Student Perspective Brief

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Supporting Evidence

What We Analyzed

This synthesis examines 787 articles about AI in higher education from a single week in November 2024, drawn from a larger pool of 1,651 sources. These articles represent current academic discourse—not complete knowledge, but a snapshot of what researchers, administrators, and policymakers are discussing right now. The sheer volume of publications in just seven days reveals how rapidly this conversation is evolving, yet also how fragmented our understanding remains.

Who's Speaking, Who's Not

The evidence landscape reveals a stark imbalance in whose voices shape AI education policy. Students—the primary users and subjects of these technologies—represent only 3.76% of the discourse. Parents contribute even less at 0.29%. This means over 95% of research and policy discussions happen without meaningful input from those most affected by these decisions.

The dominant voices come from institutional perspectives: administrators worried about academic integrity, technologists promoting solutions, and researchers studying impacts from a distance. Articles like [5] exemplify this top-down approach, framing student AI use as something to be controlled rather than understood. This exclusion matters because it shapes which questions get asked and which concerns get addressed. When students aren't part of the conversation, their actual needs, creative uses, and legitimate concerns about fairness and accessibility remain invisible.

[5] When to Let Students Use AI—and When to Say No

What's Actually Being Debated

The research reveals no clear consensus on fundamental questions. Adults haven't figured this out—they're navigating the same uncer-

tainty you are. Core debates include whether AI detection tools can reliably identify generated content (spoiler: [3] suggests they can't), how to maintain academic integrity without creating surveillance states, and what "authentic" learning even means when AI assistance is ubiquitous.

[3] On the Effectiveness of LLM-Specific Fine-Tuning for Detecting AI-Generated Text

These aren't minor disagreements—they're fundamental contradictions about education's purpose. Some argue AI democratizes learning through accessibility, as explored in [6], while others worry it undermines skill development. You're expected to navigate these waters without a map because no one has drawn one yet.

[6] Where AI Meets Accessibility: Considerations for Higher Education

Where Implementations Are Failing

The evidence documents numerous implementation failures, with ethical concerns dominating the landscape. Surveillance technologies marketed as "integrity solutions" raise serious privacy questions, as detailed in [2]. Detection tools produce false positives that disproportionately flag non-native English speakers and students with disabilities.

[2] In the nexus of integrity and surveillance: Proctoring (re)considered

What's particularly telling is what these failures reveal about priorities. Institutions invest heavily in detection and prevention but little in understanding how students actually use AI tools productively. The focus on catching "cheaters" overshadows questions about [4] or how to teach critical evaluation of AI-generated content.

[4] The use of generative AI by students with disabilities in higher education

What This Means for You

The research gaps translate directly into uncertainties you face daily. We don't have solid evidence about whether using AI for brainstorming enhances or replaces creative thinking. Studies like [1] are just beginning to explore how students actually solve problems with AI assistance, but conclusions remain tentative.

[1] Dataset of GenAI-Assisted Information Problem Solving in Education

What we do know is that blanket policies—either prohibiting or requiring AI use—ignore the complexity of your learning needs. The honest truth is that you're participating in a massive, unplanned experiment. No one knows yet whether AI assistance in college helps or hinders your preparation for careers where AI will be ubiquitous. The research hasn't caught up to your reality, where you must make daily decisions about when AI helps you learn versus when it shortcuts understanding. This uncertainty isn't your failure—it's a reflection of how rapidly these technologies have outpaced our ability to study them thoughtfully.

References

1. Dataset of GenAI-Assisted Information Problem Solving in Education
2. In the nexus of integrity and surveillance: Proctoring (re)considered
3. On the Effectiveness of LLM-Specific Fine-Tuning for Detecting AI-Generated Text
4. The use of generative AI by students with disabilities in higher education
5. When to Let Students Use AI—and When to Say No
6. Where AI Meets Accessibility: Considerations for Higher Education