate their reasoning for using it or not. If they do use it, they can reflect on whether it helped them. We have an opportunity to help them learn to use it effectively, as we know employers want job-seekers with AI skills or the ability to learn them.

"We ask our students to be honest, ethical, and transparent. It's incumbent on faculty to do the same."

Silberman: Eventually, AI is going to be so integrated that you won't be able to discern its role in the development of a piece of content. You already see vendors using AI with products to help administrators and faculty members with their work. It'll become invisible. That will be a problem.

Hakala: I just come back to the need to make sure students are learning what we need them to learn — and that will be a moving target. It'll be interesting to see this shift over the next several years and how we reimagine the classroom.

McMurtrie: If you're a faculty member with students who don't want to use AI — for ethical reasons or because they worry it'll undermine their learning — should you allow them to opt out? What kind of conversations should you have with students about that?

Darby: I heard a dialogue about this on our campus a few months back, and somebody said, "Students can't opt out of using a textbook." In a few more years — or maybe a few more months — we're not going to be asking this question anymore. For now, I'd argue we should offer students the opportunity to opt out — unless the AI use is directly tied to learning objectives or expertise students need.

Purrington: I know quite a few faculty members creating two versions of the same assignment in case there's anti-AI sentiment in their classrooms. There are valid reasons why some folks wouldn't want to engage with this technology, including religious reasons, so it's an evolving conversation.

McMurtrie: Where will we be with AI in teaching and learning five years from now?

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Silberman: I expect the conversation will be less about using or not using AI and more about which tools and supports you're going to be using. We'll see much deeper integration of the technology in academic disciplines where we haven't yet seen as much of it, although there will be disciplines where it won't be as valuable. I don't think AI is going to replace those of us in higher education — at any level. We're still needed. I do hope higher education will be a significant feeder of the discourse about AI, including with a lot more research on the subject.

Purrington: I expect to see some liberal-arts colleges leading the way in emphasizing what it means to be a human in an AI world, and I also expect us to be continuing some of these same conversations.

Darby: Just as horse whisperers understand how to calm an unruly beast and get it to do what it needs to do, we need to become AI whisperers. It's not about replacing faculty. It's about learning how and when to use it. I choose to believe we'll be doing that in five years.

This Key Takeaways was produced by Chronicle Intelligence.
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