

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON AI **AN NCFDD SURVEY REPORT**



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A Letter from Geoff



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How do we help faculty feel some sense of agency in their careers, when AI is coming at them like a tsunami?

Everyone is being bombarded by AI right now. Nowhere is this more true than in education, especially in higher ed. “AI changes everything” goes the narrative; yet faculty, who are at the center of academia, are navigating this new AI era largely by themselves. NCFDD’s aim in our “Faculty Perspectives on AI” Survey Report is to provide a voice for faculty in this moment. How do faculty feel? What are their hopes and concerns? What is their lived experience?

Not surprisingly, the landscape is dominated by anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. There’s been extensive coverage of faculty’s concerns about student overreliance on AI, its profound impact on teaching and learning, and the threat it poses to academic integrity. What NCFDD’s data reveals is the other side of AI - how it impacts faculty’s lives:

- AI is adding to faculty’s workload, not making their work more efficient
- AI is creating more stress and anxiety for faculty, who are already overburdened
- AI poses an existential threat to a life in academia and a faculty member’s purpose
- AI doesn’t just change teaching and learning, it also challenges research practices and scholarly judgement

As a professional development partner to faculty and institutions, NCFDD immediately thinks about: how can we help faculty navigate this new reality? What supports and guidance do they need? How do we help faculty feel some sense of agency in their careers, when AI is coming at them like a tsunami?

There’s no magic answer here, and there’s no right and wrong. NCFDD is meeting faculty where they are, whether they’re refusing to use AI, are hesitant dabblers (which is the majority), or have extensively incorporated AI into their practices. Similarly, faculty development needs to address this broad spectrum of perspectives, beliefs, and tech adoption. It goes beyond training on how to use the tools (though that’s important): faculty need time, trusted guidance, peer exchange, institutional support and guardrails, and agency.

By the way, AI is moving so quickly that faculty perceptions will constantly evolve, so NCFDD will update this data regularly. We invite you to use the findings to begin or deepen an institution-wide conversation that includes faculty, students, academic leaders, and faculty-development professionals. One thing is certain: AI is here to stay and is reshaping faculty life. NCFDD is here to help faculty process, find purpose, build skills, and, ultimately, thrive - let us know how we can be most helpful!

With gratitude,

Geoff Watson
CEO, NCFDD

Executive Summary

AI is pushing faculty and institutions to reconsider what students should learn, how expertise should be demonstrated, and where human judgment remains essential. Faculty are already working through these questions in their courses, their scholarship, their departments, and their own uses of AI. This report draws on NCFDD's survey of 1,659 faculty members and academic administrators across U.S. higher education to examine how that work is unfolding and what institutions can learn from it.

Faculty's adoption and use of AI in their own work is limited, with 65% of academics in aggregate characterizing themselves as either occasional users (30%), exploring (8%), or intentionally not using (27%). Only 10% describe themselves as confident and 25% as regular users.

At the same time, concern is widespread and raises fundamental questions about the future of education. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) say AI poses a fundamental threat to the future of education, while 91.5% are concerned about students over-relying on AI for coursework and 77.6% say AI makes it harder to assess what students actually know. The concerns reflected in the survey extend beyond academic misconduct to student learning, the development of expertise, and what faculty can reliably infer from the work students produce.

Faculty are already adapting in large numbers. Across the survey, 86.9% have changed at least one assessment practice, redesigning assignments to require critical thinking, adding more in-class and oral work, and asking students to document how they used AI. What stands out in this survey is the breadth of assessment redesign already underway while AI capabilities continue to change. Much of that work aims to make reasoning, process, and independent knowledge more visible when a finished product alone provides less reliable evidence of learning.

Faculty experience these pressures differently across academic disciplines. Humanities and arts faculty generally report the greatest strain, professional fields the least, and STEM and the social sciences fall between those poles. On workload the contrast is stark: professional fields are the only major disciplinary group in which reported reductions exceed increases. These patterns reflect the kinds of expertise students are expected to develop in each field. AI may affect that learning differently depending on whether students are practicing writing, coding, creative work, clinical judgment, or other disciplinary skills.

AI is often framed in terms of efficiency and productivity, but respondents to this survey describe a more complicated reality. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.9%) describe AI as one more burden on an already full plate, and 60.2% say it is increasing their stress. The overall workload balance also runs in the wrong direction, with 35% saying AI has increased their workload, compared with 21.7% who report a reduction. Faculty describe new demands from assessment redesign, verification, academic-integrity processes, policy decisions, student questions, and the constant need to keep up with changing tools, even as some report real savings on bounded tasks such as organizing information, reviewing documents, or drafting routine communications. Those workload differences are closely associated with faculty outlook. Among respondents whose workload increased, 89.4% say AI is increasing their stress and only 7.7% are optimistic about its role in higher education. Among those whose workload decreased, 19.7% report increased stress and 39.9% are optimistic.

Confidence in using AI tools also changes the experience without settling the larger questions. Among the 114 respondents who identify as confident, active AI users, 47% are optimistic about AI's role in higher education, 50% feel prepared for the changes ahead, and 54% report that AI has reduced their workload. Serious concerns persist even in this group. Among these confident users, 76.2% remain concerned about student over-reliance, 73.3% lack confidence in detection tools, 59.5% report ethical concerns about AI in scholarly writing, and 39.6% see AI as a fundamental threat to the future of education. More experienced users report greater utility and lower stress, but they continue to identify significant risks and consequences for learning.

Across the survey, respondents report substantial gaps in institutional clarity and consistency around AI. Only 6.6% of respondents say AI-related expectations are consistent across their institution, the lowest agreement rate in the survey, and few say their institution has established clear expectations or is keeping pace with the speed of change. Responsibility has landed heavily at the course level, where 71.2% of respondents set their own AI policy for students while 8.5% follow a university-wide one. Faculty are already exercising substantial judgment about where AI belongs; the institutional challenge is to give that judgment a clearer foundation and to reduce the inconsistency and uncertainty that come with making each decision in isolation.

The findings point toward coordination that preserves meaningful local judgment. Institutions can establish shared expectations around responsible use, disclosure, verification, and accountability, while departments and faculty determine how those principles apply to particular disciplines, courses, and stages of learning. That structure also depends on time for faculty to learn and redesign their work, sustained professional development tied to real academic tasks, opportunities for peer learning, and governance that includes faculty and can evolve as technologies and disciplinary practices change.

About the Data

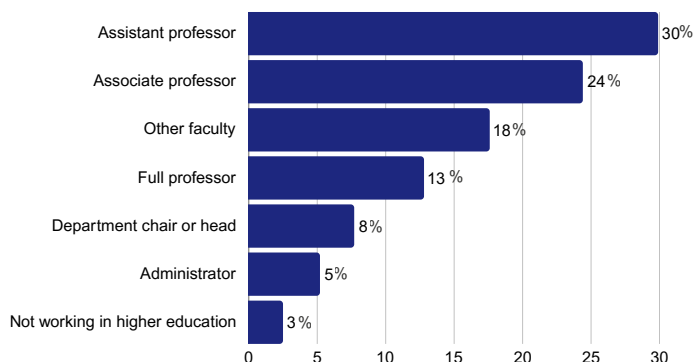
The findings in this report come from a survey of 1,659 faculty members and academic administrators across U.S. higher education, conducted by NCFDD. Because respondents were not required to answer every question, each percentage is based on those who answered that item, and the base varies from one figure to the next. Comparisons by discipline, adoption level, career stage, and other characteristics are descriptive: they show how responses differ within this sample and do not establish that one factor caused another.

The sample was reached through open recruitment rather than drawn as a probability sample, so the results characterize these respondents rather than the full population of U.S. faculty. A complete account of the sample, methods, subgroup definitions, and limitations appears in “About the Study: Methods and Limitations” at the end of the report.

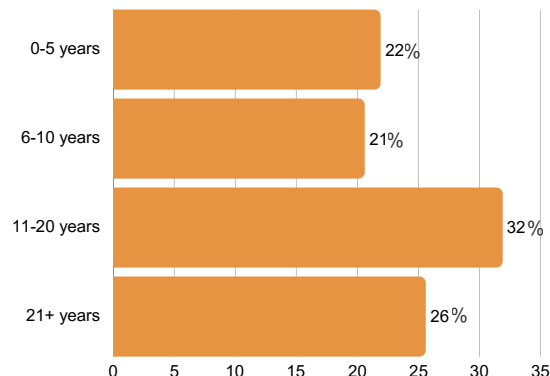
Who responded

Of the 1,659 respondents, 1,252 answered the four questions describing their role, career stage, institution type, and discipline. Assistant and associate professors make up more than half of that group, and most respondents have been in higher education for more than a decade. Respondents from R1 research universities account for 59% of the sample, with liberal arts colleges and R2 universities the next largest groups. Social sciences, STEM, and the humanities together account for three-quarters of respondents, with professional fields at 15% and the arts a small share.

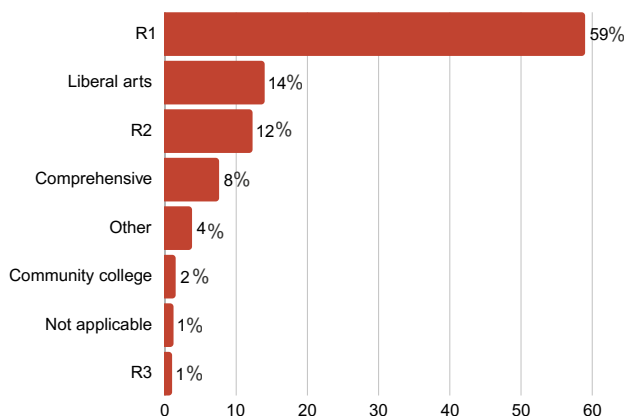
Academic role



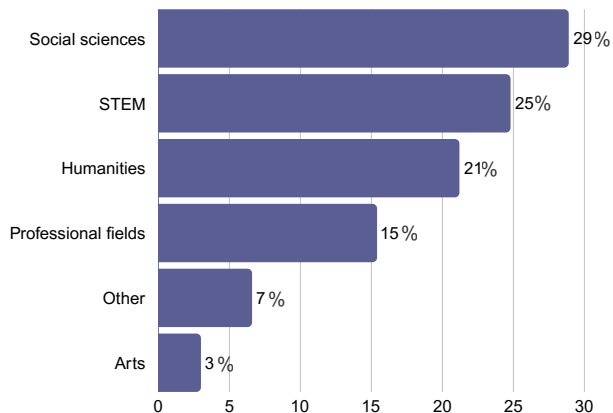
Years in higher education



Institution Type



Primary discipline

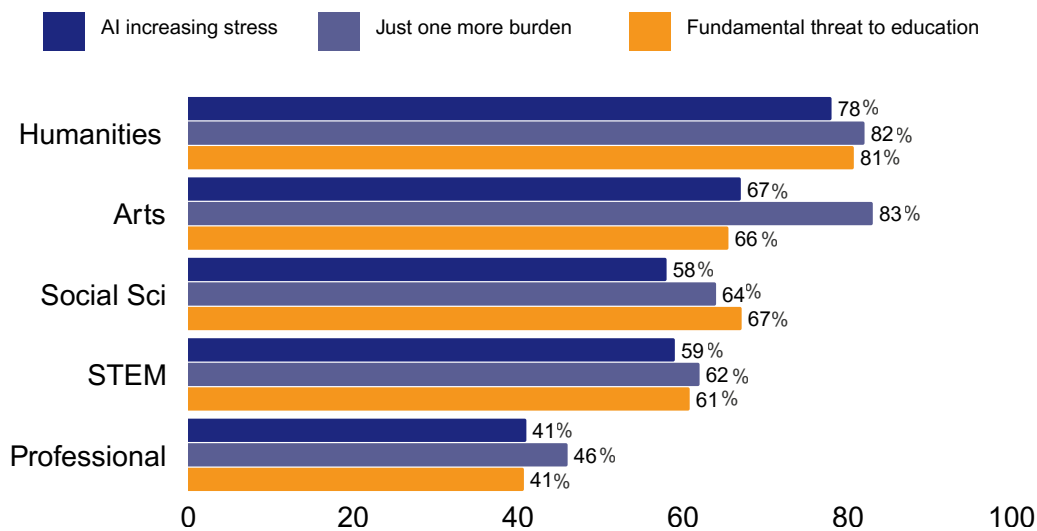


1. Discipline Shapes the Stakes

Faculty experiences with AI vary substantially by discipline. Faculty in different fields teach different kinds of skills, and AI reaches into that work in different ways. The strain runs highest in the humanities and arts and lowest in professional fields.

The differences are substantial. On some measures, disciplines are separated by 40 percentage points or more. For example, 75.2% of humanities faculty say AI has created widespread cheating in their courses, compared with 30% in professional fields such as business, law, medicine, and education. Those differences become more meaningful when considered alongside what students are expected to learn and practice in each field. Disciplines vary in how expertise is developed and what faculty need student work to demonstrate. AI therefore raises different questions depending on the kind of learning at stake and the role the tool can play in completing the work.

Figure 1.1: The Disciplinary Strain Gradient



Humanities and arts: When the process is part of the learning

In the humanities and arts, the work students produce is often inseparable from the process through which they learn. Writing, interpretation, language, and creative practice are not only ways to present knowledge; they are also how students build understanding and develop expertise. When AI can generate a finished product, the evidence of that underlying work becomes harder to see, and faculty in these fields feel the consequences most acutely.

Humanities faculty report the survey's highest strain on every measure: 77.6% say AI is increasing their stress, 82% describe it as one more burden, and 80.7% see it as a fundamental threat to education. Robert L. Turner III, PhD, Professor and Chair of Modern Languages and Linguistics and Interim Chair of Media and Journalism at the University of South Dakota, described how that pressure shows up in language instruction.

"When a student all of a sudden has a nice academic Spanish that has no dialectal inflection, and reads with English ideas but Spanish grammar, and uses structures that they haven't mastered before, I find it easier to catch than just an English text," he said.

In Turner's courses, the issue is not simply that AI can produce stronger writing. It can produce language that reflects skills the student has not yet learned. The finished assignment may therefore suggest a level of proficiency that the student cannot yet demonstrate independently.

Karenanna Boyle Creps, PhD, Subject Area Leader of Arts Integration in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University, framed a related concern around what students may miss when AI takes over work that is meant to help them develop their own scholarly and creative identities.

"My biggest concern is that the student doesn't learn about who they are as a scholar and in my case, as an artist," she said.

Creps's students often write about experiences they have had themselves, including attending performances and art exhibitions. For her, the value of those assignments is not only in the final piece of writing. The reflection and interpretation students do afterward can help them understand their own perspectives and develop as scholars, teachers, and artists. When AI substitutes for that work, students may miss part of what the assignment was intended to help them discover about themselves.

Arts faculty in the survey express broader concerns about AI and scholarly work. Among them, 75.8% say AI use in writing threatens their scholarly identity, while 90.9% report ethical concerns about AI in scholarly writing, the highest rate of any discipline.

"My biggest concern is that the student doesn't learn about who they are as a scholar and in my case, as an artist."

Karenanna Boyle Creps, PhD

Turner and Creps identify different sides of the same assessment problem. Turner describes work that can appear to demonstrate skills a student has not yet developed. Creps raises the possibility that students may miss some of the development the assignment was designed to foster in the first place. In both cases, a polished final product may tell faculty less about the learning that occurred along the way.

STEM and Social Sciences: When output outpaces understanding

STEM and social sciences sit between the disciplinary extremes in the survey, though the strain remains substantial. Among STEM faculty, 59% report that AI is increasing their stress, as do 57.7% in the social sciences.

Here the educational problem often appears in a different form. AI can produce technically plausible code, analysis, or interpretation before a student has developed enough disciplinary knowledge to judge whether the result is sound.

A STEM respondent put the problem directly.

“Many students are using AI to write their code for the computational work that we do,” they wrote. “However, this neither seems to help them learn to code themselves, nor are they confident that they can determine that their code is giving the correct outputs.”

Among STEM faculty, 78.4% say AI makes it harder to assess what students actually know, and 80.6% lack confidence in AI or plagiarism detection tools. A functioning output can mask how much judgment the student has developed, especially when the assignment was designed to build that judgment through practice.

Social sciences faculty describe a closely related challenge. Their survey responses mirror STEM on assessment. Among social sciences faculty, 78.9% say AI makes it harder to assess what students know, and 82.1% lack confidence in detection tools. In the social sciences, reaching a conclusion is only part of the work. Students also need to understand how evidence was selected, how an argument was built, and why the conclusion is warranted. For one respondent, the process can be bypassed almost entirely.

“Several students in my last undergraduate class used generative AI to write their **entire final papers**. The AI tools fabricated research and citations that did not exist.”

Social sciences, occasional AI user, R1, assistant professor

A paper built on fabricated sources can still read as competent work. That is the difficulty faculty in these fields describe. AI can make reasoning less visible, producing a plausible analysis without requiring the student to show how they arrived there. As in language and coding, the finished product can reveal less about what the student actually understands, and in this case less about whether the underlying evidence is real.

Professional fields: Practice provides a different reference point

Professional fields often have a more concrete reference point for deciding where AI belongs: the work graduates will eventually be expected to perform. Faculty can look at how AI is already being used in medicine, law, education, or business and ask what students will need to know before they enter those professions.

Doug Peterson, PhD, Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Dakota, pointed to professional practice as one possible explanation. Fields such as business, nursing, and education, he said, encounter regular messages that AI will be part of the workplace and can increase productivity.

“If AI is what the job market wants, AI is what I’m going to deliver,” Peterson said.

The survey is consistent with that more practical orientation. Professional fields are the most optimistic disciplinary group, though optimism remains a minority position even here, at 32.7%. They are also the only major disciplinary group in which more respondents report that AI has reduced their workload than increased it, at 33.9% versus 20.8%. At the same time, 40.7% still see AI as a fundamental threat to the future of education.

Marlene Shaw-Gallagher, MS, PA-C, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Education in the Physician Assistant Program at the University of Detroit Mercy, described a similar orientation in health professions education, where students are preparing for work in a field that continually changes.

“We teach our students, you are a lifelong learner. You’re never going to know everything because, especially with medical research, new things are happening constantly,” Shaw-Gallagher said.

That expectation means students will eventually need to learn how to work with new tools as professional practice changes. “We’re always looking for ways to help us. We’re always looking at how to learn something better, more efficiently,” she said.

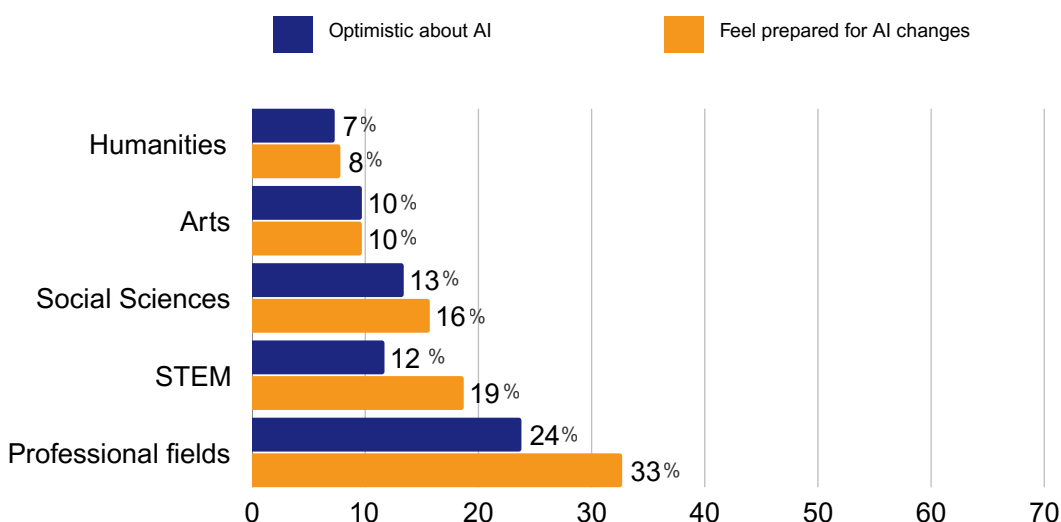
But preparing students for a changing profession does not mean every part of their education can be handed over to a tool. Shaw-Gallagher’s program confronted that distinction when it replaced a written professionalism assignment with a presentation and clinical scenarios.

Her example captures the tension within professional fields. Students may need experience with tools they are likely to encounter in their careers, while still developing the knowledge and judgment they will be expected to bring to those tools. Professional practice provides a reference point for both decisions: what can reasonably be supported by AI and what students still need to learn to do for themselves.

What the discipline divide means

The disciplinary pattern also appears in faculty outlook. Humanities and arts faculty report the lowest levels of optimism and preparedness, while professional fields report the highest.

Figure 1.2: Optimism and preparedness invert the strain



The discipline divide reflects differences in the work students are learning to do and in how faculty determine whether that learning has occurred. It is not a simple divide between fields that embrace AI and fields that resist it. Concern about student over-reliance is high across every discipline.

Key Takeaway

The disciplinary divide is a divide in the nature of the work, not in which fields embrace AI and which resist it.

The educational stakes differ substantially across tasks. Drafting a routine administrative document, composing an original speech, producing a literary analysis, writing functional code, interpreting clinical data, and developing an artistic statement each require different kinds of expertise and judgment. Even within a single discipline, the appropriateness of AI use may change according to the course level, assignment, and stage of learning.

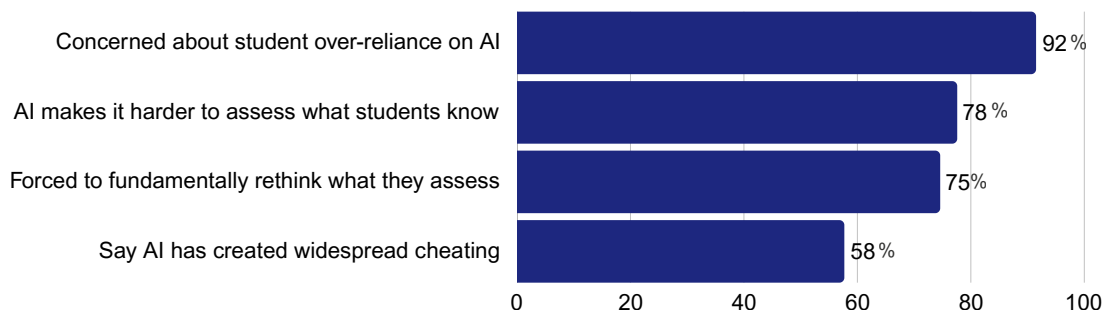
For institutions, that distinction matters. Shared principles can provide a common foundation, but decisions about appropriate use have to begin with the educational purpose of the work: what students need to know, what they need to practice, what they should be able to demonstrate independently, and where technology can support those goals without substituting for them.

2. Making Learning Visible

Faculty are changing how they assess student learning on a broad scale. Across the survey, 86.9% have altered at least one assessment practice. The changes extend beyond efforts to catch misconduct. The finished product no longer tells faculty what it used to. When AI can generate a polished essay, a completed problem set, or working code, a strong result may reveal little about how the student got there, or whether they could do it again on their own.

The survey shows how widely that concern is felt. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74.6%) say AI has forced them to fundamentally rethink what they assess, and 77.6% say it has made it harder to judge what students actually know. Concern about student over-reliance is nearly universal, at 91.5%. What faculty increasingly want to see is the reasoning, application, and judgment behind the work, rather than the work alone.

Figure 2.1: Why faculty are changing assessment



When summative assessment tells faculty less

Detection has not given faculty a trusted way to close that gap. Only 15.9% of respondents use AI detection tools, and 80% lack confidence in AI or plagiarism detection. Without a reliable automated check, faculty are looking for assessment conditions that give them more direct evidence of what students know and can do.

Some respondents described changes in student performance that made that need especially clear.

"I have been teaching online statistics for years. Average grades are typically in the C range," they said. "All of a sudden, most students are earning As. I know they're using AI to cheat but I don't know how to stop it."

A STEM faculty member reported a different kind of comparison after moving one exam from an online setting to a university testing center.

“I teach a large lecture course with multiple exams given online over two days,” they explained. “For one exam I required them to take it in the University testing center, which stopped outside connections. The class average was 30 points below the first exam.”

Neither example establishes how any individual student completed the earlier work. But both show why the finished product or score no longer gives faculty all the evidence they need about what a student has learned. When performance changes sharply across assessment conditions, instructors have to find ways to see students reason through material, answer questions, and apply what they have learned.

Making the process visible: a shift toward formative assessment

The most common redesign strategies bring more of the learning process into view through formative assessments. More than half of respondents are redesigning assignments to require critical thinking (57.1%), and 55.7% have added more in-class or oral assessment.

One confident STEM respondent described the shift directly.

“We’ve been forced to change from outcome-oriented assessments to process-oriented assessments,” they wrote. “We’re emphasizing a thought process for students, and so far AI has not done a great job of mimicking that.”

Shaw-Gallagher described one way that shift is playing out in her program. A referenced paper had long been used to assess students’ understanding of medical professionalism, but faculty reconsidered whether the paper still gave them enough evidence of what a student actually understood.

“We’ve shifted more to presentations,” Shaw-Gallagher said. Students may still use AI while preparing, but faculty can question them directly. “We want to know what you know,” she explained. Faculty can then change the circumstances and ask the student to apply that knowledge: “Say you’re in clinic and this happens. How would you handle that?”

The revised format gives faculty access to something the finished paper alone cannot show: how the student responds when they have to explain a decision and apply what they know to a new situation.

Peterson described another approach that keeps AI in the assignment while making the student's contribution easier to see. "I've heard so many innovative ways of, 'Ask AI to do this. Then you do the next step, and you have to turn in everything,'" he said. The question then becomes what the student can evaluate, extend, or correct rather than whether AI was involved at all.

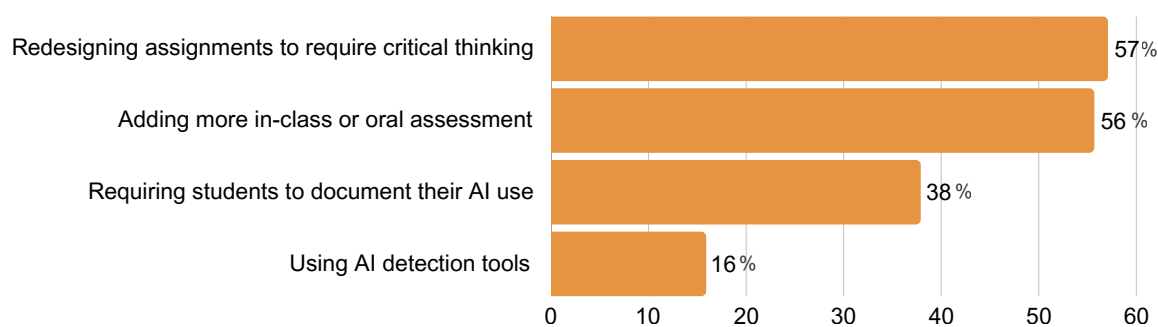
"It's your knowledge, it's your understanding, it's your job to prove you have acquired it."

Doug Peterson, PhD

That same principle can extend to the record of how an assignment was developed. Another 37.9% of respondents now ask students to document their use of AI. Peterson argued that drafts, notes, and revision histories can help students demonstrate authorship and understanding. "It's your knowledge, it's your understanding, it's your job to prove you have acquired it," he said.

Making that process visible gives faculty more than a finished product to evaluate. It gives them a clearer record of what the student contributed and understood along the way.

Figure 2.2: How faculty are adapting assessment



Course-level choices and clearer expectations

Redesigning assessment also changes what students need to understand about acceptable AI use, and most of those boundaries are being drawn one course at a time, since the large majority of respondents set their own AI policy rather than following a university-wide one. Some of that variation is appropriate, since a coding course and a composition course have different reasons for allowing or restricting AI. But it can also leave students confused, as they move between classes that each define “acceptable use” differently.

Lisa Hanasono, PhD, Professor in the School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University and Academic Director of Training and Content at NCFDD, pointed to tiered approaches that distinguish among different kinds of use rather than treating AI as simply allowed or forbidden.

“When we move to this kind of all-or-nothing approach, then we lose the nuance,” she said.

Students need a clear way to understand when AI is prohibited, when limited assistance is allowed, and when they are expected to use and evaluate it.

Only 3.4% of faculty say their students are using AI thoughtfully as a learning aid. That figure suggests that faculty see a need for more explicit guidance about when AI supports learning, what they remain responsible for, and how to document its use. Clear expectations are themselves part of the assessment design, because they tell students what evidence of their own learning the instructor will be looking for.

The cost of redesign

The survey establishes the scale of assessment change, but it cannot capture the hours behind it. Faculty comments make that cost visible. A humanities respondent captured the effort of rebuilding a full slate of assignments for an environment where AI is always available.

“I’ve had to redesign almost every assignment and assessment so it can be completed and evaluated in the context of an AI environment. So. Time. Consuming,” they said.

Changing an assessment can mean rewriting prompts and rubrics, moving work into class, adding oral questions, building draft stages, documenting processes, and explaining new expectations to students. In some courses faculty are discarding assignments they have relied on for years. And because AI tools and student practices keep shifting, a redesign is rarely finished; what works this term may need revisiting the next.

“I’ve had to redesign almost every assignment and assessment so it can be completed and evaluated in the context of an AI environment. So. Time. Consuming.”

Humanities, regular AI user, liberal arts college, associate professor

3. The Uneven Workload Exchange

Assessment redesign is one part of a broader workload exchange, and the survey shows how faculty experience it. Nearly two-thirds describe AI as one more burden on an already full plate (64.9%), and 60.2% say it is adding to their stress. The effect on measured hours is more mixed: 35% of faculty say AI has increased their workload and 21.7% say it has reduced it, with the rest reporting little overall change. But the burden faculty describe is not only about the time they spend working. It also includes the added mental work of redesigning assessments, verifying student work, and keeping pace with tools that change from one term to the next.

Those topline numbers hold very different experiences inside them. Some faculty are using AI to speed up routine or administrative work. Others are spending more time redesigning assessments, checking student work, handling academic-integrity cases, rewriting course policies, and keeping pace with tools that change from one term to the next. A single faculty member can experience both sides at once.

One social sciences respondent described exactly that exchange:

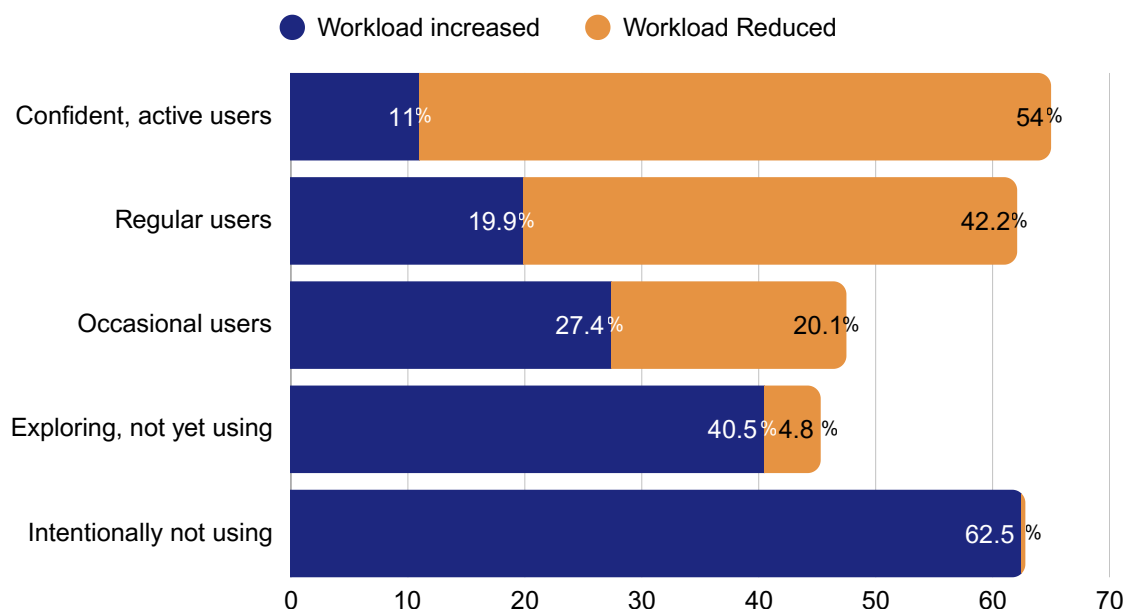
“I use AI as a glorified Google. You could say it has saved me time in that,” they wrote. “But it has also increased the time I spend on teaching because I had to redesign my courses and move to in-class hand-written exams which are harder to grade.”

For some faculty, the additional workload is harder to address because they do not control the structure of the course or assessment. One humanities respondent described working in a team-taught course where changing the assessment format was not an option:

“AI has made it much harder to detect cheating,” they said. “It’s team-taught, and as a junior, contingent faculty member, I have no power to change the assessment format. The number of academic integrity cases has skyrocketed.”

In this example, the added workload comes from the rise in academic-integrity cases, which require time to investigate, document, and resolve. The workload exchange therefore depends not only on whether AI can make a particular task faster. It also depends on what new work AI creates elsewhere and how much control faculty have over the way that work is handled.

Figure 3.1: Who gains time and who loses it



The work AI creates

The burden side of the workload exchange extends well beyond assessment redesign. Faculty also describe verification, misconduct cases, policy questions, student conversations, and course rebuilds prompted by student AI use. Much of that work reaches faculty who never use the tools themselves. Among respondents who are intentionally not using AI, 62.5% report that their workload has increased, while only 0.3% report a reduction. The survey measured overall workload change rather than task-by-task attribution, so the open-ended comments help show where that additional work is landing.

For one humanities respondent, that displacement was concrete.

“My designated teaching time is no longer spent providing meaningful feedback to students or developing exciting new activities,” they wrote. “It is now spent playing gotcha and putting together misconduct cases. It takes on average 8 hours for one misconduct case.”

The eight hours matter, and so does what they replace. Time spent documenting a misconduct case is time no longer available for feedback, course development, mentoring, or scholarship. A full accounting of AI-related workload therefore has to include not only time spent using the technology, but also the work created in response to how it is being used by students.

“My designated teaching time is no longer spent providing meaningful feedback to students or developing exciting new activities. It is **now spent playing gotcha** and putting together misconduct cases.”

Humanities, confident AI user, R2, associate professor.

Additional work can also arise when faculty use AI themselves. A social sciences respondent who uses AI regularly described the gap between the promise of efficiency and the actual time required.

“Expectation that you must use AI to increase productivity, but have found that it probably takes more time when using AI, due to fact checking, or that the output does not meet the intended need,” they said.

Whether AI saves time depends on the task, the quality of the output, and how much verification or revision is required. The efficiency is conditional, not automatic.

Where the savings appear

For some faculty, the exchange runs the other way. More than half of confident users say AI has reduced their workload (54%), against 11% who report an increase, and regular users also report more reductions than increases (42.2% versus 19.9%). The gains are real, but they are not spread evenly across all of faculty work.

Writing is a useful check on that pattern. Across the full sample, only 24.4% say AI has made them more productive in their writing, while 83.2% report ethical concerns about AI use in scholarly writing. For some faculty, writing is difficult to separate from the intellectual work it represents. One STEM respondent drew that boundary plainly:

“Writing is an extension of thinking, and I refuse to outsource my thinking,” they said.

Shaw-Gallagher’s accreditation work shows a different kind of task where savings can emerge. Accreditation requires her to work across lengthy standards, program policies, learning outcomes, and other documentation. She has used AI to compare those materials and identify where changes in accreditation standards require her attention. Rather than reviewing every part of the material in the same way, she can narrow the work before deciding what the program needs to change.

“It gives me a very clear starting point: these are the policies I have to look at. The old standards have been retained, so I don’t need to bother with those. Let’s focus on the things that need to be updated,” Shaw-Gallagher said.

That is the kind of work she is willing to hand off. “If I can automate something, if I can use tools that are going to help me get through the tedious work, I’m using them,” she said.

Savings can also come from much smaller tasks. One STEM respondent described using AI to help with messages to students requesting exceptions or special permissions:

“AI has significantly improved my communication with students asking for special permissions,” they wrote. “I use it frequently to correct the tone of my replies to be firm and aligned with course policies, while still being supportive. It saves me tons of time.”

These examples share a common feature: faculty are using AI for defined tasks they already understand well enough to evaluate. Shaw-Gallagher knows the accreditation standards and remains responsible for deciding how her program responds to them. The STEM respondent already knows the course policy and the message that needs to be communicated. In those cases, AI can reduce the time required to carry out the work without taking over the judgment behind it.

José Antonio Bowen, PhD, FRSA, Senior Fellow at the American Association of Colleges and Universities, described the larger workload dynamic plainly: “It is not that AI might not relieve faculty of some work. They are having to do more work elsewhere because of AI.”

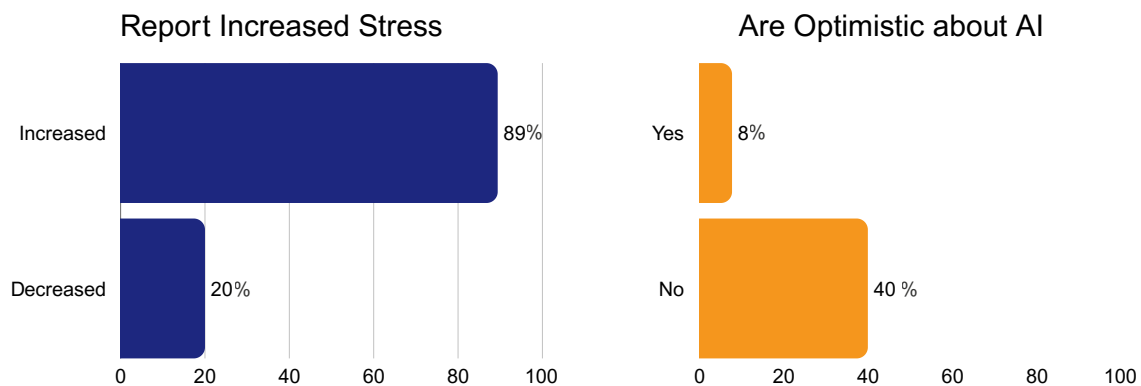
Savings on individual tasks, in other words, do not necessarily translate into more time overall.

Workload and outlook move together

The link between workload and outlook is one of the clearest patterns in the survey. Among respondents whose workload increased, 89.4% say AI is adding to their stress and only 7.7% are optimistic about its role in higher education. Among those whose workload decreased, the picture nearly inverts, with 19.7% reporting increased stress and 39.9% describing themselves as optimistic.

The contrast is substantial. Faculty who report reliable time savings also report lower stress and more positive views of AI, while faculty whose workloads have increased report much higher stress and lower optimism. Those differences suggest that workload may shape how faculty experience AI and the value they see in it.

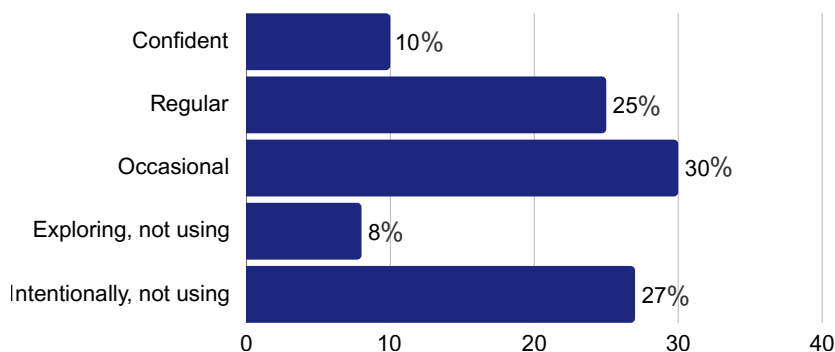
Figure 3.2: Workload and outlook move together



4. Confidence and Concern Coexist

Before looking at how faculty experience differs across levels of AI use, it helps to see how respondents are distributed across those groups. Only about one in ten describe themselves as confident (10%), active users, while more than a third have chosen not to use AI at all (35%). Most respondents fall somewhere in between (55%), using AI occasionally or regularly while still determining how it fits into their teaching and scholarship.

Figure 4.1A: Faculty AI adoption levels



The vast majority of respondents (90%) either do not identify as confident users or have chosen not to use AI at all. The most confident users are a small minority, so their more favorable outlook reflects the experience of relatively few faculty.

Faculty experience with AI is closely tied to how they describe its effects. Among the 114 respondents who identify as confident, active users, 47% are optimistic about AI's role in higher education and 50% feel prepared for the changes it will bring. Their workload also runs favorably, with 54% reporting a reduction against 11% reporting an increase. At the other end of the spectrum, faculty who intentionally do not use AI report far less optimism (1.6%) and preparedness (3.9%), alongside much higher stress and burden.

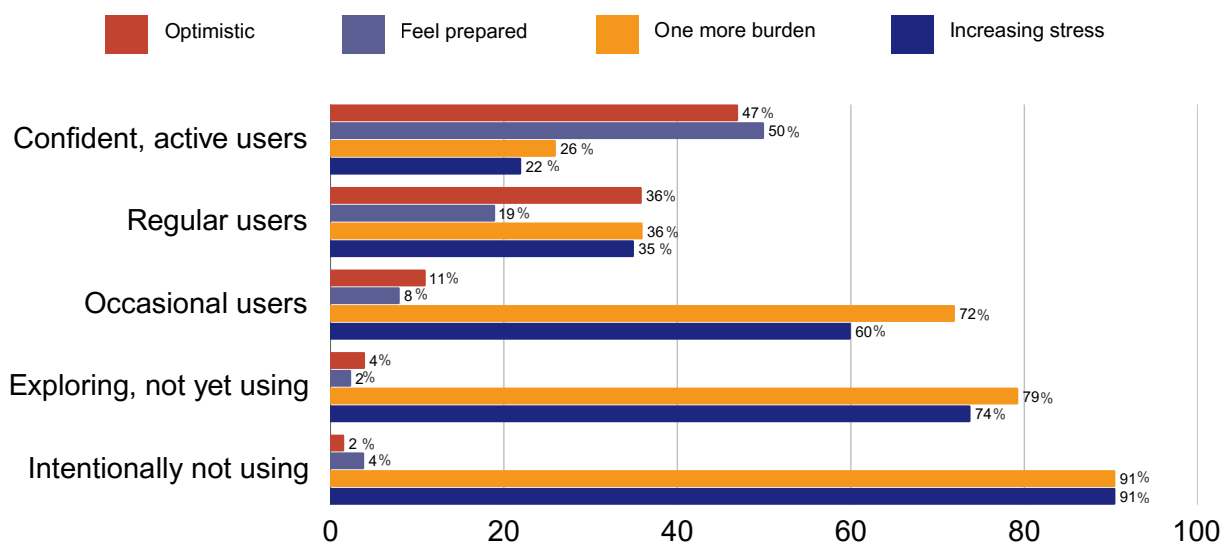
But greater confidence does not eliminate concern. Among confident users, 76.2% remain concerned about student over-reliance, 73.3% lack confidence in detection tools, and 39.6% still describe AI as a fundamental threat to the future of education.

Hanasono pointed to that combination as one of the survey's more important findings. "Even the believers are worried," she said, particularly when it comes to students becoming overly reliant on AI. "I think that is a huge concern. There's not an easy answer for it, though."

Experience with AI is associated with sharp differences in stress, burden, optimism, and preparedness, while concern about student over-reliance and distrust of detection tools remain high even among the most confident users.

Confidence does not appear to require faculty to set aside their concerns. For many, greater familiarity may simply give them a more differentiated view of where AI is useful and where caution is still warranted.

Figure 4.1B: Experience and outlook move together



Confidence with the tools changes the classroom experience

Nearly three-quarters of confident users say they explicitly teach students how to use AI responsibly (73.3%), compared with 47.7% of regular users and 34.9% of occasional users. Greater facility with the tools appears to give faculty more concrete ways to talk about AI use with students.

That teaching role complicates any simple picture of who is “for” AI. The faculty most engaged with the tools are also the most likely to be guiding students through them, even as they carry serious reservations. One confident STEM respondent described exactly that gap between faculty facility and student readiness.

“Faculty are beginning to use AI more effectively but there is a gap in how we teach our students how to use AI appropriately,” they said. “Students are now afraid to use AI as they are not sure how to use it properly and do not want to be accused of cheating.”

The comment moves the question away from personal enthusiasm and toward the conditions that responsible use requires.

Concern persists among confident users

The core educational concerns do not fade among the faculty who use AI most. Among confident users, 76.2% remain concerned about student over-reliance and 73.3% lack confidence in detection tools, concerns that stay above 73% in every adoption group. Ethical concern about AI in scholarly writing reaches 59.5% even here, and 39.6% still regard AI as a fundamental threat to the future of education. Confidence changes how faculty experience AI; it does not resolve the questions AI raises about learning and academic work.

Figure 4.2: Concern persists among confident users

Among confident, active users...	%
Concerned about student over-reliance	76.20%
Lack confidence in detection tools	73.30%
Ethical concern about AI in scholarly writing	59.50%
See AI as a fundamental threat to education	39.60%

A confident social sciences department chair captured the coexistence directly, describing steady professional gains and unresolved misgivings in the same breath.

“The most unclear or unresolved aspect of AI in my work right now is the cognitive dissonance that I feel using AI due to the ethical and environmental concerns that I have,” they wrote. “Yet, I also feel that AI has very much helped my research, my productivity, and my access to new information.”

Confident users therefore complicate a simple adopter-versus-skeptic divide. Faculty can gain real professional benefit from AI and go on questioning how it affects learning, authorship, and the conditions under which it is being adopted.

“The cognitive dissonance that I feel using AI due to the ethical and environmental concerns that I have. Yet, I also feel that AI has very much **helped my research, my productivity, and my access** to new information.”

Social Sciences, confident AI user, R1, department chair

Trying AI does not necessarily produce confidence

Occasional users are the largest single group in the survey, representing about 30% of respondents. Their experience with AI is firsthand, though typically intermittent and limited in depth. That exposure has not translated into confidence. Only 7.6% feel prepared for the changes ahead, just 10.6% are optimistic, and 59.9% say AI is adding to their stress.

Faculty who are still exploring AI report even greater strain. Nearly three-quarters say it is increasing their stress (73.8%), 79.3% describe it as one more burden on an already full plate, and just 2.4% feel prepared. These respondents are close enough to AI to be dealing with its demands, but the benefits confident users describe have not yet become a dependable part of their experience.

This middle matters for faculty development because it shows that exposure alone is a weak measure of readiness. Faculty may have experience using AI and still be unsure where it is useful, how to evaluate its output, what boundaries to set for students, or what their institution expects. Trying AI is not the same as feeling prepared to use it well.

Key Takeaway

Exposure is a weak measure of readiness. Trying AI is not the same as knowing where it helps, how to judge its output, or how to guide students through it.

What the adoption gradient means

Faculty who intentionally do not use AI report the most difficult outlook on several measures at once. Stress, burden, and perceived fundamental threat each reach 90.5%, while optimism falls to 1.6% and preparedness to 3.9%. Faculty who intentionally do not use AI are still affected by student use, assessment redesign, policy questions, and verification.

Here the descriptive nature of the survey matters most. It cannot tell us which way the arrow runs. Intentional non-use may follow from pedagogical, ethical, practical, or workload considerations, and difficult experiences with AI may themselves shape the decision not to adopt. Reading this group primarily as resistant would miss the more useful question the data invites: what conditions are producing such a hard relationship with AI, and what would change it? What the survey does establish is the width of the variation, in the combinations of cost, benefit, confidence, and concern that faculty report.

One regular user described what greater facility with AI can open up, framing it as sharper judgment rather than easier answers.

“It has made me reassess the value of thinking in education, which tasks can responsibly be offloaded, and how to assess student learning reliably,” they said.

That kind of judgment is increasingly important because AI is already shaping teaching, research, assessment, student work, and other parts of academic life, including for faculty who do not use the tools themselves. Faculty therefore need enough understanding of how AI works, what it can and cannot do, and how it is affecting their disciplines and professional responsibilities to make informed decisions about its role in their work.

For institutions, the challenge is to create the conditions that make that informed judgment possible. Faculty need time to learn and experiment, access to credible information and professional development, shared language and institutional guidance, and opportunities to work through questions with colleagues. Those structures can provide a common foundation without requiring faculty or disciplines to arrive at the same level or form of AI use. The measure of progress is whether faculty are better equipped to decide where AI is useful, where its use requires safeguards, and where it may interfere with the learning, expertise, or judgment their work is intended to develop.

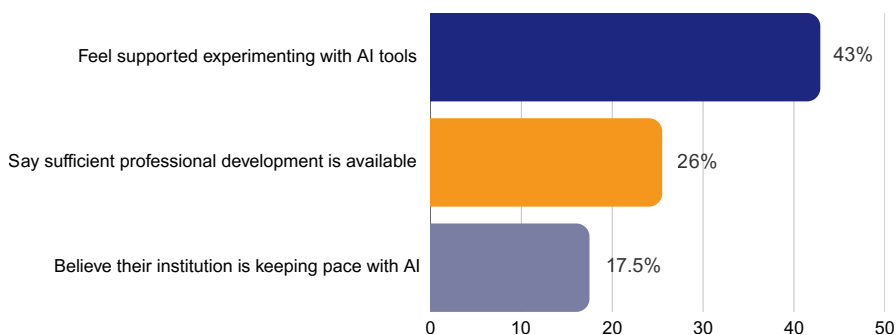
5. Building Clearer Institutional Guidance

The survey points to a shared institutional challenge. Faculty need room to make judgments that reflect discipline, course level, assignment, and stage of learning, and they need an environment in which those judgments are easier to make and easier for students to understand. The survey shows how little consistency faculty currently experience. Only 6.6% of respondents say AI-related expectations are consistent across their institution, the lowest agreement rate anywhere in the survey. Just 16.5% say their institution has established clear expectations, and 17.5% believe it is keeping pace with how quickly AI is changing.

Those numbers describe a coordination problem rather than an absence of effort. Colleges and universities are forming committees, issuing guidance, running workshops, and asking faculty to address AI in their courses. For most respondents, that activity has not yet produced a shared sense of direction and those efforts have not yet produced consistent expectations. One humanities respondent put the gap simply.

“The boundaries everyone is working under, I think we all have different ones and they are unspoken,” they said.

Figure 5.1: Institutional support at a glance



Local decisions still need institutional support

Course-level policy is already the dominant model. Among respondents, 71.2% set their own AI policy for students, while only 8.5% follow a university-wide policy. Faculty are making many of these decisions close to the classroom, where the learning goals, disciplinary expectations, and students themselves are most visible.

Hanasono argued that institutional guidance can support those decisions without determining every course-level rule. “Providing faculty with a framework is great, but also giving them some license in terms of determining for them what makes the most sense for their classes, and what makes the most sense for their students,” she said.

That leaves room for different courses to set different expectations while giving faculty a stronger starting point for making those choices. Hanasono also pointed to the value of making the parameters clear to students. Depending on the course or institution, she said, students should be able to understand “these are the parameters, as well as here’s the wiggle room.”

Different courses may reasonably draw different boundaries around AI. What matters is that faculty have enough guidance and support to make those boundaries clear, and that students understand what is expected of them in each setting.

Key Takeaway

Consistency does not mean every course sets the same rule. It means the differences between courses are understandable.

What coordination can look like

At Creps’s institution, course design is treated as part of academic freedom, and faculty receive a range of syllabus-language options they can adapt rather than a single required statement. The options continue to evolve through peer exchange.

“Every semester, somebody’s written a new version, and they share it,” she said.

Creps called the process “really educative” because faculty continue to revise the guidance as new questions emerge. The institution provides options, while faculty decide what fits their own courses and teaching goals.

Turner described a similar approach in his department. “We’re required to have a clear policy,” he said. “We have a department policy that we set together, and that is relatively loose.” The shared policy establishes a baseline for students, while individual faculty can still decide whether AI is permitted by class or by assignment.

At the university level, Turner said the guidance follows the same general pattern. “There’s definitely nothing top-down,” he said. “It’s more, here’s options you can do, here are principles to apply, that sort of thing.”

These examples show coordination that gives faculty something to work from without requiring every course to use AI in the same way. Shared language and departmental expectations can reduce the need for each instructor to start from scratch, while leaving room for policies to reflect the course and the learning goals.

Faculty and administrators see different parts of the same challenge

Faculty and administrators do not experience institutional AI support in quite the same way. Among the 65 academic administrators who responded, 68.2% say they feel supported experimenting with AI, compared with 41.2% of faculty. Administrators are also nearly twice as likely to say their institution has established clear expectations, at 31.8% compared with 16% of faculty.

That gap matters. Institutional efforts may be more visible from some roles than others, or they may be reaching different parts of the university unevenly. Either way, the same policies, resources, and initiatives are not necessarily experienced in the same way across campus.

One administrator described that disconnect directly:

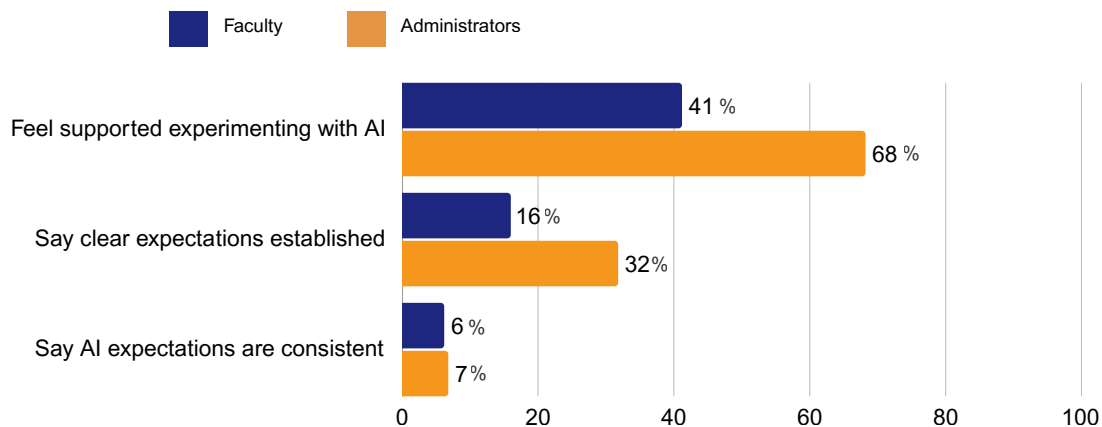
“Institutional guidance tends to be contradictory, prohibiting AI use in most cases academically but pushing administrative staff to incorporate it into their workflows,” they wrote.

The comment is important because the concern is coming from inside the administration itself. Faculty are not alone in seeing mixed signals. Different parts of the institution may be moving toward AI at different speeds or with different expectations.

On one measure, faculty and administrators are almost completely aligned. Only 6.2% of faculty and 6.8% of administrators say AI expectations are consistent across their institution. Whatever differences exist in how support and clarity are experienced, both groups identify the same larger problem: institutional expectations are still not lining up.

That shared assessment creates an opening for coordination. Faculty and administrators may encounter different parts of the institution's AI response, but both have a stake in making those pieces work together more clearly.

Figure 5.2: Faculty and administrator perceptions of support



Faculty are asking for sustained development support and institutional clarity

When respondents named the largest gaps in institutional support, clarity came first but did not stand alone. Nearly half selected clear expectations or policies (49.5%), followed by alignment across the institution (40.2%) and time and resources to learn (38.3%). Those needs are closely connected. Faculty need guidance, but they also need time to understand what that guidance means for their courses and to make changes where necessary.

The effects of limited support show up in how faculty are navigating AI. Inadequate support has increased stress for 43.9% of respondents, 30% report avoiding AI even when it might be useful, and 28.7% worry about being evaluated unfairly against AI-related expectations. There is also a gap between feeling supported to experiment and having access to professional development: 42.9% feel supported experimenting with AI, while only 25.5% say sufficient professional development is available.

Bowen argued that these practical needs sit within a much larger educational challenge. “Higher education is responding with operational tactics to an epistemological crisis,” he said.

A syllabus statement can clarify whether AI is permitted in a course. It cannot answer every question faculty are now confronting about what students should learn independently, how mastery should be demonstrated, or how AI changes expectations within a discipline. Working through those questions requires more than a short introduction to the technology.

“The big problem is that administration wants 2 or 3 hours when faculty need 2-3 days,” Bowen said. “Faculty need BOTH time to learn and time to completely redevelop courses.”

His point brings the issue back to faculty capacity. Clearer expectations can reduce uncertainty, and coordination can keep faculty from having to solve every problem independently. But faculty also need dedicated, hands-on opportunities to understand how AI tools work, where they may be useful in teaching and research, and how they are affecting student learning. Reconsidering assignments and revising courses still require time.

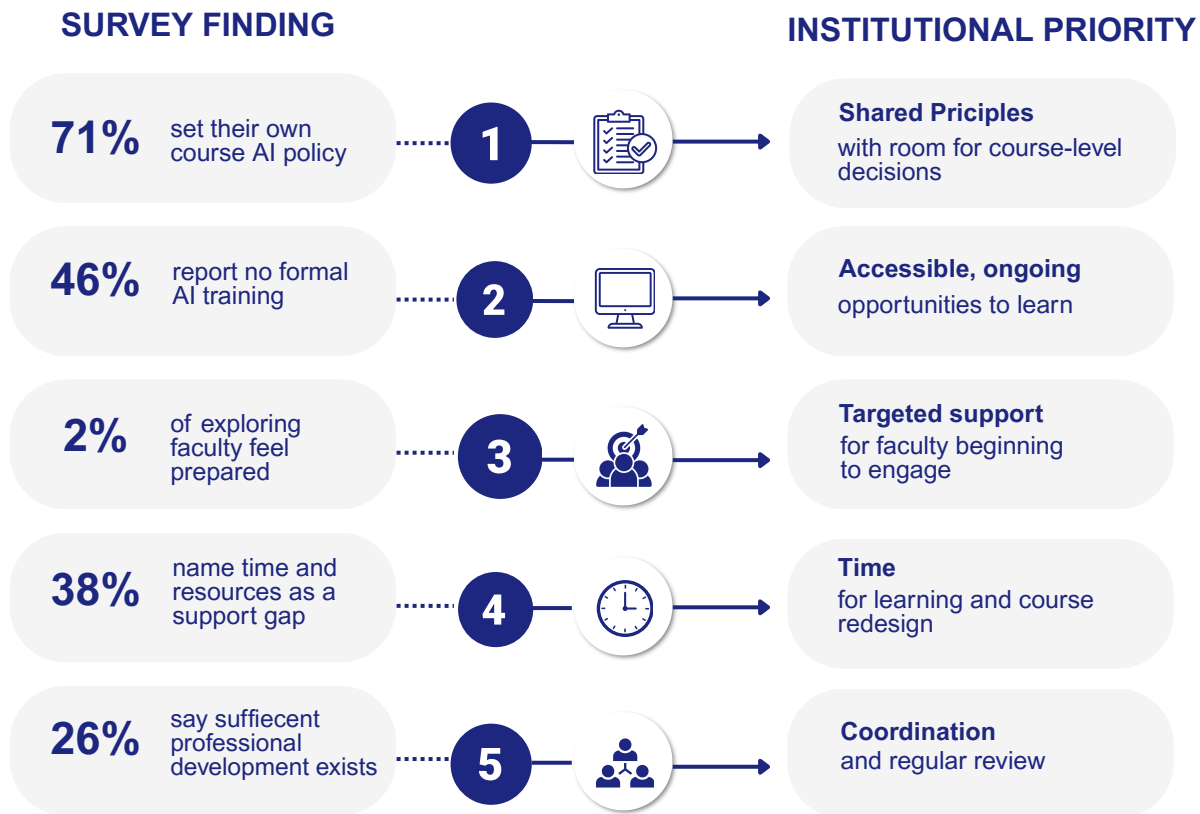
6. A Faculty-Centered Institutional Roadmap

Faculty are already adapting their teaching and academic work to AI, even as that process is still unfolding. They are revising assessments, setting expectations for their courses, evaluating tools, and deciding what students should know and demonstrate independently. Institutions can support that work by giving faculty clearer guidance, time to learn and redesign, and a meaningful role in decisions about how AI is used in their teaching and scholarship.

The survey documents substantial variation in how faculty are experiencing AI. Those differences appear across discipline and level of AI use, while the workload involved in adapting courses and practices shapes how sustainable that work feels. The findings also point to the importance of preserving faculty judgment. What makes sense in one discipline, course, or stage of learning may not make sense in another.

The five priorities that follow reflect the needs that recur across the survey and interviews: shared guidance, faculty agency, opportunities to learn, time to adapt, and better coordination across the institution.

Figure 6.1: Five priorities grounded in the survey findings



1. Anchor AI decisions in educational purpose

Many of the questions faculty are confronting about AI lead back to a more fundamental one: what is the work of teaching and scholarship meant to accomplish? One early-career STEM respondent described what can happen when that question remains unresolved.

“Almost all developments feel reactive,” they wrote. “The university responds to what companies, driven by commercial incentives, do. We have no narrative for why what we do is valuable and should not be automated.”

That concern puts educational purpose before the question of any particular tool. In one course, students may need to complete work without AI because the practice itself is part of what they are learning. In another, using and evaluating AI may be part of preparing students for work they will encounter in their field. What matters in either case is being able to connect the decision to what students are expected to learn and demonstrate.

The survey documents substantial variation in how faculty are experiencing AI. Those differences appear across discipline and level of AI use, while the workload involved in adapting courses and practices shapes how sustainable that work feels. The findings also point to the importance of preserving faculty judgment. What makes sense in one discipline, course, or stage of learning may not make sense in another.

The same question can help orient decisions beyond an individual course. As institutions consider AI-related policies, tools, and expectations, clarity about the value of the learning and scholarly work at stake gives faculty a stronger basis for deciding where AI supports that work and where it may change what the work is meant to accomplish.

“We have **no narrative** for why what we do is valuable and should not be automated.”

STEM, R1, early-career assistant professor.

2. Create shared principles and guidance

Faculty are already making many AI decisions at the course level, but the survey shows how little consistency surrounds those choices. Only 16.5% of respondents say their institution has set clear expectations around AI use, and just 6.6% say expectations are consistent across the institution.

Shared guidance can give faculty something to work from without requiring every course or discipline to make the same choices. The interviews point toward a framework that clarifies where institutional expectations apply and where faculty judgment remains central. That matters when decisions about teaching, research, or professional practice involve questions that extend beyond a single classroom.

The need for clarity has particular weight for faculty earlier in their careers. Faculty in their first five years report lower optimism and preparedness than the most senior group, alongside higher ethical concern about AI in scholarly writing. Some respondents also described uncertainty about how their own choices around AI might affect their careers.

“The way in which my ethical decision not to use AI is going to impact my professional opportunities and evaluation in the discipline,” one assistant professor said.

Another early-career faculty member described being encouraged to use AI in assignments after a teaching observation even though they remained uneasy about doing so. Those comments show why emerging AI norms are not only a policy question. Faculty who are still establishing themselves professionally are also trying to understand how their choices will be interpreted by colleagues and evaluators.

Turner connected that uncertainty to the different positions early-career faculty occupy. He noted that an experienced professor may have redesigned a course many times and can draw on years of teaching experience when AI changes the conditions again. For someone who has only recently built a course, he said, having to redo it can be “a much bigger ask for a junior faculty member than it is for a senior faculty member.”

Clearer responsibilities and expectations can reduce some of that uncertainty. They give faculty a better sense of which decisions are theirs to make, where institutional guidance applies, and how AI-related choices are likely to be understood within their professional context.

3. Invest in faculty time and capacity

Learning how to respond to AI takes time, and so does acting on what faculty learn. In the survey, 38.3% of respondents identify time and resources to learn as a major gap in institutional support, only 25.5% say sufficient AI-related professional development is available, and 43.9% say inadequate institutional support has increased their stress.

Earlier findings show where that time goes. Faculty are redesigning assessments, reconsidering course policies, checking student work, and learning how AI is affecting their disciplines. For some respondents, that work is happening on top of existing responsibilities rather than within time already set aside for it.

“Provide release time for training. Everything I have had to do has been on my own time,” an assistant professor who identifies as an occasional AI user said.

Creps described the same constraint as a practical question faculty face when deciding how deeply they can engage with AI: “How do I do this in a way that I feel fits within the time that I have to dedicate?”

The question is not only whether faculty have access to information about AI, but whether they have enough capacity to do something useful with it. Learning about a tool may lead to revisiting an assignment, changing an assessment, comparing approaches with colleagues, or deciding that a particular use does not fit the course at all.

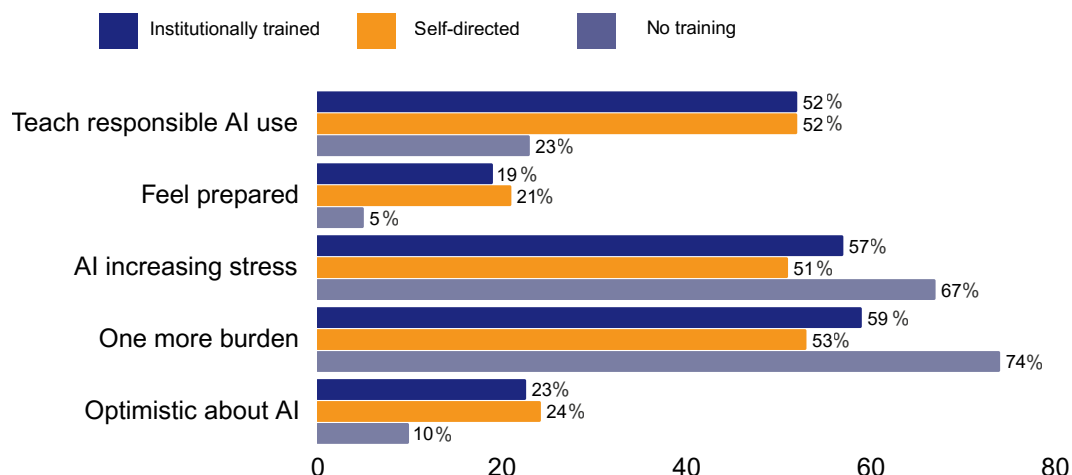
Institutions need to help faculty build the AI literacy required to make informed decisions about how the technology affects different parts of their work, including teaching and learning, research, and administrative tasks. That means providing ongoing practical development opportunities alongside time to apply what faculty learn. Responding to AI requires both new knowledge and the time and support to put that knowledge into practice.

4. Build differentiated, ongoing faculty development

Nearly half of respondents (46.2%) report no formal AI training. Faculty who received institutional training are more likely than untrained respondents to say they teach responsible AI use (52.2% versus 23.1%), feel prepared for AI-related changes (18.9% versus 5.2%), and are optimistic about AI’s role in higher education (22.6% versus 9.9%). These comparisons do not establish that training caused the differences, but they show a consistent association between training and greater confidence engaging with AI.

Training does not resolve the broader pressures faculty are experiencing. Among institutionally trained faculty, 56.5% still report increased stress and 59% still describe AI as another burden. Those rates are lower than among respondents with no formal training, at 66.8% and 74%, but they remain high. Learning more about AI may help faculty engage with it, but it does not remove the time required to reconsider a course, revise an assessment, or work through changing expectations.

Figure 6.2: Training, preparedness, and workload



Self-directed learners add another dimension to the findings. They report somewhat lower stress and burden and slightly greater optimism than faculty who received institutional training. Faculty who seek out learning on their own may differ from other respondents in ways the survey cannot measure. Even so, the comparison raises an important question about how much control faculty have over what they learn, when they learn it, and how they apply that learning.

The survey also shows why faculty development cannot assume the same starting point for everyone. Faculty who are exploring AI but have not yet begun using it report some of the highest stress and burden in the sample: 73.8% say AI is increasing their stress, 79.3% call it another burden, and only 2.4% feel prepared for the changes it will bring. They have already expressed interest in engaging, but they are doing so from a very different position than confident users, half of whom say they feel prepared.

Bowen argued that the time devoted to faculty development has to reflect the scale of what faculty are being asked to learn. “No one expects complete fluency in French from a one-hour workshop,” he said. His larger point was that faculty need sustained opportunities to learn and enough time to reconsider their courses as their understanding develops.

The survey supports a model of faculty development that continues beyond initial exposure. Faculty are learning about tools that keep changing while also deciding what those tools mean for teaching, assessment, scholarship, and their disciplines. A single introduction can begin that process, but it cannot answer the questions that emerge once faculty start applying what they have learned.

5. Keep governance participatory and adaptive

Faculty participation has to begin early enough to shape decisions rather than react to them. A professional-fields respondent captured what happens when it does not.

“AI feels like it was forced into our lives before we were given the opportunity to have focus groups or dedicated thinking on how we wanted to integrate it,” they said.

Faculty can identify how a proposed tool or policy will affect assessment, scholarly materials, student data, accessibility, disciplinary standards, and workload, and they can help separate the questions that need an institution-wide answer from those that belong to a department or course. Students can inform that process too. One academic administrator recommended creating shared spaces for conversation among faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates, noting that students often arrive from internships and other settings where AI practice is moving quickly. Their input can show where course expectations are confusing and which emerging uses deserve a closer look, while faculty remain responsible for academic standards with better information about the environment students are navigating.

Governance also needs a regular rhythm. New capabilities, approved tools, disciplinary practices, and external standards will keep changing, and recurring faculty and student feedback, working groups, and scheduled policy review let an institution update guidance before uncertainty piles up into another emergency response. That review should look at workload effects as well, and at whether the supports an institution believes it is offering are actually reaching the faculty who need them.

What a faculty-centered roadmap makes possible

The measure of success is not how many faculty reach the same level of AI use. It is whether the institution has built the capacity for informed judgment. Faculty should be able to explain why AI is permitted, limited, or required in a given setting. Students should understand what remains their own responsibility and how a course's AI policy connects to its learning goals. Leaders should know where institution-wide guardrails are genuinely necessary and where disciplinary expertise should decide.

A structure like that lets different choices coexist without leaving faculty and students to navigate a pile of unrelated rules, and it keeps institutional resources aimed at what the survey shows matters most: credible evidence of learning, sustainable workload, responsible use, and the continued development of expertise and judgment. AI will keep changing, and institutional decisions will have to change with it. The durable response is a process that can be revisited, in which educational purpose sets direction, shared principles create coherence, faculty time and development build capacity, and participatory governance keeps the institution learning.

Key Takeaway

The strongest institutional response builds faculty capacity to make better decisions about AI, rather than trying to make those decisions for them.

About the Survey: Methods and Limitations

This report draws on a survey of 1,659 faculty members and academic administrators across U.S. higher education. Of those respondents, 1,022 completed the full survey and 637 provided partial responses. The sample spans a wide range of institutional settings, disciplines, career stages, academic roles, and levels of experience with AI.

The survey was distributed through email to NCFDD partner and non-partner institutions, social media, and banners on ncfdd.org. Participation was voluntary, and respondents self-selected into the survey based on eligibility questions included in the instrument. The survey was open from May 5 - May 21, 2026. Because the sample was reached through these channels rather than drawn as a probability sample, it is not designed to be statistically representative of all U.S. faculty; the findings characterize the respondents to this survey.

How the findings were calculated

Respondents were not required to answer every question. Percentages throughout the report are therefore calculated from the respondents who answered each individual survey item, and the denominator varies by question. Partial responses are retained. Subgroup comparisons use respondents with data for the relevant items, so subgroup denominators also vary across analyses.

The report examines patterns by discipline, AI adoption level, career stage, training source, institution type, and academic role. These comparisons are descriptive. They show how responses differ within this sample and should not be read as evidence that one characteristic caused another. The association between greater AI confidence and lower reported workload, for instance, may reflect several processes at once, including prior experience, access to support, the kinds of tasks a person takes on, or the possibility that successful uses of AI build confidence over time.

Open-ended responses and interviews

Open-ended survey comments are drawn from the 694 respondents who consented to having their comments quoted. Anonymous quotations are attributed by broad respondent characteristics rather than by name or institution and may be lightly edited for clarity. These comments add context to the quantitative findings by showing how respondents describe consequences, practices, and unresolved questions in their own work.

The report also draws on named interviews with faculty leaders, department chairs, and higher education experts. Interview participants provide examples, mechanisms, and institutional perspectives that help interpret patterns in the survey. Their comments are not treated as additional survey observations and are not used to estimate how common a view or practice is across higher education.

How to read subgroup findings

Subgroup sizes vary considerably. Some comparisons involve relatively small groups, including arts respondents (n=37) and academic administrators (n=65). Findings from smaller groups are especially sensitive to individual responses and should be read as directional. The adoption categories used throughout the report reflect respondents' reported level of AI use and confidence; they are useful for describing different experiences, but they are not a standardized measure of AI proficiency.

The survey is cross-sectional and captures respondents' experiences at one point in a rapidly changing environment. Associations among training, confidence, workload, stress, optimism, and other measures can identify meaningful patterns, but they do not establish the direction of causality. The training comparisons are a clear example: faculty who pursue self-directed learning may already differ from other respondents before any training occurs, so the observed differences should not be attributed to training alone.

Limitations and scope

Representativeness. The sample is broad across institution types, disciplines, career stages, and roles, but breadth alone does not establish statistical representativeness. This report characterizes the respondents to this survey and does not treat its percentages as population estimates for all U.S. faculty or institutions.

Missing data. Because partial responses are included, the number of observations differs by item and by subgroup analysis. Item-level response counts should accompany the detailed tables and figures in the technical appendix so readers can see the base for each estimate.

Smaller subgroups. Results for smaller groups should be interpreted with additional caution. Postdoctoral respondents were not captured as a distinct role category, which limits the report's ability to examine their experiences separately.

Timing. AI capabilities, institutional policies, and disciplinary norms are changing quickly. The findings should be understood as a snapshot of respondents' experiences during the survey period rather than a fixed account of how higher education will experience AI over time.

Study scope. This report uses the 1,659-response main survey. A separate supplemental survey of 125 respondents, focused on specific AI tools and companies, was fielded independently and is not pooled with the findings reported here.

Appendix: Survey Instrument

The following instrument was administered as part of NCFDD's survey on faculty perspectives on artificial intelligence in higher education. Question wording and response options are reproduced here as presented to respondents. Instructions, response formats, and optional open-response prompts are included where applicable.

Section 1 About you

Q1 What is your current role?

- Adjunct or part-time faculty
- Assistant professor (pre-tenure)
- Associate professor
- Full professor
- Lecturer or instructor
- Department chair or academic leader
- Other: ____

Q2 How many years have you been in higher education?

- 0–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 11–20 years
- 21+ years

Q3 Institution type

- R1 / doctoral research university
- Regional or teaching-focused university
- Liberal arts college
- Community college
- Professional school (law, medicine, business, education)
- Other: ____

Q4 Primary discipline

- Humanities
- Social sciences
- STEM
- Professional (business, law, medicine, education)
- Arts
- Other: ____

Q5 Have you received any formal training on AI tools?

- Yes — through my institution (workshops, professional development, etc.)
- Yes — self-directed (online courses, YouTube, peer learning)
- No formal training

Section 2 Current AI use and experience

Q6 Are you currently using AI in any aspect of your academic work?

- Yes, regularly
- Yes, occasionally
- No, but I am actively exploring it
- No, and I am intentionally not using it

Q7 Where are you using AI?

Select all that apply

- Research — writing, analysis, literature review
- Scholarly writing — drafting, editing, structuring arguments
- Grant writing or funding-related work
- Administrative tasks
- Class preparation or teaching-related work
- I am not currently using AI
- Other: ____

Q8 Which best describes your current experience with AI?

- I am actively integrating AI with clear strategies and feel confident in how I use it
- I am experimenting but still figuring out how to use it effectively
- I feel pressure to use AI but lack clear guidance or confidence
- I am unsure how AI fits into my work
- I am intentionally not using AI

Q9 Which best describes how you are currently using AI?

- Basic use — editing, summarizing, drafting
- Intermediate use — structuring research, generating ideas, assignment design
- Advanced use — integrated into workflows, teaching strategy, or research process
- Not currently using AI

Q10 What feels most unclear or unresolved about AI in your work right now?

Open response

Section 3 AI and scholarly writing

Q11 Have you used AI in any part of your scholarly writing process?

- Yes, regularly
- Yes, occasionally
- No, but I am considering it
- No, and I do not plan to

Q12 For what aspects of scholarly writing have you used AI?

Select all that apply

- Overcoming writer's block or getting started
- Drafting sections or full manuscripts
- Editing, revising, or improving clarity
- Structuring arguments or outlines
- Literature review or synthesis
- Responding to reviewer comments
- I have not used AI for scholarly writing

Q13 Rate your agreement with the following statements about AI and your scholarly writing.

Statement 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 = Strongly disagree · 3 = Neutral · 5 = Strongly agree

AI has made me more productive in my writing. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Using AI for writing raises ethical concerns for me. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel comfortable acknowledging AI use in my scholarly work. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AI use in writing feels like it threatens my scholarly identity. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I have clear guidance on what AI use is acceptable in publication. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Section 4 AI in teaching and student assessment

Q14 Have you integrated AI into your teaching?

- Yes
- No
- Planning to

Q15 How have you used AI in your own class preparation?

Select all that apply

- Creating or updating course content or syllabi
- Generating lecture notes, slides, or reading materials
- Designing student assignments or activities
- Creating or revising AI use policies or course guidelines
- Developing feedback or grading rubrics
- Teaching students how to use AI tools responsibly
- I have not used AI in class preparation
- Other: ____

Q16 In what ways do you allow students to use AI in your courses?

Select all that apply

- Freely, for any purpose
- For specific tasks only (e.g., brainstorming or editing — not final writing)
- Not at all — I prohibit AI use in my courses
- It varies by assignment
- I have not set a clear policy

Q17 Who set the AI policy for students in your courses?

- I set my own policy
- My department set the policy
- My school or college set the policy
- There is a university-wide policy I follow
- There is no clear policy — I am navigating it on my own

Q18 What is your perception of how students are using AI to complete class assignments?

- Most students are using it thoughtfully as a learning aid
- Students are using it in ways that reduce the learning value of assignments
- Use is mixed — some thoughtful, some not
- I do not have enough visibility to say

↳ If you have a specific observation or example, briefly describe it.

Open response (optional)

Q19 How has AI impacted student learning in your courses?

Select all that apply

- Students are producing higher quality work with AI support
- Students are completing work more quickly, but depth has decreased
- AI has created more opportunity for creative or complex work
- I have not observed a clear impact yet
- Other: ____

Q20 How do you think AI is impacting student learning in higher education broadly?

- Mostly positive — it is expanding access and capability
- Mixed — benefits and risks are roughly equal
- Mostly negative — it is undermining learning and skill development
- Too early to say

Q21 How has AI changed your approach to student assessment?

Select all that apply

- More in-class or oral assessments
- More project-based or process-documented work
- Redesigning assignments to require critical thinking or personal reflection
- Use of AI detection tools
- Requiring students to document their process or AI use
- No changes yet

Q22 Rate your agreement with the following statements about AI and teaching.

Statement 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 = Strongly disagree · 3 = Neutral · 5 = Strongly agree

I am concerned about students over-relying on AI for coursework. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I explicitly teach students how to use AI responsibly. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AI has forced me to fundamentally rethink what I assess. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AI makes it harder to assess what students actually know. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Section 5 Impact on workload, productivity, and wellbeing

Q23 Approximately how many hours per week do you spend learning, experimenting with, or troubleshooting AI tools?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–3 hours
- 4–6 hours
- More than 6 hours
- I am not spending time on AI tools

Q24 Overall, how has AI affected your workload?

- Significantly reduced my workload
- Somewhat reduced my workload
- No net change
- Somewhat increased my workload
- Significantly increased my workload

Q25 Rate your agreement with the following statements.

Statement 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 = Strongly disagree · 3 = Neutral · 5 = Strongly agree

Keeping up with AI is adding to my stress and cognitive load. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel expected to use AI without adequate support to do so well. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

The pace of AI change is affecting my confidence in my work. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel I can be honest with colleagues about what I don't know about AI. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AI will fundamentally reshape my role as a faculty member. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I am optimistic about the role of AI in higher education. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel prepared for the changes AI will bring. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Q26 Can you describe a specific way AI has changed how you work — positively or negatively?

An example or anecdote is welcome

Open response

Section 6 Institutional support — gaps and costs

Q27 Which of the following has your institution provided related to AI?

Select all that apply

- Clear guidelines or policies on AI use
- Training or professional development
- Examples of effective AI use in teaching or research
- Opportunities to experiment or pilot AI use
- Dedicated time or resources to learn AI
- Spaces to discuss AI openly with colleagues
- Access to institutionally approved tools
- None of the above
- I am not sure

Q28 Rate your agreement with the following statements about your institution.

Statement 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 = Strongly disagree · 3 = Neutral · 5 = Strongly agree

My institution has clear expectations around AI use. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel supported in experimenting with AI tools. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AI-related expectations are consistent across my department or institution. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

My institution is keeping pace with how quickly AI is changing. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

There are sufficient professional development opportunities related to AI. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Q29 Where do you feel the biggest gap in your institution's support around AI?

Select up to 2

- Understanding how to use AI in teaching
- Understanding how to use AI in research or scholarly writing
- Clear expectations or policies
- Time and resources to learn
- Peer community or collegial discussion
- Alignment across the institution
- Access to tools
- I do not feel there is a significant gap

Q30 Which of the following have you experienced as a result of inadequate institutional support around AI?

Select all that apply — this question helps us understand the real cost of the support gap

- Increased stress or anxiety about keeping up
- Feeling isolated or unsure who to ask for help
- Inconsistent or ineffective AI use in my work
- Avoidance of AI even when it might help
- Concern about being evaluated unfairly on AI-related expectations
- None — I feel adequately supported

Q31 What should institutions be doing right now to better support faculty around AI?

Open response

Section 7 AI in research and grant funding

Q32 Have you used AI in any part of the research or grant funding process?

- Yes, regularly
- Yes, occasionally
- No, but I am considering it
- No, and I do not plan to

Q33 How have you used AI in research or funding work?

Select all that apply

- Literature review or synthesis
- Drafting or editing manuscripts
- Grant proposal writing or editing
- Identifying funding opportunities
- Data analysis
- Idea generation or brainstorming
- I have not used AI in research or funding work

Q34 What concerns do you have about AI in research or grant writing?

Select up to 3

- Accuracy and reliability of AI outputs
- Authorship and attribution concerns
- Lack of clear guidance from journals or funders
- Risk to originality or scholarly voice
- Data privacy
- I do not have concerns
- Other: ____

Section 8 Peer norms and the social dimension of AI

Q35 What do you think most of your colleagues in your department are doing with AI?

- Actively integrating AI into their work
- Experimenting but uncertain
- Largely avoiding it
- I genuinely don't know — we don't talk about it

Q36 Rate your agreement with the following statements.

Statement 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 = Strongly disagree · 3 = Neutral · 5 = Strongly agree

I feel comfortable discussing my AI use — or lack of it — with colleagues. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I feel pressure to appear more comfortable with AI than I actually am. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Peer community and collegial discussion have helped me navigate AI. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Faculty at my institution support each other in navigating AI challenges. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Section 9 Voice of the field

Q37 In 2–4 sentences, share your perspective on AI in academia right now. What is most on your mind?

Your response may be featured in the white paper with your permission.

Open response

Q38 What is your biggest hope for AI in higher education?

Open response

Q39 What is your biggest concern?

Open response

Q40 Is there anything else you would like to share about AI and your work as a faculty member?

Open response

Section 10 Follow-up and permissions

Q41 Would you be open to a follow-up conversation for the white paper?

- Yes
- No

Q42 Would you be open to being quoted in the white paper?

- Yes, with my name and institution
- Yes, anonymously only
- No

About NCFDD

Founded in 2010, NCFDD is a faculty development organization that works with colleges, universities, and individual scholars across U.S. higher education. NCFDD partners with institutions and supports faculty, postdocs, and graduate students through the transitions and demands of academic careers.

NCFDD's work treats faculty development as part of an institution's core academic infrastructure rather than as an individual accommodation. That perspective shapes this report. Questions about AI, assessment, workload, and institutional coordination are, at their core, questions about the conditions under which faculty can do their best work.

Our Approach to Faculty Development

Faculty development is most effective when it is responsive to real working conditions. NCFDD's approach emphasizes:

- **Structure that supports focus and follow-through**, even under heavy workload and uncertainty
- **Community-based support** that reduces isolation and normalizes shared challenges
- **Agency and flexibility**, allowing faculty to engage in development in ways that align with their goals, values, and capacity
- **Sustainable practices** that support writing, research, teaching, mentoring, and well-being over the long term

Learn More

Institutions and academic leaders interested in supporting faculty development as core academic infrastructure can learn more about NCFDD's partnerships and resources at www.ncfdd.org.

For questions about institutional partnerships, contact membership@ncfdd.org.

