anthology®

AI in Higher Ed:
Hype, Harm, or Help

The perceptions and realities of AI among university leaders and students.

US EDITION

AI

In the constantly evolving landscape of higher education, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), its integration into technology and our daily lives, and its use in and outside of the classroom have brought incredible opportunities and complex challenges. As universities embrace this new age, understanding the unique viewpoints of students and university leadership—the key stakeholders— is vital in capitalizing on the potential of AI while also addressing potential ethical, pedagogical, and operational challenges.

Anthology conducted a global survey of more than 5,000 higher education leaders and current students in eleven countries to provide context and perspective from those leaders and students about the opportunities, challenges, adoption, and impact of artificial intelligence. The study reveals insights highlighting the need for a collaborative approach regarding AI to help enrich the educational experience and ensure future-ready graduates.

This report focuses on the responses from students and university leaders in the United States, including where there are significant differences compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Through this research, Anthology aims to contribute to the enhancement of the higher education experience for students and universities as they work together to refine how teaching and learning take place.

Students, University Leaders, and Artificial Intelligence

Students in the US are already actively using generative AI tools; 38% report using them at least monthly and an additional 24% have used these tools once or twice. Even though this may seem like a high percentage—with more than 60% reporting some use of generative AI tools—students in the US trail all other countries surveyed except for students

More than half
of students in the US expect that their use of generative tools will increase in the next six months

in the UK related to the frequency of use and familiarity with generative AI. In the US, 10% of students report using AI on a weekly basis, while a high proportion are occasional users (monthly use). The lower comparative use may provide a bit more time for university leaders and faculty members to adjust to our new reality; however, more than half of students in the US expect that their use of generative tools will increase in the next six months—also a slower rate of increase than their peers in other countries (where 71% expect their use of generative AI tools to increase).

Forty-five percent
of university leaders expect their use of generative AI to increase

Also notable is that US university leaders trail in their adoption of generative AI, as only three percent of leaders consider themselves to be frequent users of generative AI, while 23% are monthly users, which is in stark contrast to their counterparts in the United Arab Emirates (where 54% use generative

AI frequently or occasionally) and Singapore (where 49% use generative AI frequently or occasionally). Fifty percent of university leaders are either familiar with generative AI tools and have never used them, do not use them, or are not familiar with these tools. However, similar to students, 45% of university leaders expect their use of generative AI to increase either significantly or somewhat. University leaders in the US also trail other countries surveyed, but US leaders have higher use of AI than those in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa.

Although lower than in many countries, these findings highlight the use of generative AI on campus and indicate its continued growth. Universities should continue to prepare their institutions for generative AI and AI overall.

University Students' Use of Generative AI Tools

Legend: United States | All   Sample Size=2,728
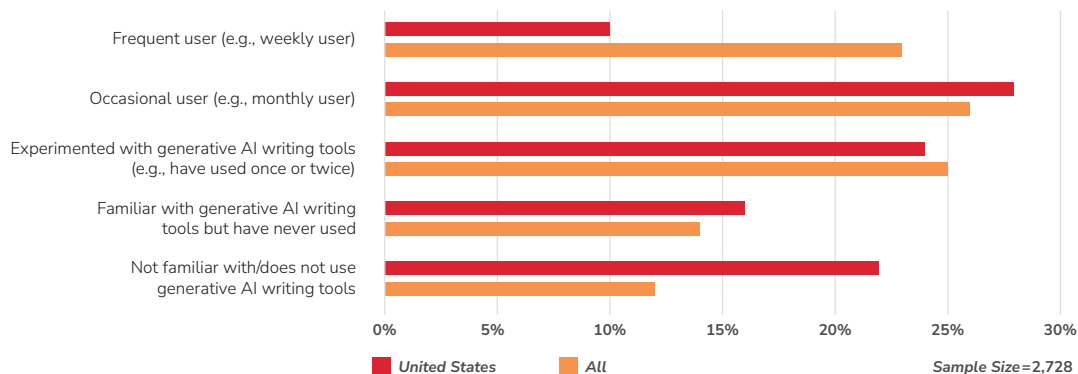
Student and University Leaders' View of Role of AI in Higher Education

When asked about opportunities related to AI and its potential role in higher education, students and leaders in the United States generally appear excited about the opportunities that generative AI and AI will bring.

Student Perspective:

What role do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will play in higher education?

*United States*   *All*   *Sample Size=2,728*
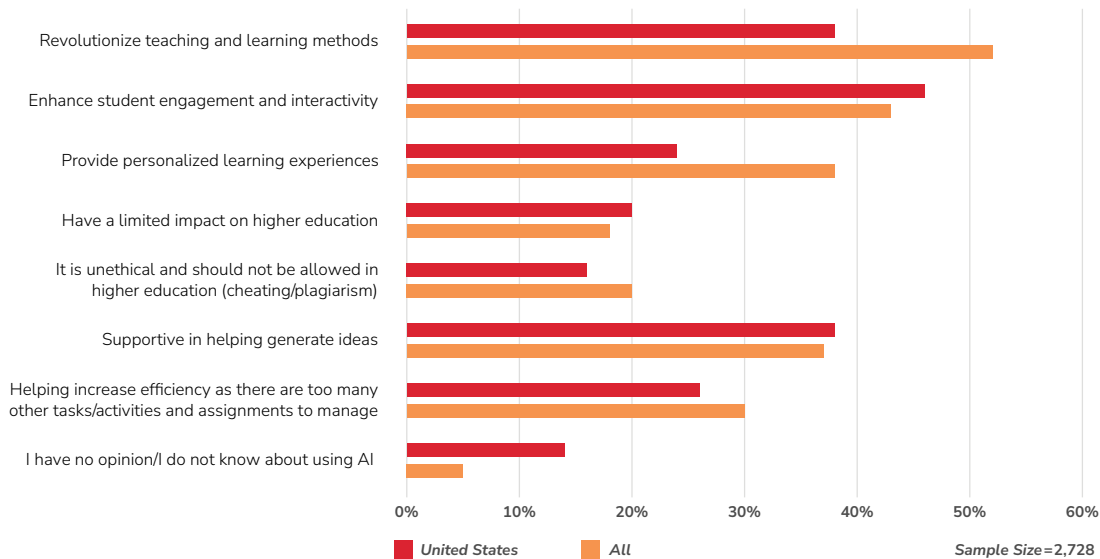
In fact, nearly one in two students indicated that they feel AI will enhance student engagement and interactivity (46%), followed by nearly four in ten students who feel that it will be supportive in helping to generate ideas (38%) and in revolutionizing teaching and learning methods (38%). Furthermore, subsets of students also said they feel it will help increase efficiency with tasks and activities (26%) and provide personalized learning experiences (24%). At the same time, about one in six students feel that generative AI specifically is unethical and should not be allowed in higher education—this is lower than results from most other countries, which may be indicative of greater acceptance among US students for the role that generative AI can play in higher education. One in five students feels that AI will only have a limited impact on higher education. This shows higher disparity of thought related to AI than in other countries surveyed, potentially due to the lower familiarity with generative AI, as mentioned above. Overall, however, students are generally positive about the impact AI will have on their student experience, whether it relates to the level of engagement, the teaching style, or as a means to get assistance through the use of AI and generative AI.

Interestingly, while the use of generative AI may be comparatively low among students in the United States, a greater number of students are somewhat or very comfortable using AI chatbots to get quick answers to questions (more than six in ten). This presents an opportunity for universities to add chatbots where they can help support students.

While it is to be expected that students more quickly adopt to new technology, including generative AI, in this case, it is especially important that university leaders and faculty members familiarize themselves with this technology, as it presents opportunities to adjust the approach to teaching and improve the student experience.

University Leader Perspective:

What role do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will play in higher education?
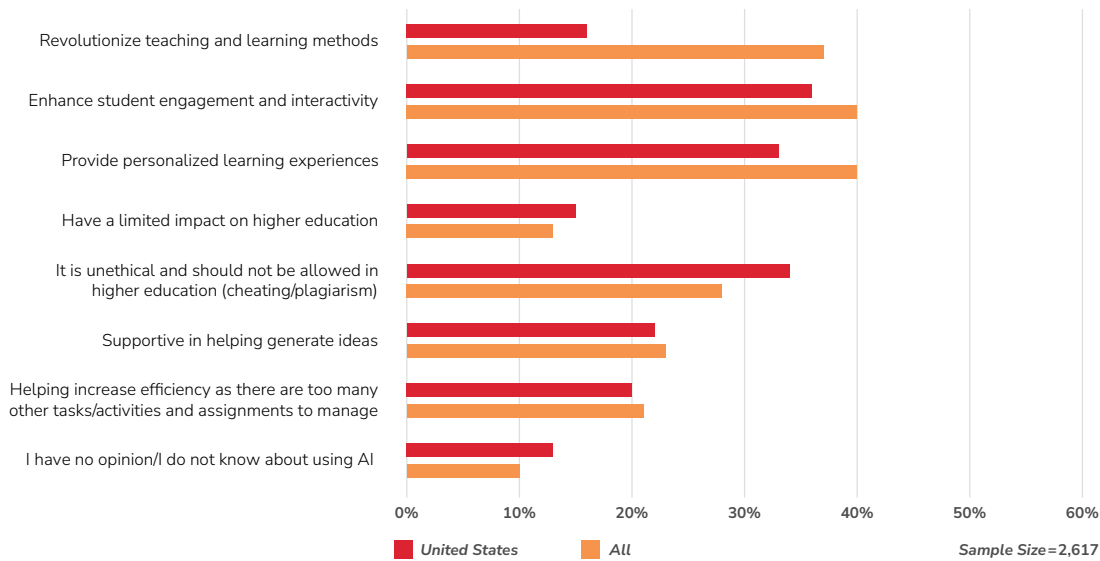
University leaders in the US were aligned with students regarding the biggest impact AI will make in higher education—more than one in three leaders pointed to enhancement in student engagement and interactivity. However, nearly the same percentage feels that generative AI in particular is unethical and should not allowed in higher education—one of the highest percentages across the countries surveyed, with leaders only in the United Kingdom feeling more strongly about it. Therefore, continued conversation is needed about AI overall among university leaders, especially given the anticipated continued adoption of generative AI by students. Leaders also felt that AI would help provide personalized learning experiences to students, which differed from the student perspective, with nearly 10% fewer students mentioning this as an outcome of AI. The other notable difference was related to the impact of AI in revolutionizing teaching and learning methods: 38% of students indicated this as a role for AI, while only 16% of university leaders saw this as an outcome of AI. This was the area with the highest difference between the two groups and may be one for university leaders to reflect on with faculty members.

Continued conversation is needed about AI overall among university leaders, especially given the anticipated continued adoption of generative AI by students

When asked to anticipate the most significant ways AI tools will impact higher education and university operations, the top result was one of concern about creating new challenges in identifying plagiarism. Here again, university leaders in the United States reported higher concern than all but those in the United Kingdom, further supporting the need for continued discussion on ways to shift assessment strategies and mitigate this perception of AI (specifically generative AI). Those conversations may center around how AI can support more authentic assessment, using questions and prompts that promote critical thinking skills like analyzing, creating, and evaluating. While assessment objectives like recalling or remembering are potentially susceptible to responses generated by AI, prompts like creating are more difficult for AI tools to generate and can evaluate a learner's understanding and application of course content more deeply. By encouraging deeper forms of assessment, institutions can more thoroughly evaluate learners and confront AI plagiarism head-on.

University leaders indicated opportunity for AI to impact higher education positively as well, with nearly one-third pointing to assisting with brainstorming and 22% highlighting the opportunity for AI to assist in course building and creation, as well as in drafting assessment questions aligned to learning outcomes. Interestingly, only about one in five sees AI as helpful in querying data to develop retention or student success campaigns.

Based on the survey results, universities in the United States appear to have taken a proactive approach in addressing the potential implications of AI, as 53% of leaders reported that their university has rolled out a university-wide policy with respect to generative AI writing tools like ChatGPT, while 20% report working on one currently. This parallels student awareness of these policies—52% of students indicated being aware of guidelines for the use of AI at their institution. However, ensuring that students are aware and understand the policies put in place will be critical for consistent, equitable use of AI across every institution.

Although there might be room for further alignment, these results indicate that while US education leaders recognize the value of AI in idea generation and in developing personalized learning and growing student engagement, they may require additional time and experience to fully embrace the broader spectrum of AI's potential when compared to their international counterparts. Luckily, students in the US also have not fully adopted generative AI and AI into their daily lives, leaving university leaders time to deepen understanding and experience. However, there is no question among them that AI will impact higher education, with only 15% of university leaders surveyed feeling that AI will have a limited impact on higher education.

Opportunities

- Review ways that AI can help enhance the student experience based on student sentiment

- Consider and implement ways that AI can be used to enhance the educational experience in and outside of the classroom

- Identify additional opportunities to deploy AI chatbots to answer more simple student questions, freeing up staff time for more meaningful conversations with students

- Continue to educate students on the use of AI and encourage its continued, appropriate use

Methodology

Data collection was conducted online among university leaders and students across eleven countries in August 2023, including Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. Separate questionnaires with similar questions were utilized to enable comparisons. To qualify, student respondents had to indicate that they were currently enrolled at a higher education institution and were pursuing a degree or diploma. University leader respondents had to indicate that they were currently senior leaders (dean, provost, rector, etc.) at a higher education institution. In total, 2,617 university leaders and 2,728 students qualified for and completed the survey. In the United States, 255 students and 251 university leaders responded to the survey.

About Anthology

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