Creativity with AI in Education

2025 Report

US Higher Education Edition

Adobe × ADVANIS

Contents

Executive Summary and Key Findings	3
About this Study	10
Creative AI in College Classrooms Today	13
Student Academic Outcomes from Creativity with AI	20
Student Career Outcomes from Creativity with AI	30
Student Personal Outcomes from Creativity with AI	34
Barriers and Opportunities to Increase Student Success	43
References	50
Appendix	52

1 Executive Summary and Key Findings

In a world increasingly shaped by advancements in technology like generative AI, how can we prepare students not only to adapt but to thrive?

This *Creativity with AI in Education 2025 Report* explores the current and potential impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education, focusing particularly on its use for creative thinking, multimedia content creation, and communication skills.

The report highlights the potential of this new technology to enhance student outcomes in key areas, including academics, careers, and personal development factors such as self-expression and well-being.

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative research from 668 faculty across the US, the study offers insights that reveal how generative AI can transform classrooms. This technology has the potential to empower students to connect ideas, express themselves, and build the confidence needed to tackle the challenges of tomorrow. Additionally, the report addresses the varying sentiments regarding AI in the classroom, as well as barriers to its implementation in higher education institutions.

As indicated in the report, the influence of generative AI in education goes beyond mere functionality; it has the potential to enable students to learn more deeply, nurture lifelong curiosity, and pursue new professional and personal opportunities.

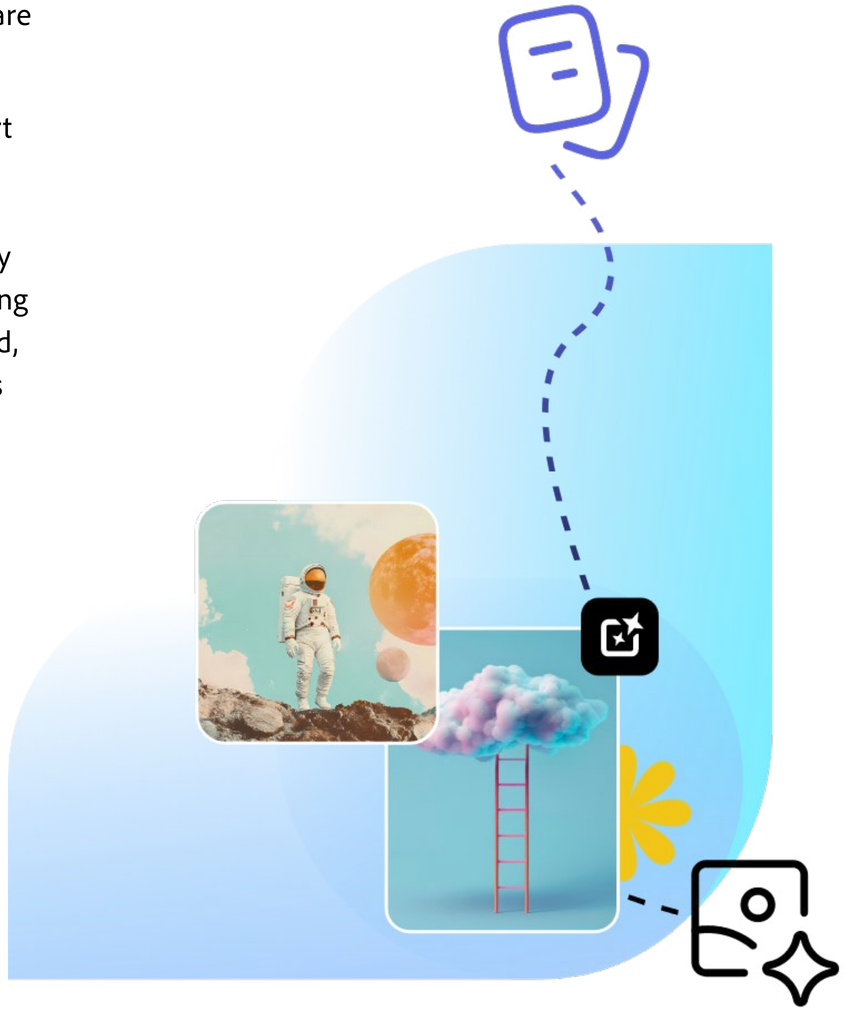
Faculty involved in the study report that creative projects and curricula allow students to bring complex ideas to life, solve intricate problems, and create connections that make learning personal and meaningful.

With generative AI serving as a catalyst for creative thinking, students can move beyond rote memorization. They can embrace opportunities to think independently, develop resilience, and discover the joy of learning in ways that are personally relevant and engaging.

Furthermore, generative AI has the potential to bridge the gap between education, skill development, and career readiness. By providing students with hands-on experience with technologies that are reshaping the workforce, AI literacy can foster adaptability, creative problem-solving, and critical digital skills that employers across various industries prioritize today. This literacy, along with creative skills, also enables students to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives and new forms of employment, ultimately striving for economic stability and equitable mobility.

Lastly, the report emphasizes AI's role in supporting students' well-being by encouraging self-expression, purpose, and emotional growth on campus. In a time when mental health is a pressing concern, AI offers students new avenues to explore their identities, share their voices, and understand their sense of purpose.

By gathering insights directly from faculty, this report illustrates how practical, future-focused learning can equip students with technical expertise while fostering innovative thinking. By merging technology with creativity, faculty in higher education are creating environments where every student feels empowered, capable, and prepared to shape a future that reflects their boundless potential.



Key Findings

1

89%

of faculty report that their students are using creative AI tools for their coursework.

AI has quickly become an essential part of the learning experience in higher education classrooms today. Faculty have observed that students incorporate AI into regular assignments and class projects to enhance their thinking and engage more deeply with their learning.

Faculty note that AI is especially effective in helping students visualize complex ideas and express themselves creatively.

This widespread use highlights the growing potential of generative AI to provide students with modern, relevant learning experiences that resonate with their interests and future career aspirations beyond the classroom.

2 3 4 5

Key Findings

1 2 3 4 5

85%

of faculty believe that generative AI has the ability to increase students' creativity and creative thinking skills.

Initial questions regarding generative AI in the classroom focused on whether this technology would enhance or hinder students' creative thinking. These questions exist alongside broader concerns about students becoming overly reliant on generative AI for skill development.

The study found that when used thoughtfully, generative AI can be a powerful tool for unlocking students' creative potential. It allows them to brainstorm more freely, explore alternative ideas, visualize concepts, and communicate their thoughts in innovative ways.

This emphasis on creativity fosters an environment in which students can embark on imaginative projects, boosting their confidence and curiosity as they bring abstract ideas to life. It also encourages them to take risks and think outside the box.

Key Findings

1 2 3 4 5

92%

of faculty believe that creative literacy is beneficial for enhancing student learning and preparing students for success in college.

Faculty have found that integrating creativity into the curriculum with the help of AI not only sparks student interest but also enhances essential skills and metacognition that are important for every subject, discipline, and career.

By encouraging students to actively engage with the material and make connections across different subjects, AI-supported creative projects help them internalize information and think critically about complex topics. This approach has proven particularly effective in fostering a deeper and more lasting understanding of academic content.

Key Findings

1 2 3 4 5

86%

of faculty believe that learning generative AI for creative or multimedia uses will increase the likelihood of students landing jobs.

AI proficiency is now considered an essential skill for the modern workforce. Many faculty and campuses are working to incorporate AI into the curriculum to provide students with industry-relevant capabilities.

By offering hands-on experience with safe and responsible generative AI tools, faculty in higher education are helping students develop important skills such as adaptability, confidence, and technical expertise, which are increasingly sought-after in various careers.

Faculty emphasize that generative AI can enhance the integration of real-world problem-solving projects and practical applications. This approach not only increases student engagement but also helps students visualize how their skills can be applied in the professional world.

Key Findings

1 2 3 4 5

90%

of faculty believe that generative AI fosters greater creative expression, which positively affects students' well-being and sense of purpose.

Faculty believe that creativity is crucial for mental and emotional development, and generative AI can help eliminate design barriers, boost creative confidence, and enable students to engage in self-expression and explore meaningful projects more frequently and easily.

Faculty observe that AI-based projects enhance students' confidence and create a supportive environment where they feel empowered and valued. Faculty also recognize the potential of generative AI to promote a sense of purpose, belonging, resilience, and confidence in students as they develop into lifelong learners.

2 About the Study

The study examines the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on creativity, critical thinking, career readiness, and personal well-being in education.

It addresses five key questions that reflect the crucial needs of today's education system:

1. How is creative **generative AI** currently being used in college classrooms?
2. How does creative generative AI affect students' **creativity**, creative **problem-solving,** and **communication skills**?
3. In what ways does creative generative AI prepare students for **future careers**?
4. How does learning with creative generative AI influence students' personal **well-being** and **sense of purpose**?
5. What are the main barriers to adoption, and what opportunities exist to enhance student access and **holistic impact**?

Methodology

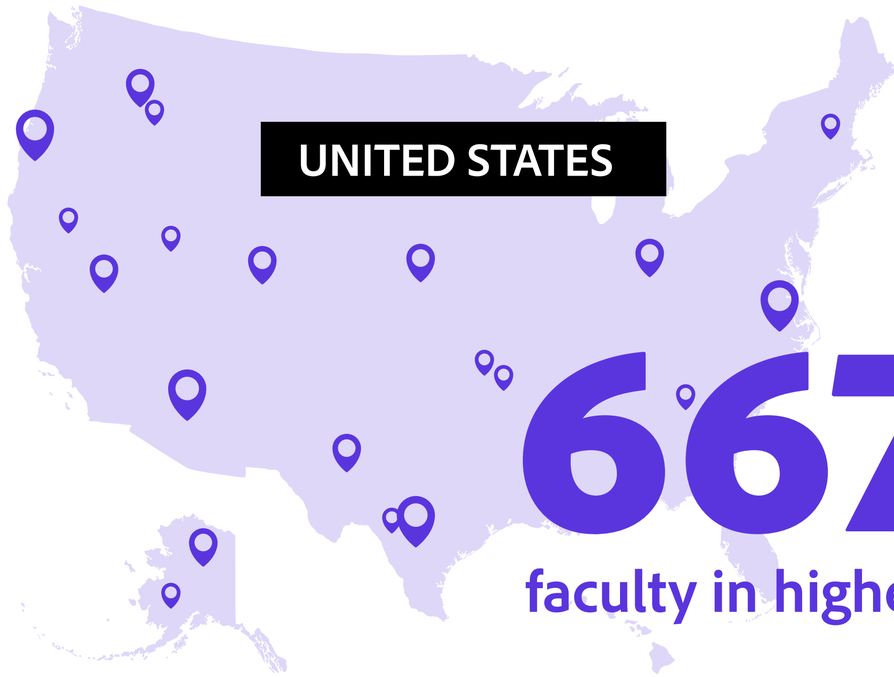
By focusing on these vital areas, the study provides a comprehensive overview of how faculty are leveraging AI to equip students with not only technical proficiency but also the creative confidence and adaptability necessary for success in school, work, and life.

This research was conducted through a comprehensive survey administered by Advanis, an independent research firm, in late 2024.

The full survey sample included 2,801 educators across K-12 and higher education in the US and UK. This special edition focuses specifically on the 667 US higher education faculty who participated in this research. To ensure a balanced representation, it draws insights from faculty from diverse school environments and various subjects, disciplines, and years of teaching experience.

Participants were asked questions regarding the development of creative skills and the use of generative AI by their students for coursework. They shared their observations on the impact of AI and provided expert insights into its benefits and challenges in equipping students with the creative skills necessary for holistic success.

The survey captured both quantitative data and qualitative perspectives, allowing for a thorough understanding of how AI influences the learning experience.



Key Terms

To ensure clarity and consistency, several key terms were defined for participants in the study.

Creativity

The ability to generate original ideas, make meaningful connections, and solve problems in new and innovative ways. In an educational context, creativity includes skills that promote inquiry, exploration, and expression. Importantly, creativity is not limited to artistic expression or design skills; it encompasses creative thinking that spans various subjects and disciplines.

Generative AI

A type of artificial intelligence that produces original content—such as images, text, or multimedia—based on user input. This study focused on generative AI tools that support students in creative projects, offering them new ways to generate ideas, design, and express themselves artistically. Specifically, the study emphasized students creating multimedia content rather than standalone textual or numerical outputs.

AI literacy

A foundational understanding of how artificial intelligence operates and how to interact with it effectively, responsibly, and ethically. This concept can also encompass more advanced computer science skills, including model building.

AI literacy equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate an increasingly AI-integrated world, fostering adaptability and promoting informed digital citizenship.

3 Creative AI in College Classrooms Today

In just a few years since the general release of generative AI technology, it has begun to transform educational experiences across higher education classrooms. This innovation allows students to engage more deeply with creativity, problem-solving, and exploration.

The adoption of various generative AI technologies differs significantly among campuses today. Factors influencing usage include who is utilizing the technology—whether administrators, faculty, or students—and the specific applications, such as administrative tasks, lesson planning, student homework and projects, or assessment and feedback.

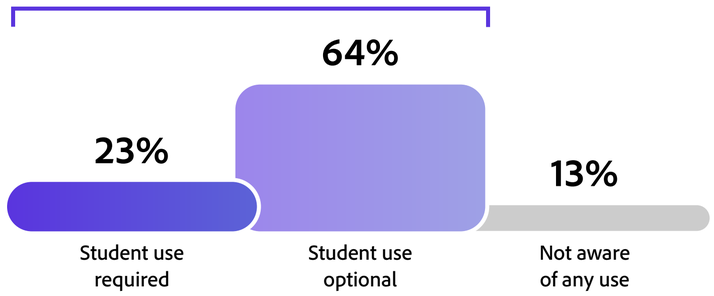
This report found that student usage of generative AI for creativity and content creation in coursework is surprisingly high.

FIGURE 3.1

College student use of generative AI for coursework

87%

of college students are creating with AI for classes.

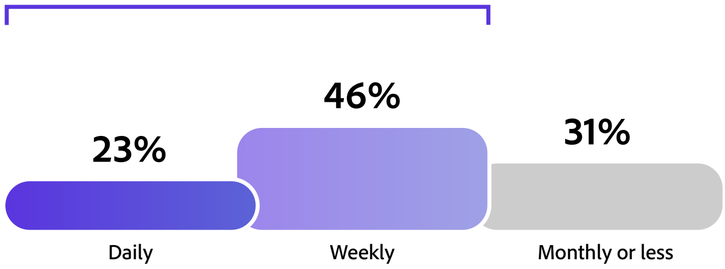


→ "In the past two years, have your students used generative AI tools to create content for assignments in any of your courses?"

Frequency of creative AI usage by college students for coursework

69%

of college students who create with AI for classes do so at least weekly.



→ "In the past year, roughly how often were your students creating content with generative AI in your courses?"

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, 87% of faculty report that their students are using creative AI tools. Additionally, 69% of students are engaging with generative AI in their classes at least once a week.

As a result, AI has become an integral part of the learning experience for many students, helping them to bring abstract ideas to life and encouraging innovative thinking and communication.

Faculty hold a variety of perspectives on student use of creative AI. When asked about their reasons for integrating creative generative AI into their courses, faculty expressed that their motivation stems from a desire to foster curiosity and confidence in students, enhance engagement, deepen understanding, and make self-expression more accessible for those who find it challenging to visualize their ideas in projects or assessments.

There are many ways students can utilize generative AI to enhance their learning process, and faculty are rapidly discovering which methods have the most significant positive impact. When surveyed about the types of activities that could be most enriched by AI, faculty identified the top three: 1) assisting students with brainstorming and ideation, 2) facilitating creative demonstrations of learning, and 3) promoting creative self-reflections (Figure 3.2).

The faculty in this study expressed a keen interest in viewing the learning process as iterative and creative, recognizing that different stages may benefit from AI assistance based on the specific project or the individual growth areas of their students.

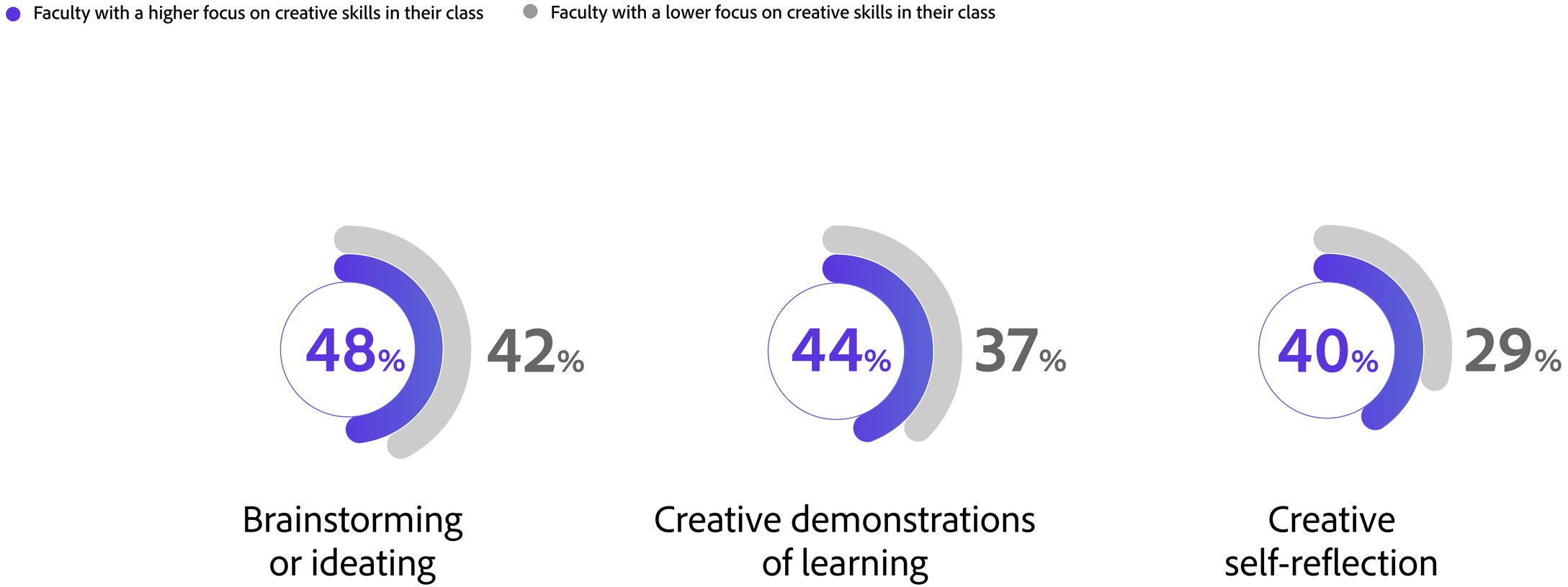
This insight aligns with other preliminary research exploring creativity and AI in education. It suggests that certain aspects of the creative process, particularly brainstorming, can have a notably positive effect on student learning.[1] By focusing on creative engagement during moments of brainstorming, ideation, and the generation of novel ideas or approaches, students are encouraged to take risks, explore new concepts, and learn from their experiences.

The ability to reflect on their creative process, which is ranked third in terms of potential, highlights how generative AI can enhance students' awareness of their own thinking and creativity. This awareness allows students to identify areas for personal growth.

Additionally, using generative AI technology to support creative project-based learning provides students with opportunities to showcase their understanding in ways that are personally meaningful to them.

FIGURE 3.2

Creative thinking activities faculty see as having the greatest potential to be enriched by generative AI



→ "Which of the following creative and self-expression activities or assignments has the most potential to be enriched with the use of AI?"

Use of Generative AI for Creative Skill Development

Creative skills are increasingly recognized as essential in education, yet their integration into college classrooms remains inconsistent. This inconsistency often hinges on available resources, curriculum goals, and individual teaching methods, all of which influence how creativity is prioritized in the learning experience.

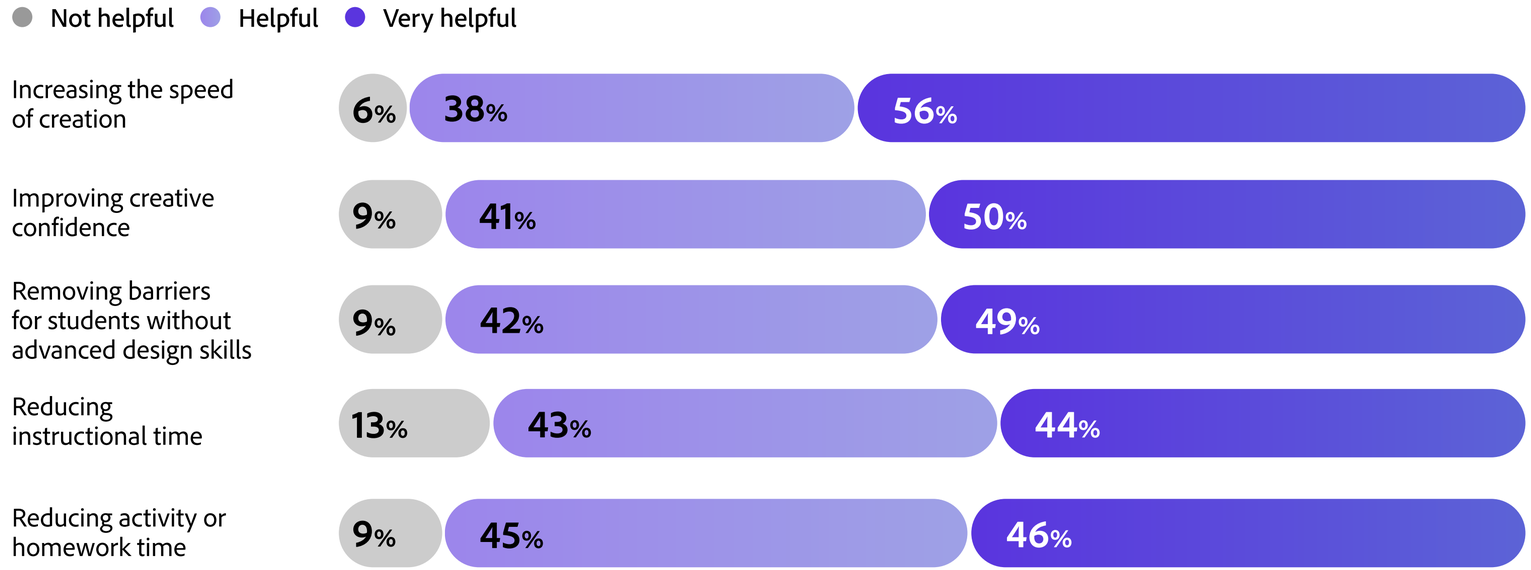
The growing adoption of generative AI in classrooms presents a unique opportunity to enhance the frequency of creative projects and the teaching of creative thinking and communication skills.

Notably, 85% of faculty believe that generative AI can boost students' creativity and creative thinking skills when used thoughtfully.

In particular, the user-friendly nature of AI tools helps eliminate traditional barriers to integrating creativity into the classroom.

FIGURE 3.3

Areas faculty find generative AI helpful to students for creative projects and multimedia assignments



→ "How helpful do you think generative AI can be for students in the following areas?"

Faculty find generative AI especially beneficial for creative projects and multimedia assignments in the following ways:

Increasing the speed of creation
(**94%** helpful / very helpful)

Removing design and communication barriers between a student's great idea and its realization
(**91%** helpful / very helpful)

Improving creative confidence in students to explore and express their ideas
(**91%** helpful / very helpful)

Reducing time students need to create something they are proud of
(**91%** helpful / very helpful)

Decreasing instructional time to teach students manual steps to create from a blank canvas
(**87%** helpful / very helpful)

This increase in productivity is particularly valuable in today's college classrooms, where students often feel overwhelmed by the volume of work. Many routine tasks yield minimal pedagogical impact. AI helps streamline these processes, making it easier for students to approach projects with creativity and depth.

Selection of Appropriate Classroom Tools

Today, campuses follow a range of guidelines and regulations that suggest, approve, or even prohibit certain generative AI tools. In many instances, both faculty and students are making personal choices about which tools will be effective and helpful. In this way, faculty play a crucial role in evaluating these tools on behalf of their students.

With an ever-expanding array of options available, faculty have identified key features and attributes (related to the tool, the model, or the company behind it) that are most important when determining whether a technology is suitable for student coursework, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

This chapter has offered a foundational overview of the current state of generative AI in higher education classrooms, particularly regarding its creative and multimedia applications by students.

The following chapters will explore the reasons behind this usage, focusing on the aspirations faculty have for this new technology to enhance students' academic, career, and personal outcomes.

FIGURE 3.4

Generative AI features higher education US faculty find important for student use in classrooms

96% Student privacy protections

96% The AI model was created ethically and responsibly

96% It's possible to verify whether the outputs were made using AI

96% Industry-standard tool students will use in the future

95% The AI model was trained with anti-bias measures

95% Designed by former faculty with deep faculty input

94% The AI model will not generate inappropriate content

93% There is an education-specific version of the tool

88% Creative outputs cleared for commercial use

86% Company is established, not a startup

→ Percentage of faculty who say the following features are important when deciding whether an AI tool is appropriate for their students to use in their class.

4 Academic Outcomes from Creativity with AI

In addition to delivering benefits such as increased productivity and engagement, any new technology introduced for classroom use must directly address students' academic outcomes. These outcomes can be measured through improved performance on assessments, higher grades, better retention rates, or more holistic indicators such as engagement, confidence, and a love of learning.

For generative AI to effectively tackle significant and longstanding challenges in education, including enhancing essential creative thinking skills, it must be demonstrated that it has a positive impact on student performance in the classroom and beyond.

The findings presented in this section highlight how faculty across higher education are utilizing AI-driven creative projects to improve these critical academic outcomes. This sheds light on AI's potential to make learning more engaging and impactful for students.

Increasing Engagement and Retention

Low student engagement is a significant concern affecting all educational levels today. In the US, 25% to 54% of Generation Z students report that they lack engaging school experiences.[2] In the UK, university students struggle to maintain consistent engagement in their studies, often citing boredom in lectures, assignments, and assessments, which leads to lower attendance and poorer academic performance.[3]

Given these challenges, faculty at all levels are increasingly interested in how generative AI can help reengage students by making learning experiences more relevant, interactive, and creative.

This finding indicates that combining creativity with generative AI can be crucial in addressing the issue of student disengagement. By doing so, faculty can empower students to take more ownership of their learning and express themselves creatively.

93%

of faculty believe that integrating AI literacy into their coursework will enhance student engagement.

58%

of faculty say improved student engagement is one of their primary reasons for having their students use creative AI more frequently.

Faculty participating in this study expressed particular enthusiasm for AI's ability to support personalized and project-based learning. Both approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing student interest and involvement.

> "AI enhances student creativity by offering personalized learning, innovative tools, and instant feedback, enabling them to explore and expand their creative potential."
>
> — US university arts and digital media faculty in California

36%

of faculty in this study reported they are motivated to incorporate creative AI into their curricula because of the positive impact these projects can have on student retention, attendance, and graduation rates.

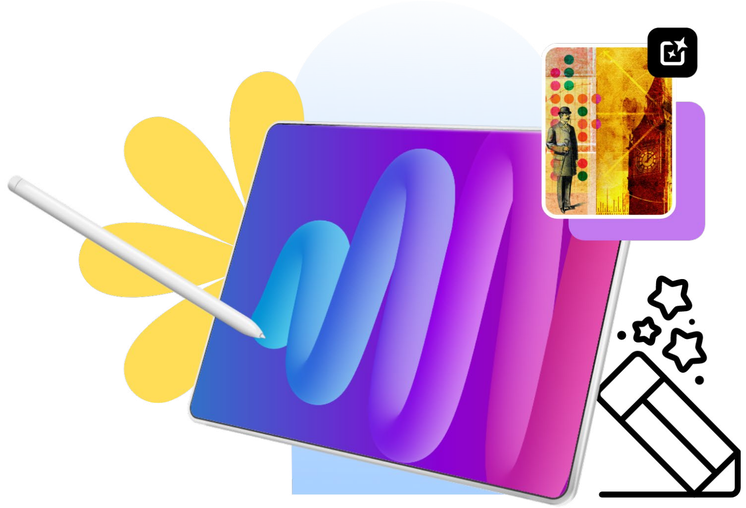
Cultivating Multimodal Communication

A key way to drive engagement is to move students from passive consumers of information to active creators and communicators of their unique and ideas and solutions. According to this report, generative AI has the potential to enhance communication and self-expression.

By offering diverse formats—such as visuals, multimedia, and presentations—AI enables students to communicate in ways that align with their learning styles and personalities, thereby fostering more inclusive and effective learning environments.

Many faculty in this study connect accessibility and inclusion with assessments that depend on communication skills. When students face challenges with confidence or multimedia communication skills, generative AI can equitably ensure that all students can fully express their understanding.

Additionally, developing these multimodal communication skills benefits all students, preparing them for a world that increasingly relies on diverse modalities and multimedia for sharing and consuming information.



50%

of faculty are motivated to incorporate generative AI into their classrooms in order to help students articulate their ideas more effectively and express themselves.

How Creativity Improves Broader Academic Outcomes

Creativity occupies a distinct role among the essential "4 Cs"—alongside critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. At first glance, faculty and parents may overlook creativity as merely an "elective" skill related to the arts rather than as a core competency vital for success across various subjects and industries.

In practice, a classroom that fosters creativity often incorporates a number of creative thinking instructional practices and pedagogical strategies.

Research indicates that many of these practices not only enhance creative thinking but also improve higher-order cognitive and academic skills.[4] In this report, we surveyed faculty to determine how often they incorporate creative practices in their classrooms. We divided the survey respondents into two groups: faculty who focus most on creativity (the top 25th percentile) and faculty who focus least (the bottom 25th percentile). This approach mirrors similar research methodologies used in previous studies (Appendix A).

Top creative thinking instructional practices

- Brainstorming **various approaches or solutions**
- Creating projects that reflect **what students have learned**
- Experimenting with **different methods**, even if they may not succeed
- **Drawing connections** between multiple subjects or classes
- **Generating original ideas** to address a problem
- Working on projects or assignments with **real-world applications**
- **Engaging in discussions** on topics that lack definitive right or wrong answers
- Presenting information or knowledge in **diverse formats or media types**

This segmentation allows us to demonstrate the impact of creative instructional practices on student outcomes. It also emphasizes the potential for generative AI to facilitate more positive outcomes for a greater number of students.

As shown in Figure 4.1, faculty who deploy more creative activities in their classrooms report significant increases in their students' weekly demonstration of other essential skills compared to faculty with a lower focus on creativity:

- Deep learning of subject matter (+37%)
- Resilience (+14%)
- Curiosity (+37%)
- Making connections between subjects (+34%)
- Knowledge retention (+35%)
- Problem-solving (+16%)
- Critical or analytical thinking (+22%)

87%

of faculty believe that creative AI fosters deeper learning by enabling students to examine topics from various perspectives and encouraging the integration of knowledge across different disciplines.

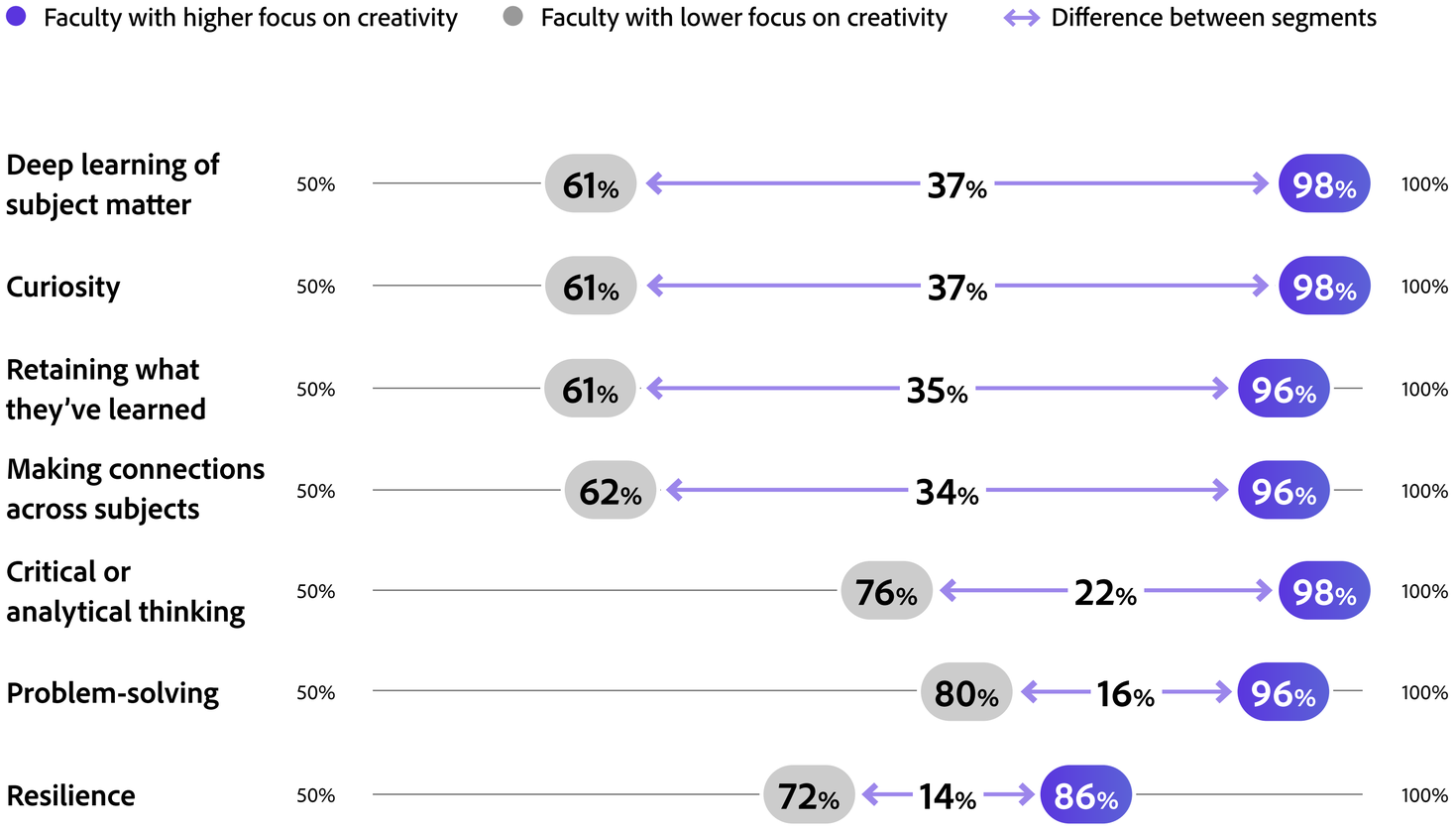
Faculty in this study offered valuable insights into why these creative activities have such a wide-ranging impact beyond fostering creativity and the role of generative AI in enhancing those benefits.

Faculty who incorporate more creative activities in the classroom are often attracted to the hands-on nature of AI projects. These projects require students to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways, which enhances their engagement with the content. As a result, students tend to perform better academically and experience deeper learning as they actively process and internalize information.

AI also offers new approaches for analyzing and solving problems, empowering students to experiment and take intellectual risks. This willingness to explore contributes to a deeper understanding and improved retention of the material.

FIGURE 4.1

Percentage of higher education faculty in the US who report that their students demonstrate each cognitive skill at least weekly



→ "How often do your students demonstrate the following cognitive skills?"

Assessment and Grading of Creative Work Produced with AI Assistance

The introduction of generative AI into classrooms is significantly reshaping how faculty approach assessment and grading. This shift is prompting campuses to re-evaluate the emphasis they place on rote memorization and routine tasks.

Part of this transformation is driven by the acknowledgment that generative AI is particularly effective at assisting with these types of tasks, similar to how calculators changed perspectives on the importance placed on manual mathematical computation.

However, an important discussion is emerging on campuses regarding the balance between generative AI as a tool to assist and its potential to replace essential skills. This conversation has sparked considerable caution and thoughtfulness about how and where generative AI is integrated into learning and assessment practices.

By the end of 2024, discussions about generative AI, assessments, and concerns about cheating have focused primarily on traditional assessments like essays, multiple-choice questions, and computations involving text-to-text or text-to-code generative AI. However, when it comes to creative projects, collaborative work, or multimodal assessments, the conversation takes a different direction. For these more comprehensive and holistic assessments, there is typically a strong emphasis on the process students use, including feedback rounds, rather than solely evaluating the final product or outcome.

Many innovative generative AI tools designed for multimedia creation utilize technologies like embedded Content Credentials. These credentials provide metadata that reveals how the content was created, whether AI was employed, and whether the content was edited or credited.

59%

of faculty believe that cheating is a lesser concern when it comes to using AI for creative or multimedia projects.

84%

of faculty believe that feedback on the creative process is more important than grading the final result, particularly for multimedia and creative projects.

This suggests that creative AI projects, which often produce unique and personalized results, are less vulnerable to traditional forms of academic dishonesty.

Additionally, 83% of faculty in this study express confidence that students can learn to disclose their use of AI, similarly to how they handle attribution and citations, especially employing technology that helps them show how they used AI.

Faculty also observe that students are more inclined to take ownership of AI-driven creative projects. They view these projects as genuine self-expression opportunities rather than simply assignments that need to be completed for the "right answer."

Assessment can often be a mundane or personally unfulfilling task for faculty, especially when it comes to evaluating multiple-choice questions or routine student assignments. In contrast, many faculty gain deep personal satisfaction from assessing creative work. In fact, 85% of them believe that providing feedback on creative projects is more meaningful than grading exams or essays.

Faculty also report that creative projects offer them greater insights into their students' personalities, strengths, and areas for improvement.

At a time of increasing faculty burnout and a need for more authentic connection and well-being in the classroom, the intellectual exchange of ideas between students sharing their creative work and faculty providing feedback can create powerful opportunities. This interaction not only enhances the effectiveness of projects and assessments but also makes them more meaningful.

96%

of faculty believe **the ability to verify if outputs were generated using AI is crucial** when determining whether an AI tool is suitable for classroom use.

Evaluating creative work, whether it involves AI or not, presents unique challenges for faculty who may lack training in providing process-based feedback or assessing creative and multimodal projects.

In fact, 86% of faculty indicate that they need rubrics or guidelines to assist them in grading AI-assisted creative work.

This evolving approach to assessment reflects a broader trend in higher education, where grading practices are moving away from static, outcome-based evaluations and toward dynamic, process-oriented feedback.

As generative AI continues to influence the learning environment, faculty are reconsidering grading methods to acknowledge not only final assignments but also various learning artifacts. These artifacts demonstrate how students engage with the learning process and reflect on their thinking in metacognitive ways.

> **“Generative AI with creativity helps my students get different views and helps their thinking process.”**

— US college engineering faculty in Missouri

5 Career Outcomes from Creativity with AI

In today's rapidly changing job landscape, campuses play a crucial role in preparing students for meaningful career success in the age of AI.

From generative AI to augmented and virtual reality, new technologies are transforming every career and every aspect of the human experience.

Today's students are the first generation empowered to use these tools to enhance productivity, reduce routine tasks, and foster creative thinking, innovation, and collaboration. This technological empowerment opens new doors to career paths that were previously inaccessible or did not exist.

Integrating AI into creative projects offers students more than just an education; it provides a vital competitive edge that aligns them with the expectations of modern employers.

Within just three years of the general release of generative AI tools, 66% of industry leaders now report that they would not hire someone without AI skills.[5] Additionally, creative thinking is projected to be the most important skill by 2027, making it essential across various fields, including healthcare and engineering.[6]

The rapid rise of AI in the workplace, combined with the increasing demand for creative skills, highlights career opportunities for students that extend far beyond traditional "creative" roles.

Classroom projects that incorporate AI literacy equip students with highly relevant competencies such as brainstorming, storytelling, and multimedia communication, all of which are applicable across various industries, including finance, healthcare, and education.

Acquiring Essential Creativity and AI Career Skills

In our study, 83% of faculty believe that teaching students how to use generative AI for creative or multimedia projects will enhance their chances of securing jobs in the increasing number of careers that require these skills.

Many faculty recognize that AI literacy contributes to students' career readiness by fostering essential skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and creativity—skills that are vital for success in nearly every industry.

Additionally, 38% of faculty indicate that improved career prospects for students is a key reason for encouraging the use of AI in creative or multimedia projects. By fostering confidence in creative problem-solving and communication skills, faculty can help students enter the workforce equipped with abilities that distinguish them from previous generations.

Addressing Underemployment with Durable Skills

Underemployment and skill mismatches pose significant challenges for recent graduates, as many find themselves in jobs that do not require a degree or fully utilize their potential.

In the United States, approximately 40% of recent college graduates are underemployed; alarmingly, 73% of those who start underemployed remain in that situation 10 years after graduating.[7]

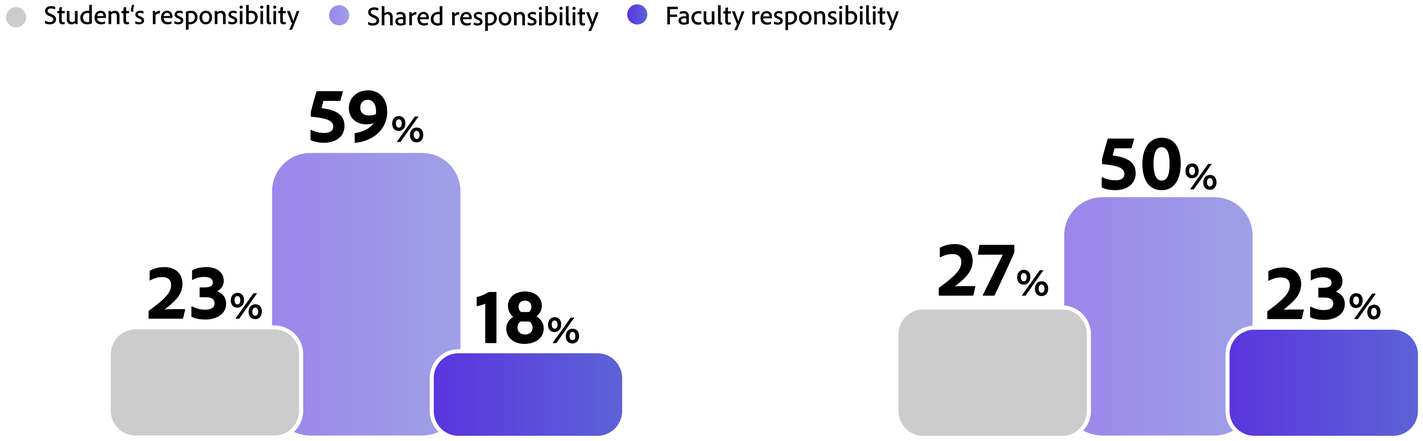
In the United Kingdom, over one-third of college graduates end up in low-skilled jobs, resulting in lower levels of job and life satisfaction.[8]

The financial consequences of this trend are considerable: underemployed recent graduates in the US earn about $10,000 less each year compared to their peers working in roles that require a degree.[7]

In light of these realities, faculty are increasingly recognizing their responsibility not only to prepare students academically but also to ensure that they are career-ready.

FIGURE 5.1

Perceived responsibility for cultivating college student creativity and AI skills for career success



Responsibility for developing creative thinking skills

→ "To what degree do you see it as your responsibility to set students up to pursue a wide variety of careers with transferable skills like creative thinking?"

Responsibility for developing generative AI skills

→ "To what degree do you see it as your responsibility to set students up to pursue a wide variety of careers with transferable skills like generative AI?"

In this study, faculty express a significant sense of responsibility for equipping their students with creativity and AI skills necessary for career success (see Figure 5.1).

They view AI-supported creative projects as valuable opportunities that allow students to explore career paths that align with their interests and ambitions.

When selecting the right generative AI tools for their classrooms, faculty consider the employable skills they want to equip students with, ensuring that they gain fluency in industry-standard tools.

With the rapid increase of new generative AI tools available, many of which have uncertain longevity, 88% of faculty emphasize the importance of using tools developed by established companies rather than startups. This is to ensure the durability of the technical skills students acquire.

Additionally, whether students aim for careers in companies or as entrepreneurs or freelancers, faculty recognize the value of training students on tools suitable for professional use. For instance, 88% of faculty find it important to teach students how to use tools that allow their creative outputs and projects to be cleared for commercial purposes.

Beyond skill development, creative AI also allows students to explore their personal interests and find a sense of purpose in their work. By engaging in projects that resonate with their unique aspirations, students can identify meaningful and sustainable career pathways aligned with their interests and ambitions.

This commitment to supporting students' career opportunities was a recurring theme among faculty participating in this study. They discussed their own professional purpose and the sense of accomplishment that extends beyond immediate indicators like grades.

96%

of faculty believe it is important for students to use industry-standard tools that they are likely to encounter in their future careers involving generative AI. Among these, 57% regard this as "very important."

6 Personal Outcomes from Creativity with AI

With the rise of disruptive technologies and the emergence of global social, economic, and environmental challenges, the next generation is striving to find their place and purpose in a rapidly changing world.

As a result, educational institutions are increasingly attempting to address the observed lack of purpose and diminished personal well-being among youth.

Research indicates that 80% of young people lack a clear sense of purpose, which negatively impacts their mental health and resilience.[9] This issue does not seem to improve over time; college students report similar struggles, with over half stating that they lack direction in their lives, an issue that contributes to ongoing mental health challenges.[10] Furthermore, 95% of college graduates consider having a sense of purpose in their careers essential, yet only 40% feel that they have achieved it.[11]

Addressing these issues requires more than academic solutions; it necessitates a focus on how campuses can support students' holistic well-being, mental health, and broader sense of purpose.

This report builds on previous research demonstrating how creativity can enhance well-being, particularly for students and faculty. How can creativity, assisted by AI, create new opportunities for students to express themselves, discover their passions, and explore their sense of purpose in ways that may positively impact their well-being?

Creativity's Impact on Mental Health and Well-being

Creative activities in the classroom have been shown to benefit mental health and reduce stress for both students and faculty.[12,13] Recent research shows that 95% of faculty believe that encouraging creativity improves mental health and lowers stress levels for themselves and their students.[14]

These findings show that incorporating creative projects in the classroom can support academic growth and help address youth well-being challenges.

AI-powered tools that streamline creative projects and promote equity can help faculty dedicate more time to their students' personal development, ultimately enhancing the well-being of both faculty and students.

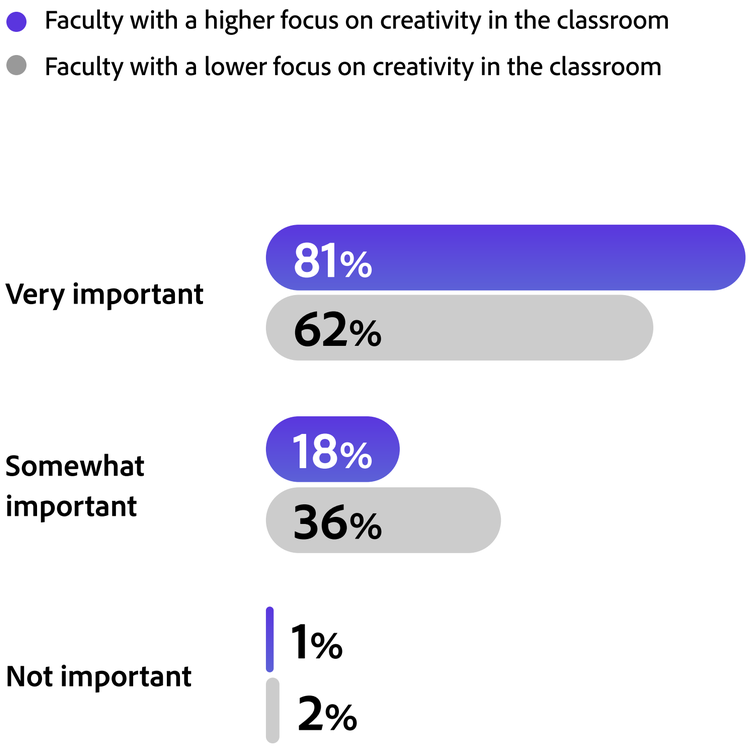
> "Many students have creative visions but lack the skillsets to make them come to fruition. Using AI, students can bring their vision to life. Since creativity is natural, when a student completes an endeavor using AI, she feels a sense of accomplishment, increasing her sense of well-being."
>
> — US community college math and computer science faculty in Texas

82%

of faculty who utilized creative activities in their classrooms last year reported positive effects on student well-being and engagement, leading to increased faculty satisfaction and reduced burnout.

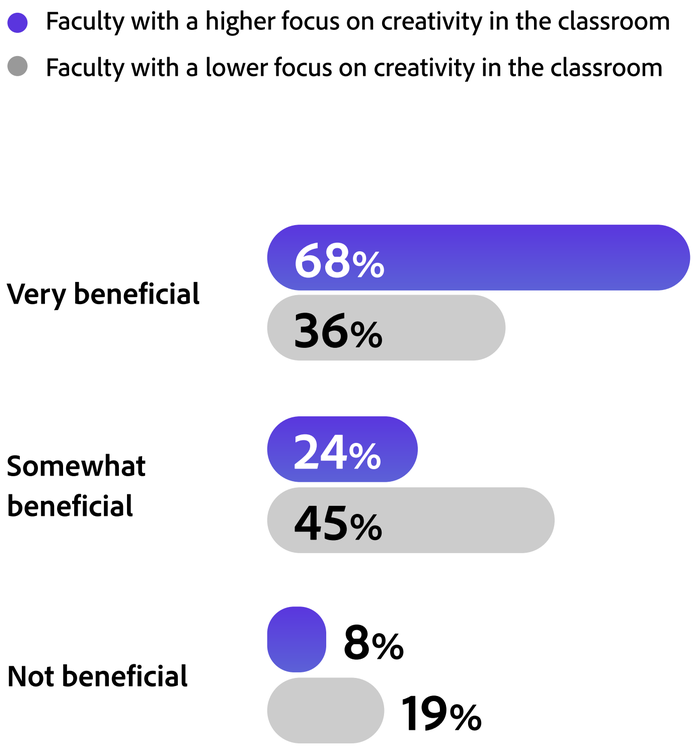
FIGURE 6.1

How important faculty find creativity and self-expression to be for the well-being of their students and themselves



→ "How important do you believe creativity and self-expression are in fostering both faculty and student well-being?"

How beneficial faculty believe creating with generative AI can be for the well-being of their students and themselves



→ "If students learn AI literacy, how beneficial do you believe it will be for their self-expression and personal well-being?"

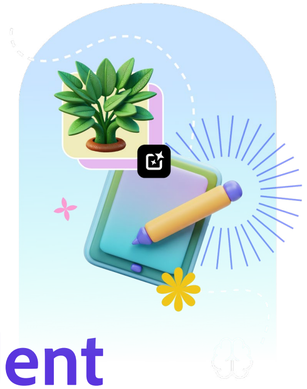
In this study, 99% of faculty report that creativity and self-expression are important for fostering well-being in both themselves and their students, with 69% stating that it is “very important.”

To enhance the benefits of creativity, 88% of faculty believe that learning AI literacy for creative work can also significantly improve student self-expression and personal well-being. Additionally, 51% of faculty reported that this outcome is “very beneficial” when generative AI is integrated effectively.

Faculty who emphasize creative thinking and activities in their courses tend to recognize the significant impact that creativity—both with and without the aid of generative AI—can have on the well-being of both themselves and their students, as shown in Figure 6.1.

The potential of creative activities in the classroom to unleash student self-expression, foster personal connections with faculty and peers, and help students find meaning in their daily experiences is immense.

This is an exciting field for further exploration. Future research could help identify which types of activities or curricula are most effectively enhanced by generative AI to promote positive outcomes for both students and faculty.



> “AI can significantly contribute to student well-being and a sense of purpose by enhancing their creativity and self-expression in various ways. It can help students express themselves, building confidence with creative wins, exploring identity and finding purpose, reducing stress.
>
> Whether it’s offering a safe space for self-expression, building their confidence, or helping them connect with others. AI can be a powerful ally in supporting student well-being.”

— US university business faculty in Georgia

The Power of Purpose: A Foundation for Self-Discovery and Growth

A person's sense of purpose significantly impacts their well-being and personal fulfillment. Opportunities to explore this sense of purpose can profoundly influence the lives of students. Purpose can be defined in various ways, such as having a central, self-organizing aim in life.[15] Individuals with a strong sense of purpose can often identify what matters most to them and set goals aligned with those values, enabling them to lead more purpose-driven lives.[15]

In addition to enhancing mental well-being, a robust sense of purpose is linked to numerous positive health outcomes, including improved sleep.[16]

Moreover, a strong sense of purpose is essential not only for health but also for creativity. Research indicates that engaging in creative activities—whether they involve designing solutions or innovating in new ways—is one of the primary methods through which people find meaning in their lives.[15]

In the classroom, creative AI offers students the chance to explore these pathways, helping them understand and define their personal and professional sense of purpose from an early age. Faculty, who are often driven by a strong sense of purpose themselves, are increasingly recognizing that fostering a sense of purpose in students is crucial for their success and overall well-being.

Research studies typically assess an individual's sense of purpose in life through surveys that include statements like, "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life" and "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them."

For this study, we adopted a similar approach by asking respondents to react to various statements using a scale. This allowed us to create an overall purpose index and categorize respondents into two groups: those in the highest quartile as "Faculty with a high sense of purpose" and those in the lowest quartile as "Faculty with a low sense of purpose."

This methodology reveals insightful correlations between an a faculty member's personal sense of purpose and their dedication to fostering a sense of purpose in their students. This commitment often

involves integrating activities into the curriculum that promote creative self-expression, utilizing multimodal assessments, and providing personalized opportunities for students to connect the subject matter to topics, skills, and real-world applications that hold significance for them.

Almost half of faculty believe this responsibility is shared with students, emphasizing the importance of collaborative approaches that foster students' growth and self-discovery. Creative activities—especially those facilitated by generative AI—are becoming a powerful way to achieve this.

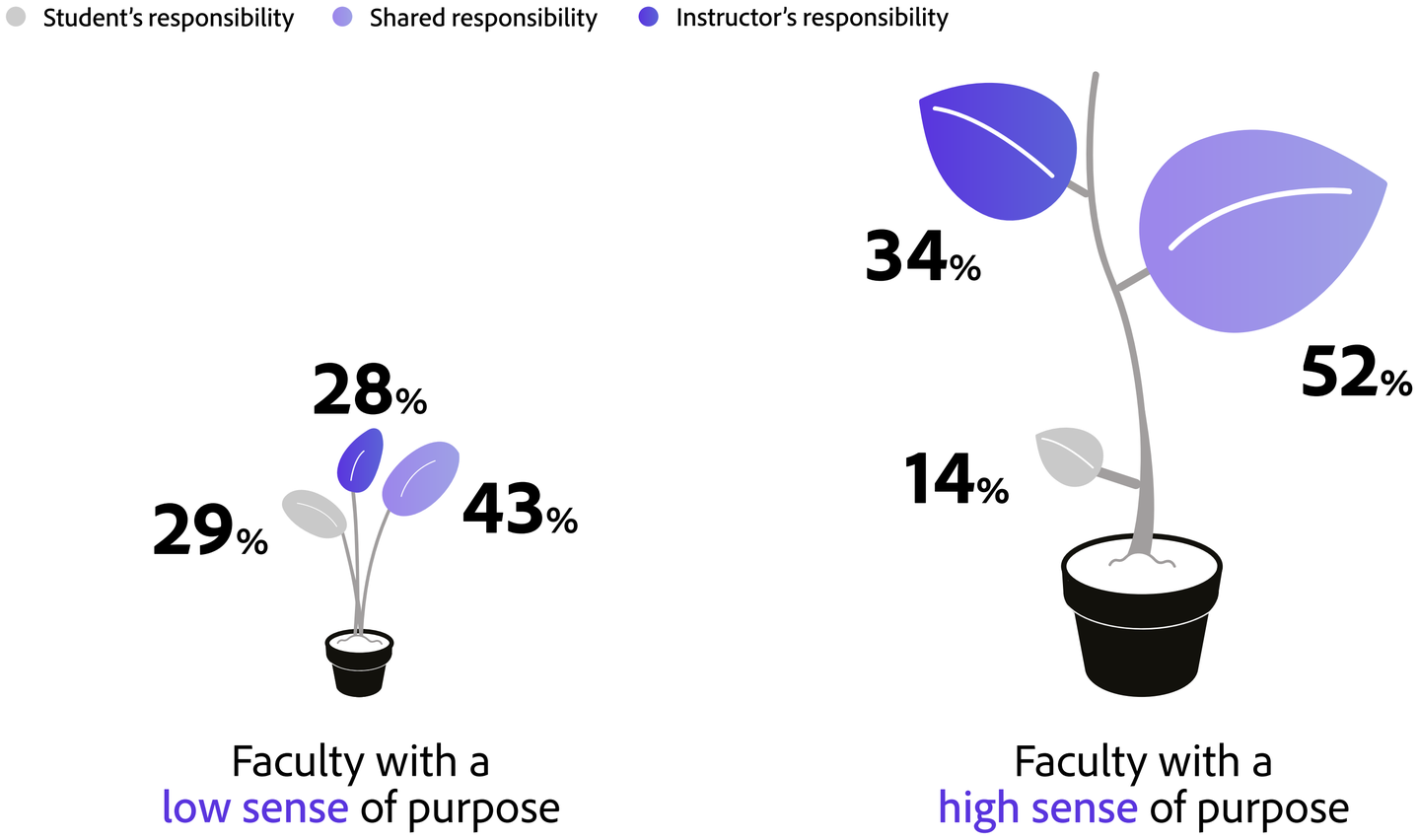
Creative self-expression, supported by AI, allows students to engage in projects that resonate with them personally, which promotes emotional well-being and resilience.

As previously mentioned, the next generation is deeply invested in ensuring that their careers have a sense of purpose. However, without a clear understanding of what motivates them and what they truly care about, it becomes difficult for students to make career decisions that are driven by purpose.

FIGURE 6.2

The higher a faculty member's sense of purpose, the more they see it as their responsibility to instill a sense of purpose in their students

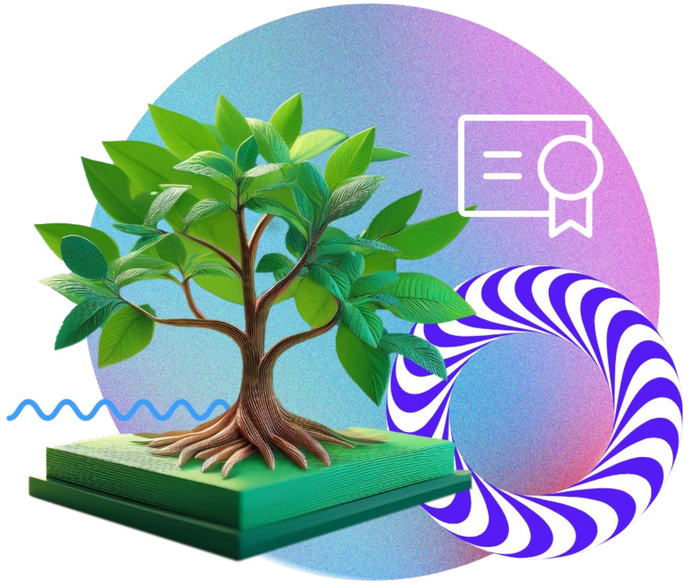
"To what degree do you see it as your responsibility to give students the opportunity to explore their sense of purpose?"



As shown in Figure 6.3, a faculty member's sense of responsibility for preparing students for careers is significantly shaped by their own personal sense of purpose. Faculty who possess a sense of purpose tend to be more dedicated to teaching skills such as creative thinking and generative AI. They are also more likely to explore potential career pathways that these skills can support.

AI tools, such as text-to-image software and digital art applications, enable students to express their creative visions without being constrained by their technical skills. This availability offers immediate validation and a sense of accomplishment.

These enriching experiences allow students not only to explore their unique interests but also to cultivate resilience by fully engaging with projects because they are personally meaningful to them. By integrating creative AI tools across the campus and curriculum, we can offer consistent support for self-discovery and personal development.



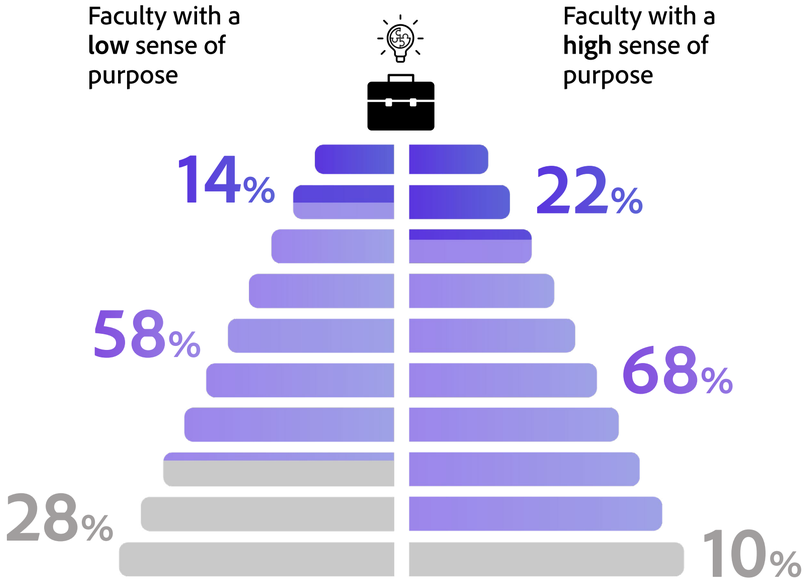
86%

of faculty with a high sense of purpose feel it is their responsibility to help their students explore their own sense of purpose, compared to only 71% of faculty with a low sense of purpose.

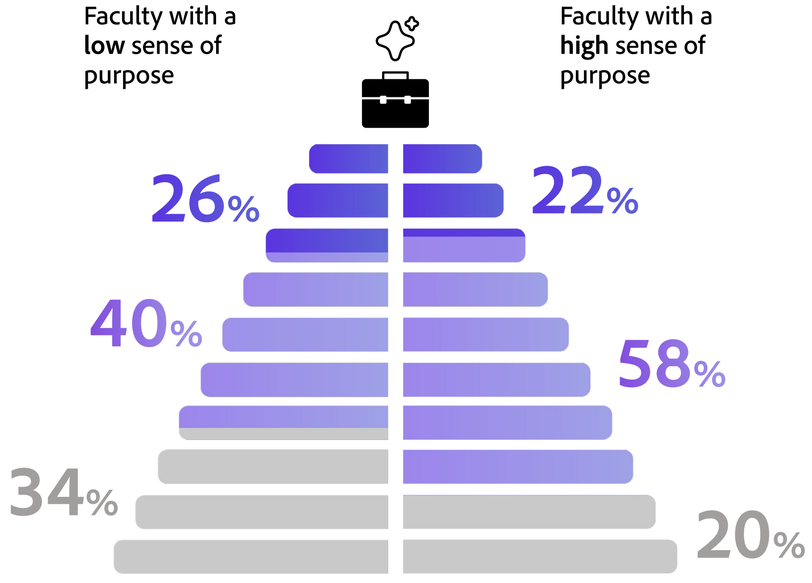
FIGURE 6.3

How a faculty member's sense of purpose influences their commitment to student career exploration

Student's responsibility Shared responsibility Instructor's responsibility



Responsibility for developing creative thinking skills



Responsibility for developing generative AI skills

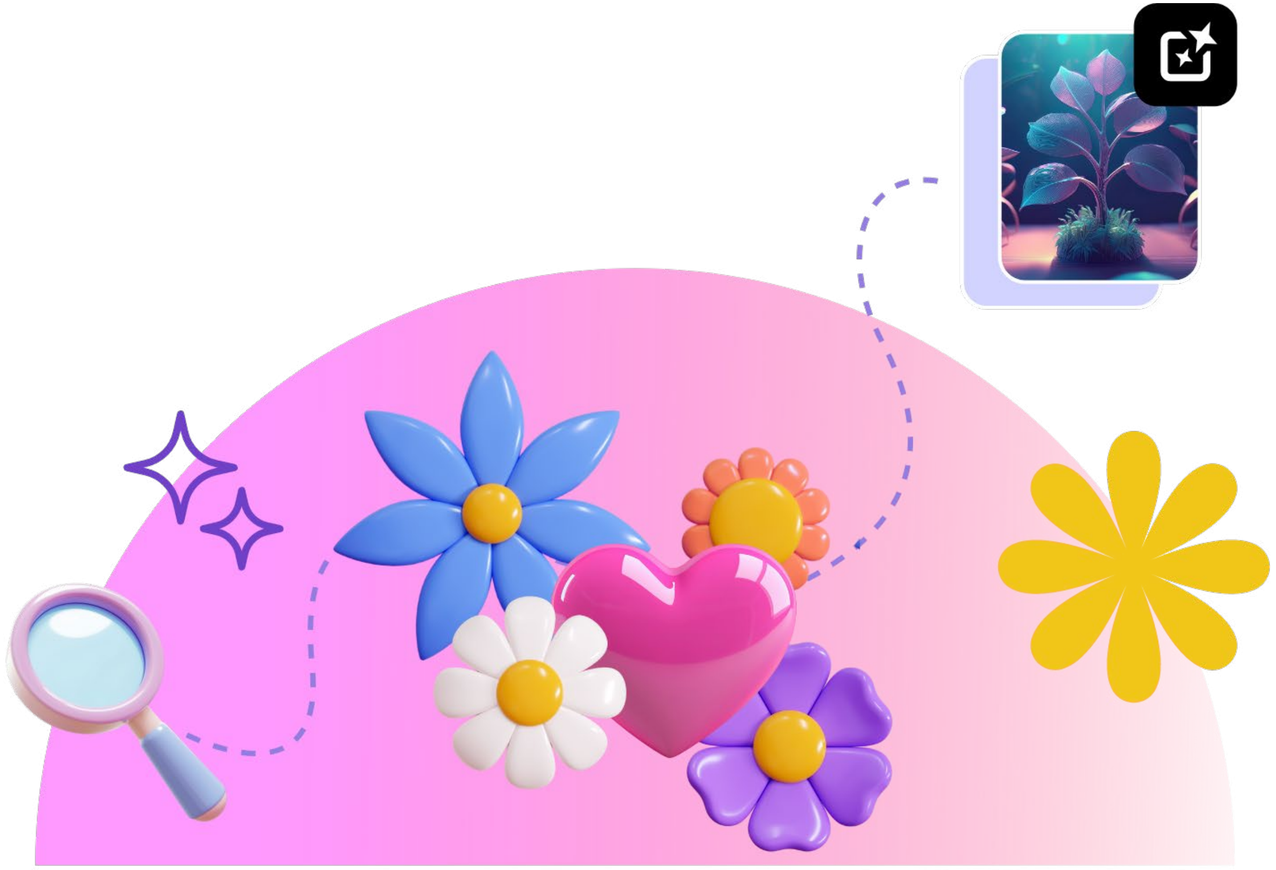
→ "To what degree to do you see it as your responsibility to give students the opportunity to develop creative thinking or generative AI skills?"

Building a Brighter Future: Empowering Students with Digital Creative Skills and Purpose

In today's world, purpose and well-being are crucial. Helping students develop them requires holistic approaches that go beyond traditional academic goals. By incorporating creative AI in education, we are not only teaching technical skills but also empowering students to discover meaning, build confidence, and develop resilience that will benefit them throughout their lives.

This generation of students has a unique opportunity to use generative AI to express themselves, explore their interests, and make meaningful contributions to the world around them.

With tools for creativity and AI readily available, students have new ways to navigate today's challenges with purpose and hope, preparing them to lead fulfilling and impactful lives.



7 Barriers and Opportunities to Increase Student Success

As more AI tools emerge in educational settings, faculty and campus leaders are carefully evaluating which features make these tools effective, safe, and responsible for classroom use.

This assessment goes beyond functionality; it addresses fundamental concerns related to academic integrity, student safety, change management, and the necessary resources for integrating new technology.

Despite their enthusiasm for AI's potential, faculty encounter significant barriers to the widespread adoption of AI tools. Limited budgets, complex IT approval processes, and inconsistent AI policies often hinder the realization of AI's transformative possibilities in campuses.

Identifying these barriers is the first step, but overcoming them requires a unified effort across education, industry, and government to bridge these gaps and unlock the full value that AI offers to both students and faculty.

Top Barriers to Adoption and Leading Solutions

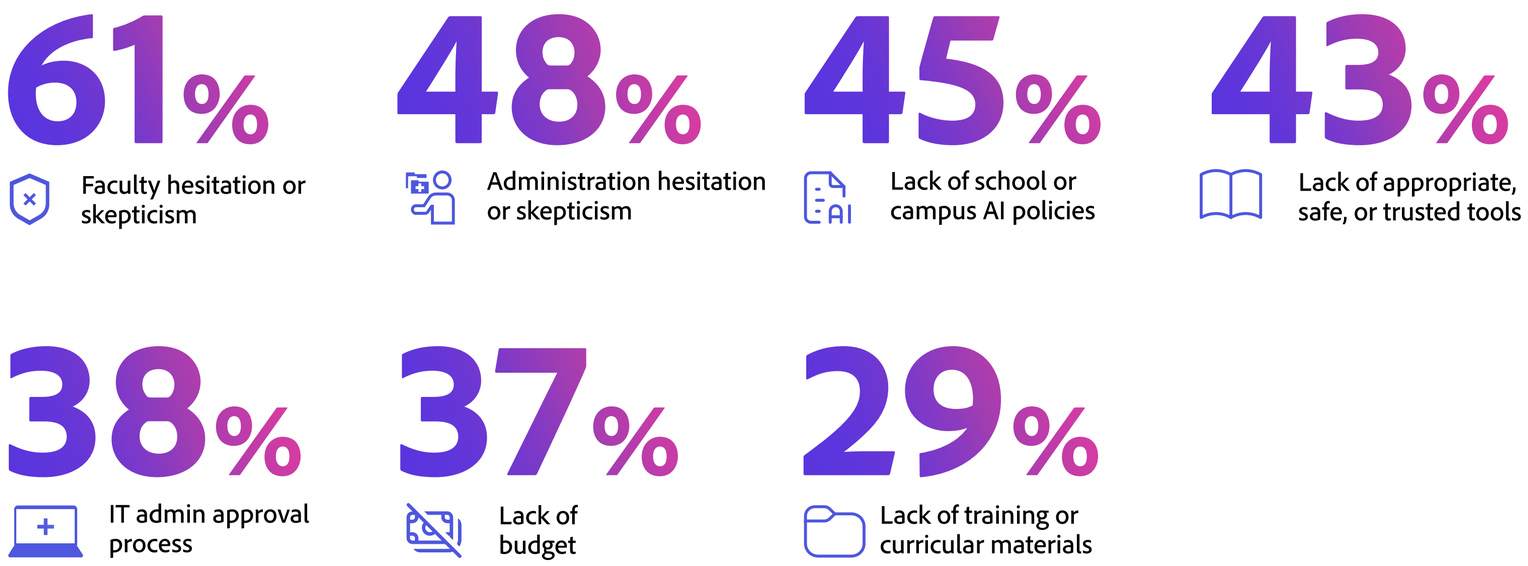
One of the aims of this report was to consider how faculty can find a balance between the opportunities presented by creative generative AI in the classroom and the existing barriers that hinder its accessible and equitable use for themselves, their colleagues, and their campuses. Figure 7.1 illustrates some of the top barriers faculty reported.

In light of these barriers, faculty in this study offered insights into their characteristics. They also suggested practical solutions to address these barriers, enabling students to fully benefit from the positive outcomes associated with creative generative AI.

FIGURE 7.1

Top barriers to adoption of creative generative AI in the classroom

Percentage of faculty who ranked a factor as a "top 5" barrier to a broader adoption at their school or campus.



→ "What are the biggest barriers to broader adoption of creative generative AI at your school or campus? (rank)"

1. Faculty and administrator skepticism

As with any new technology, the initial learning curve often brings hesitancy, skepticism, and concerns about disruptions to established norms, as well as the costs associated with managing such changes.

Generative AI seems to be particularly impacted by this pattern of adoption. This is partly due to the complexity of the technology and the varying levels of AI literacy among administrators, faculty, and students.

In this study, faculty highlighted that hesitancy and skepticism toward generative AI are the main barriers to its wider acceptance. Hesitancy from faculty, administrators, and campus leadership were listed as the top two barriers to broader adoption.

Proposed solutions to overcome these challenges focused on professional development and raising awareness to enhance understanding of AI. This includes addressing key concerns and dispelling common misconceptions.

INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS SHARED BY FACULTY ON SHIFTING MINDSETS AROUND GENERATIVE AI

> “Administrators need to check their bias against AI and realize that it is a useful tool and not a threat. Then they would hold PD or seminars for faculty.”
>
> — US arts and digital media faculty in New York

2. IT approval and policies

Faculty today often face challenges in obtaining IT and administrative approval for new AI tools, resulting in slow or stalled processes. This is typically complicated by inconsistent or nonexistent policies. Faculty are seeking more agile processes and clearer guidelines on when and how they can incorporate AI into their learning environments across various subjects and disciplines, particularly in ways that promote equitable access.

Current policies regarding AI in education often focus on restricting its use to prevent cheating or misuse. While preventing cheating is important, many faculty in this study noted that these restrictions can unintentionally stifle innovation and hinder the potential benefits of AI for student engagement and learning outcomes.

By evolving AI policies to support positive applications—such as encouraging creative projects, collaborative work, and critical thinking exercises using AI—campuses can create an environment where AI enhances rather than disrupts education.

INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS SHARED BY FACULTY ON SHIFTING MINDSETS AROUND GENERATIVE AI

> “Create a campus-wide policy—either we all use it, or we don’t. Otherwise, it’s too confusing to students.”
>
> — US business faculty in Mississippi

3. Cross-curricular frameworks and curricula for AI literacy and creative projects

In many campuses, the skills related to generative AI are not yet integrated into the curriculum, creating challenges for faculty who wish to introduce these concepts. However, AI literacy frameworks, developed in collaboration with educational technology providers and nonprofit organizations, are starting to facilitate the meaningful integration of AI into academic and campus programs.

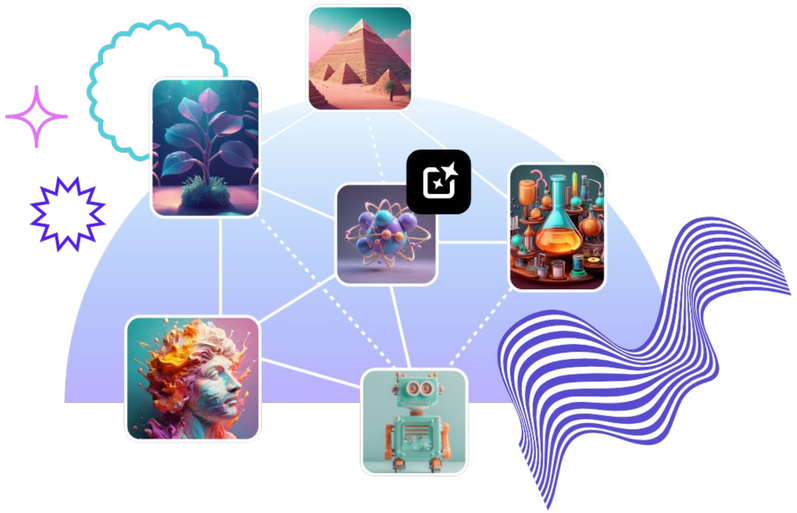
Many faculty involved in this study observed that the integration of AI is still limited to specific subjects, disciplines, or courses. This siloed approach makes it difficult to connect AI literacy with transferable skills like creative thinking and to support interdisciplinary projects or programs. Additionally, there is a significant need for more comprehensive frameworks, curricula, and resources focused on AI literacy to foster creative thinking and expression.

Industry and educational partners, through initiatives like TeachAI, are working to establish policy guidance and AI literacy frameworks and curricula that balance the needs of faculty and students. The goal is to promote the use of AI as a safe and enriching tool in the classroom.

INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS SHARED BY FACULTY ON SHIFTING MINDSETS AROUND GENERATIVE AI

> “School leaders need to give approval for students to use AI across the curriculum, not for certain subjects only.”
>
> — US college interdisciplinary faculty in Ohio

> “We’ve had several teaching-related conversations about AI in the classroom in the more general sense, but less for creative outputs.”
>
> — US college social science faculty in Illinois



4. Faculty professional development and co-learning communities

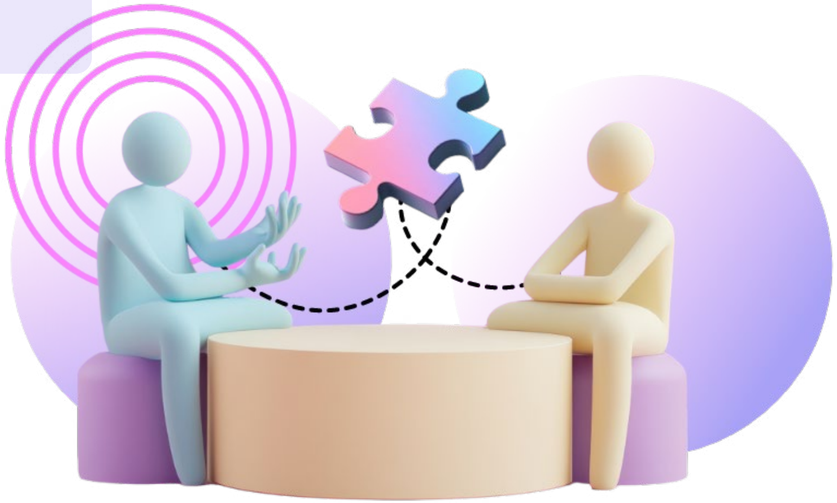
Faculty from higher education also emphasize that a major barrier to the adoption of creative generative AI is the lack of relevant and ongoing professional development in AI literacy. This is particularly true for professional development aimed at enhancing creative thinking skills.

Faculty point out that training should be continuous, tailored to various subjects and disciplines, and focused on learning outcomes and curricula rather than just superficial explanations of tools or features.

Given that generative AI is a rapidly evolving field—with new innovations and opportunities emerging in real time—many faculty in this study also express a desire to connect with their peers in professional learning communities provided by their campuses, organizations, or industry partners to exchange knowledge and best practices.

INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS SHARED BY FACULTY ON SHIFTING MINDSETS AROUND GENERATIVE AI

> “Campus leaders have to set better standards for incorporating AI in my particular area of expertise. We instructors need more learning about AI in order to effectively teach our students and show them how AI can increase their creativity.”
>
> — US college social science faculty in Missouri



Summary

The solutions shared by faculty in this study collectively create a dynamic blueprint for addressing the challenges of AI adoption on campuses today.

By fostering targeted partnerships and developing intentional policies, higher education institutions can equip students with the tools, knowledge, and confidence they need to use AI responsibly. This approach can enhance their academic performance, career opportunities, and overall well-being in an ever-changing world.

AI in higher education is not a distant concept; it is an immediate reality that is shaping the next generation. By focusing on AI-driven creativity, safety, responsibility, and support for faculty, institutions can prepare students not only to thrive in an AI-augmented world but also to play an active role in creating a better future.

References

[1] Sabrina Habib, Thomas Vogel, Xiao Anli, and Evelyn Thorne, "How does generative artificial intelligence impact student creativity?", Journal of Creativity, vol. 34, issue 1, April 2024.

[2] "K–12 Schools Struggle to Engage Gen Z Students," Gallup, Inc. and Walton Family Foundation, August 21, 2024.

[3] John Sharp et al., "Academic boredom among students in higher education: A mixed-methods exploration of characteristics, contributors and consequences," Journal of Further and Higher Education, vol. 41, issue 5 (May 2016), 657-677.

[4] Creativity in Learning Report, Gallup, Inc., 2019.

[5] "2024 Annual Work Trend Index," Microsoft and LinkedIn, May 8, 2024.

[6] "The Future of Jobs Report 2023," World Economic Forum, April 30, 2023.

[7] "TALENT DISRUPTED: College Graduates, Underemployment, and the Way Forward," Burning Glass Institute and Strada Institute for the Future of Work, February 2024.

[8] "Growing proportion of UK graduates ending up in low-skilled jobs, where they experience lower levels of job and life satisfaction," CIPD, November 4, 2022.

[9] "The Business Case for Purpose," Harvard Business Review, 2015.

[10] Richard Weissbourd et al., "On Edge: Understanding and Preventing Young Adults' Mental Health Challenges," Harvard Graduate School of Education, October 2023.

[11] "Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work: The Role of Higher Education," Gallup and Bates College, 2019.

[12] Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn, "What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review Health Evidence Network synthesis report," World Health Organization, November 5, 2019.

[13] Ross C. Anderson et al., "Reinvigorating the Desire to Teach: Teacher Professional Development for Creativity, Agency, Stress Reduction, and Wellbeing," Frontiers in Education, vol. 7, March 1, 2022.

[14] "Creativity in the classroom reduces burnout and improves teacher and student wellbeing," Adobe and Advanis, July 2023.

[15] Victor J. Strecher, "Life on Purpose: How Living for What Matters Most Changes Everything," HarperOne, May 2016.

[16] Arlener D. Turner, Christine E. Smith, and Jason C. Ong, "Is purpose in life associated with less sleep disturbance in older adults?", Sleep Science and Practice, vol. 1, article #14, 2017.

Appendix

Appendix A.

Segmenting faculty by emphasis on creative skills in the classroom

To better understand how AI and creativity are integrated across classrooms, faculty in this study were segmented into two groups: those with a high focus on creativity and those with a low focus on creativity, based on how frequently they incorporate activities that promote open-ended thinking and real-world applications in their classes. This approach is an adaptation of a similar approach used in Gallup's Creativity in Education report, and it provides a valuable perspective on how different teaching practices impact student engagement and other learning outcomes.

The survey segmented faculty based on their responses to questions about the frequency of creative activities. For example, the survey asked, "How often do your students have the following learning experiences in your classroom?", and then it listed experience options like brainstorming, project creation, real-world applications, and discussions with no clear right or wrong answers.

Faculty with a high focus on creativity—those in the top 25%—frequently incorporate open-ended learning activities. In contrast, faculty with a low focus on creativity—the bottom 25%—primarily use traditional methods like memorization and test preparation, providing fewer opportunities for creative thinking and utilizing them less frequently.

Appendix B.

Segmenting faculty by their sense of purpose

To better understand how a faculty member's sense of purpose influences their instructional approaches related to creativity, career exploration, and AI, this study segmented faculty into two groups: those with a high sense of purpose and those with a low sense of purpose. The survey administered to faculty used the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scales, specifically the "purpose in life" subscale, which assesses various aspects of psychological well-being, including a sense of purpose. This method offers valuable insights into how a faculty member's sense of purpose impacts student engagement and other learning outcomes.

Faculty were categorized based on their responses to statements such as: "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life," "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality," "I don't have a clear sense of what I'm trying to accomplish in life," and "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me."