

Dear Tulane Faculty,

Welcome to the new school year. Our campus is coming back to life as our students return to New Orleans, and each year I get caught up in their excitement and enthusiasm, even if I have some pangs of regret at not getting everything done over the summer that I had hoped.

There is always a lot to talk about as we come together after a long summer, but I write at this moment to make a few remarks about Artificial Intelligence. You will receive other correspondence about our commitment to engage broadly in the exploration of the applications of artificial intelligence, but in this note, I write to respond to a variety of classroom-related questions and concerns that we have received from numerous faculty from multiple schools.

To begin with, we do not have any new policies related to the academic uses of A.I. I am not sure that would be helpful. Any precise statement we make will likely be outdated in a month. However, it is important to note that the major questions about the use of A.I. by our students are already covered in our academic integrity policies. For example, the Newcomb-Tulane College code of academic conduct states:

In all work submitted for academic credit, students are expected to represent themselves honestly. The presence of a student's name on any work, including group papers or projects, submitted in completion of an academic assignment is considered to be an assurance that the work and ideas are the result of the student's own intellectual effort, stated in their own words, and produced independently, unless clear and explicit acknowledgment of the sources for the work and ideas is included (with the use of quotation marks when quoting someone else's words). This principle applies to papers, tests, homework assignments, artistic productions, laboratory reports, computer programs, and other assignments.

This specific code applies to undergraduates. However, each of our graduate and professional schools has their own code of academic integrity, and I believe that each such code contains a similar passage. **Text produced by ChatGPT or other generative A.I. programs, even if in response to a prompt by a student, is not understood to be the student's work, and so is not generally compliant with this policy.** Nor can the student ask ChatGPT to draft an essay to which the student makes limited changes. Our general understanding is that in the absence of other instructions, our students can use automated spell-checkers and grammar-checkers to suggest minor edits but must stop short of allowing any other person or automated assistant from writing or rewriting significant elements of their work.

Please note that each instructor has the option of putting in place any guidelines that make the most sense for their specific course or project, but your instructions must be clear and precise. In particular, you can permit the assistance of A.I., but if you do, I encourage you to have your students describe how such tools were used.

To repeat, in the absence of any such explicit permission, use of generative A.I. is prohibited by our academic integrity policies. It is challenging, however, to enforce such restrictions because of a lack of reliable tools, at present, to detect computer assistance. If you wish to prevent the use of A.I. in your students' work, you have the option of having students complete their work in-class or in another proctored setting.

If your goal is to ensure that students fully engage with and take ownership over their work, I encourage you to experiment with generative A.I. to learn more about what sorts of projects can be handled effectively by ChatGPT and which will not. For example, my own experiences suggest that to limit the effectiveness of these tools, ask the students to incorporate elements of their own personal experiences, require that students accurately cite their sources (something that the generative A.I. tools do not do well at present), or require students to compare and contrast ideas from different settings (my experience suggests that ChatGPT's responses to such prompts can be quite superficial). One can try to use a computer to generate such work, but the results are often unsatisfactory. There are few general rules, however, and nothing can substitute for your own exploration.

All that said, our goal should not be simply to restrict the use of A.I. in our curriculum. Rather, we should be thinking about how to integrate some of the emerging artificial intelligence tools into our classes in ways that are consistent with our goals, and perhaps even support a deeper kind of learning than might be possible otherwise. (For one historical example, the introduction of calculators into the classroom freed math teachers from the constraint of assigning problems which only required arithmetic calculations that could easily be done by hand, and so allowed faculty to introduce a new level of complexity into the models they explored.) After all, our students are going to graduate into a world in which every industry will be affected in some way by A.I., and we need to prepare them to thrive in this new environment. CELT and others will be introducing workshops to help you learn more about potential uses.

Moving beyond ChatGPT and the classroom, we do know that there are other potential applications of A.I. across all elements of the university and its operations. The use of any such tools can raise serious questions about accuracy, transparency, accountability, privacy and potential systemic biases. This can be particularly significant if you are using an A.I. model created by others about which you do not have full knowledge (either about the structure of the program or the data on which it was "trained"). Should you find yourself exploring the use of such a tool, please consult with us so that we can find ways to ensure that your uses are safe and appropriate. In the future we will be sharing information about a more transparent process by which some of these uses of A.I. may be vetted.

We will be creating an A.I. website on which we will share relevant updates about advances in A.I. and the potential impact on the university. In the meantime, I encourage you to pass along to me any thoughts you may have, including suggestions for the effective use of such tools, and to participate in the various related public events that will be held across campus. I look forward to opportunities to bring together the significant expertise we have across our faculty, staff, and administration to help chart the course forward.

Best wishes for a great Fall semester.

Robin  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
Professor of Mathematics