

To Colorado College Faculty and Staff,

At the start, I want to apologize for the length of the message below. I have been purposefully slow to address AI, and now that I'm doing so, I find I have a lot to say. Feel free to skim to later in this message where I outline how the Writing Center will be approaching AI, and what our tutors would like to see from professors to help us better serve students visiting the Writing Center.

In late March, 2025, a new Generative AI (Gen-AI) trend hit social media: altering photos to mimic Studio Ghibli drawings. The Japanese animation studio has a very appealing style, so users were excited to see themselves [reproduced](#) to look like they were sharing the same world with Totoro, Kiki, or Howl. Of course, users also had the AI make [images of 9/11 and the JFK assassination](#). The trend once again raised questions about [copyright infringement](#) and the very nature of art.

For me, the trend made me ask the same question I've had since Gen-AI was first developed: *What's the point?* Are we really comfortable expending vast resources, environmental and [financial](#), just to have some cute pictures? My distaste for how it's used on social media (and by [lazy lawyers](#)) admittedly clashes with some positive uses in [healthcare](#) and the sciences. It's possible that certain benefits may justify the cost, though I remain skeptical that is the case.

As an educator, I also have to ask, *how is it helping us learn?* [Current research](#) suggests it isn't, and regular use may lead to underperformance on a number of cognitive tests. Yet Gen-AI companies insist it will transform education (in no small part because they want colleges and universities to financially undergird an industry that is [still in the red](#)). The way Gen-AI is currently transforming education is to give us additional headaches. As we all know, some students are using Gen-AI as a way to bypass learning altogether, by having it write text that will give them the grade they want, or summarize readings that they should be carefully reading and analyzing on their own. Where Gen-AI can be useful, by helping get started with research or in providing critiques of an argument or hypothesis, the user already needs strong critical thinking skills to guide the bot and get relevant feedback that a human can then assess and act on.

Though there are ways Gen-AI can be useful, I am not interested in identifying "ethical" uses of Gen-AI. My personal feeling is that Gen-AI, in its current state, is inherently unethical, as they are trained on [stolen content](#), [reproduce harmful biases](#) around things like [race and gender](#), [traumatize and exploit the people](#) who train and moderate AI, [fuel disinformation](#), and produce [negative environmental impacts](#). I also question whether we are actually helping students by using Gen-AI in our college courses, or if we are creating [lifelong customers](#) unable to think or write without an AI subscription. However, I recognize that students are using the programs, as are professionals. Barring any momentous

legislation, court rulings, or a collapse in the tech business model, AI will continue to integrate itself into our lives.

Striking this balance between use and refusal is no easy task. I have developed a handout for students which I hope will provide them some measure of guidance (please contact me if you'd like a copy). According to the college's AI Philosophy, we will be seeing policies and guidelines for students, staff, and faculty, as well.

In the meantime, **the Writing Center will continue our same mission - Treating writing as a process, as an essential part of developing critical thinking in a liberal arts education, and as a way of empowering a student as a person in the world.** In its worst use case, AI treats writing as a product that [sidesteps critical thinking](#) and makes success reliant on for-profit tech enterprises. In the best case, it integrates into the writing process (instead of bypassing it), is guided by the user's critical thinking, and empowers students in achieving their goals. Where AI is encouraged, we will strive to make it fit this best-case scenario.

The Writing Center will operate by three central tenets in regard to AI

1. Writing Center tutors will follow a professor's AI guidelines for a course

As with all assignments, tutors will follow faculty guidelines for written work. Because of this, we are asking professors to include a syllabus statement regarding AI use or non-use that the tutors can refer to for guidance during a session. We held professional development on this topic with tutors and the Honor Council, and **our tutors and the Honor Council are asking for the following items to be addressed in your syllabus statements:**

1. Is AI allowed or not?
2. If so, in what ways can it be used?
 1. Please specify the uses allowed (research, brainstorming, checking on citations) so that tutors know how best to advise students.
3. What is the rationale for the ways it can or shouldn't be used?
 1. Whatever your reason for allowing or disallowing AI, sharing that in your syllabus is an opportunity for the tutor to reaffirm your decision and discuss the implications with your students.

In addition, please specify whether students can use AI to summarize readings and conduct research. This is likely the most common use of AI among students. In some cases, it can be appropriate. In others, it undermines reading as a practice necessary to the discipline. Writing Center tutors are trained to teach basic reading skills and can do so when applicable. We are also near the Tutt Library Research Desk and can refer students to librarians for help with research.

2. When AI use is encouraged or required, the Writing Center will teach students how to use Gen-AI in ways that support learning

A central part of tutoring is asking questions – from “what do you want to work on today” to “how does this topic fit into your thesis?” and everything in between. In this same vein, we will help students with what kinds of questions to ask the Gen AI, and with assessing the AI outputs, all with a focus on learning and critical thinking, not with the purpose of getting a convenient output. Accordingly, when we use prompts, they will be limited to what the professor has allowed, which usually includes background research into a topic, questions of formatting, and sentence-level revision.

We will not be asking Gen-AI to produce text that then goes into the writer’s work, unless explicitly required to do so by the professor.

3. The Writing Center will continue to promote a [Students’ Right to Their Own Language](#) by questioning the biases and language generated through AI

By now, I hope it’s well known that Gen-AI models are built on heavily biased, if not outright [racist and sexist](#), training data. Most companies try to mitigate this problem by training the program to not generate blatantly offensive outputs. Results [vary](#).

Even when a Gen-AI manages to not reproduce the biases present in its training data, the result is often dull, anodyne prose that does not represent a student’s voice. At best, you end up with efficient but uninteresting writing that [homogenizes language](#). At worst, it colonizes writing by setting a standard of “good” writing that strips a writer of the voice that is the gift and strength of their cultural background. Writing Center tutors are trained to acknowledge, affirm, and encourage a writer’s identity. We will continue to do so by pushing back when AI recommends changes that undermine a writer's voice, and to inform writers of the programming biases inherent in Gen-AI.

A final note on adapting to an AI world

For more on ways to address AI in your classroom, please reach out to me, Jennifer Golightly, or Ryan Banagale and the Crown Center. We have resources for better integrating yourself into the student writing process, as well as resources on AI use and AI [refusal](#). I am also happy to sit down and discuss your writing assignments with you, to be a thought partner in how AI may assist or undermine the goals of your writing assignments.

Best,

Chris Schacht

Director, Ruth Barton Writing Center

Colorado College

