Leading Through Disruption:
Higher Education Executives Assess AI's Impacts on Teaching and Learning

A survey of college and university leaders provides a status report on the fast-moving changes taking place on the nation's campuses

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Foreword by Lynn Pasquerella **President, AAC&U**

Confronting the promises and perils associated with AI, from engaging in curricular innovation that acknowledges the extent to which facility with AI is increasingly essential to workforce success, to mitigating concerns over academic integrity and the achievement of learning outcomes, necessitates protracted engagement by higher education leaders at all levels, from the classroom to the boardroom. Like the internet, AI has fundamentally changed our relationship with knowledge, and it is our responsibility to prepare our students at every level and at all types of institutions for knowledge creation and dissemination in a globally interdependent world, in which rapidly changing technology means rapid obsolescence, within a future none of us can fully predict.

The findings from this groundbreaking report on assessing AI's impact on teaching and learning are intended to empower and prepare faculty and administrators to embrace institutional change and effectively utilize digital innovation. The fact that 95% of the leaders surveyed are concerned about the impact of Generative AI on academic integrity, 92% worry about undermining deep learning, and 80% fear the exacerbation of existing inequities due to the digital divide points to the need for both democratizing opportunity by closing the skills gap and for building AI competencies.

Nevertheless, there are significant challenges that must be overcome to achieve these objectives. According to the survey data, majorities of campus leaders believe that students' use of Generative AI surpasses that of faculty on their campuses. They are also convinced that their institutions are either not very ready, or at all ready, to utilize AI to prepare students for future employment. Of course, AI is already being used in classrooms to create custom curricula and tutoring plans, identify additional support and enrichment opportunities, and address individual student needs by providing rapid feedback on assignments. These moves make it easier for faculty to focus on higher-level instruction and engage in one-on-one interactions. Even so, nearly half of those surveyed expect significant changes to their teaching models as a result of Generative AI.

Such work will entail providing students with practice using AI without depriving them of the learning processes foundational to the outcomes faculty strive to facilitate in their courses, including the promotion of active learning, deeper metacognition, and intellectual curiosity. In the process, faculty will be required to manage students' cognitive loads, respond to learners' needs, and redesign assessment to account for the training paradox of fostering expertise in AI without relinquishing the requirement for students to practice the essential skills needed for adapting to a new era of human thinking.

Indeed, the survey results reaffirm the need for higher education's AI strategies to be aligned with institutional strategic plans. Senior leaders must actively investigate and seek to comprehend the risks and rewards of AI, commit to ongoing professional development for faculty and staff around AI, create new jobs and allocate budget lines to support AI implementation, test and validate new AI processes, and infuse AI literacy and ethics throughout the curriculum from first year experiences to senior seminars and from general education to the major.

AAC&U is proud to partner with Elon University's Imaging the Digital Future Center in presenting this status report. We look forward to continuing to support your institution's mission, vision, and values in positioning all students for success in work, citizenship, and life.

Introduction from Connie Book **President, Elon University**

In 2023, Elon University launched a series of initiatives promoting higher education's essential role in preparing humanity for the artificial intelligence revolution. Drawing on contributions from more than 140 educators in 48 countries, we developed a set of six principles that provide guidelines for institutions to advance digital and information literacy. In fall 2024, Elon partnered with AAC&U to create a Student Guide to Artificial Intelligence that has been shared with students, faculty and staff at more than 1,600 colleges and universities in 128 countries.

This report is a continuation of our efforts to foster a critical discussion about the ways AI is reshaping higher education. Through their responses to this timely survey, higher education leaders paint a vivid portrait of the changes underway at their institutions, the choices they face and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. We thank them for sharing their thoughts and opinions in the spirit of mutual support.

While the survey reveals significant concerns about academic integrity and institutional preparedness, it also points to an optimistic future, with a strong consensus around AI's potential to enhance learning outcomes. This survey suggests we are at an inflection point, with 93% of leaders expecting significant or moderate changes to their teaching models.

As universities and colleges create AI-focused courses, explore innovative pedagogical approaches, and create new policies, this report offers valuable insights. I hope you will take a few moments to reflect on these findings and consider how your own institution will adapt and evolve as AI becomes more embedded in modern life.

Key Data Takeaways

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Elon University's Imagining the Digital Future Center conducted a survey of US higher education leaders in November–December 2024, asking questions about the impact of Generative AI (GenAI) tools.

These leaders say student use of AI tools is **nearly ubiquitous**, but faculty use trails significantly behind. Meantime, more than **8 in 10** of these leaders say they use GenAI tools.

More than a third of these higher education leaders perceive their institutions to be below average or far behind others in using GenAI tools.

48% expect significant changes in their institution's typical teaching model over the next five years and another **45%** expect at least some changes.

91% expect GenAI will enhance and customize learning and **75%** say it will improve students' research skills.

59% of these leaders say cheating has increased on their campus since GenAI tools have become widely available; **54%** do not think their faculty are effective in recognizing GenAI-created content.

45% think the impact of GenAI in the next five years on their institutions will be **more positive than negative**; **27%** think it will be equally positive and negative and only **17%** say it will be more negative than positive.

SECTION 1:

Executive Summary

The rise of generative artificial intelligence systems is impacting teaching and learning at every level of education. In particular, colleges and universities are working hard to understand and adapt to advanced computer tools that pose challenges to some of the foundational structures of education.

The immensity of this disruption is captured in a new survey of leaders of higher education by the American Association of Colleges & Universities and Elon University's Imagining the Digital Future Center. A total of 337 university presidents, chancellors, provosts, rectors, academic affairs vice presidents, and academic deans responded to questions about **generative artificial intelligence tools (GenAI)** such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and CoPilot. The questions covered the current situation on their campuses, the struggles they encounter, the changes they anticipate, and the sweeping impacts they foresee.

The **overall verdict they render about the future of higher education** in the age of GenAI:

45% of these higher education leaders think the impact of GenAI in the next five years on their institutions will be **more positive than negative**.

17% say it will be **more negative than positive**.

27% think it will be **equally positive and negative**.

10% say they **don't know**.

At the same time, **62%** believe GenAI tools will both enhance some aspects of **the role institutions of higher learning play in society** and diminish others.

Other key findings include:

Current situation

- **High student adoption of GenAI, lower faculty uptake:** Most of these higher education leaders say 60% or more of their school's students use GenAI tools for coursework, while most report that less than 40% of faculty use GenAI as part of their jobs. Some 83% of the academic leaders in this sample say they themselves use GenAI tools – and a portion of them are power users who use GenAI for a wide range of activities.

- **Peer comparisons:** While 38% perceive their own institutions to be about average in using GenAI for teaching, learning and other activities, 28% say their schools are below average and 7% say they are far behind.

- **Cheating increase:** 59% of these leaders report that cheating has increased on their campuses since GenAI tools have become widely available; 21% say it has increased a lot.

- **Detection of GenAI content isn't great:** More than half of these leaders do not think their faculty are effective in recognizing GenAI-created content. Some 13% believe their faculty are "not at all effective" in spotting this kind of content and 41% think their faculty are "not very effective.

- **Unpreparedness:** Majorities of these college and university leaders believe their institutions are *not very or not at* all ready to use GenAI for such things as: preparing students for the future (56% say their schools are not prepared for this); preparing faculty to use GenAI for teaching and mentoring (53% feel unprepared); and helping non-faculty staff use these tools for work (63% feel unprepared). Some 59% believe last spring's graduates were not prepared for work in companies where skill in using GenAI tools is important.

- **Challenges to making progress:** Large majorities of these leaders cite specific hindrances to GenAI adoption and integration at their schools. The challenges most often mentioned include faculty unfamiliarity with or resistance to GenAI, distrust of GenAI tools and their outputs, and concerns about diminished student learning outcomes.

Most of these leaders say their institutions have taken some steps to adjust to the rise of GenAI. Some 69% report their schools have adopted **written policies about appropriate and inappropriate uses of GenAI tools** in learning and teaching. In addition, **44% report they have created new classes** specifically devoted to AI, and a **fifth have created majors or minors in AI**.

Changes ahead

Asked to assess the impact of GenAI tools on students' academic lives, these leaders give a mixed verdict. The **positive outcomes** they foresee include:

- **Enhanced learning:** 91% think GenAI tools will enhance and customize learning, including 47% who believe there will be a lot of impact.

- **Improved research skills:** 75% think the tools will improve student research skills, including 29% who believe there will be a lot of impact.

- **Better student writing:** 69% think the tools will increase students' ability to write clearly and persuasively, including 27% who believe there will be a lot of impact.

- **Increased creativity:** 66% say the tools will increase student creativity, including 21% who believe there will be a lot of impact.

The **negative fallout** includes:

- **Concerns about academic integrity:** 95% of these leaders say concerns about the academic integrity of students will be affected by the spread of GenAI tools, including 56% who believe there will be a lot of impact.

- **Dependence on GenAI:** 92% think GenAI tools will lead to overreliance by students on the tools, including 44% who think there will be a lot of impact.

- **Greater digital inequities:** 81% of these leaders think GenAI will have an impact on digital divides, including 36% who think there will be a lot of impact.

- **Decreased attention spans:** 66% think GenAI will diminish student attention spans, including 24% who think the tools will have a lot of impact on this.

Some key findings about other changes that will occur at their institutions:

- **Changed teaching model:** 95% of these leaders say the teaching models at their schools will be affected significantly or to some degree. Nearly half (48%) believe the change will be significant.

- **Classroom focus on ethical issues raised by the rise of GenAI tools:** Strong majorities of these officials believe it is very necessary to have a classroom focus on major issues tied to GenAI, including privacy issues, hallucinations, misinformation, bias, data breaches, and the alignment of the tools with human values.

Future impacts

- **Better learning outcomes:** A fifth of these academic leaders (21%) say student learning outcomes will get a great deal better at their schools in the next five years because of GenAI tools and another 46% think the change will be somewhat for the better.

- **Students' lives will be positively affected:** Asked about the impact of GenAI on the overall lives of students, 50% of these academic leaders say the impact will be more positive than negative in the next five years, compared with just 12% who believe the impact will be more negative than positive.

- **Assignments, teaching, learning, and research will get better:** 70% of the leaders in this survey say the quality of assignments to students will get a lot or somewhat better because of the use of GenAI tools; 68% think the tools will relieve faculty of routine work they now face; and 68% think the tools will help faculty research. Another 54% think the quality of lectures and lessons will improve thanks to GenAI and 51% say the quality of feedback and grading of student performance will improve.

A persistent concern on campus relates to jobs.

These college and university leaders say some reductions in employment levels could occur, but it will mostly be minor: 29% say they expect reductions in the number of staff at their schools (only 3% say it will be major), while 11% expect reductions in faculty and teaching assistants (only 1% say it will be major). In both cases, about a fifth of these respondents say they do not know yet what the impact on staffing levels will be at their schools.

The results reported here come from a non-scientific survey of academic leaders known to the American Association of Colleges & Universities and a supplemental list of key officials in higher education compiled by Elon University. In all, 338 college leaders responded to at least some portion of the survey. It was conducted between November 4 and December 7, 2024. It is a diverse sample in key respects, including by the size of the undergraduate population of schools and the geographic distribution of the schools. Still, the results are not generalizable. For further details about the sample and the questions, please see the Methodology section of this report.

The term "GenAI" is used throughout the report and refers to "generative artificial intelligence" tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot.

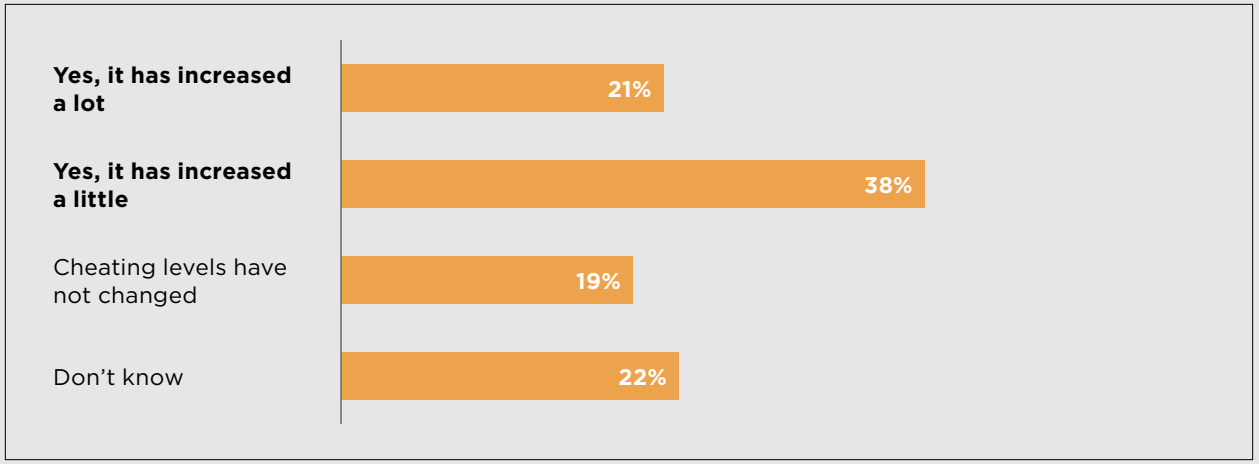
SECTION 2:

Many Higher Education Leaders Report their Campuses are Unprepared for the Impact of GenAI

A majority of leaders report that cheating has increased, and most think faculty members are not able to detect GenAI-created content

The rapid adoption by students of GenAI tools often puts them at odds with institutional or course policies related to academic integrity. Students are finding myriad ways to leverage GenAI to write papers, complete assignments, take tests, and circumvent intended learning outcomes. So far, the cheating-detection tools mostly prove inadequate.

Has cheating increased on your campus since Generative AI tools have become widely available?



*Those who did not answer are not shown
*Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

54%

say their institution's faculty members are **not effective** in recognizing such content

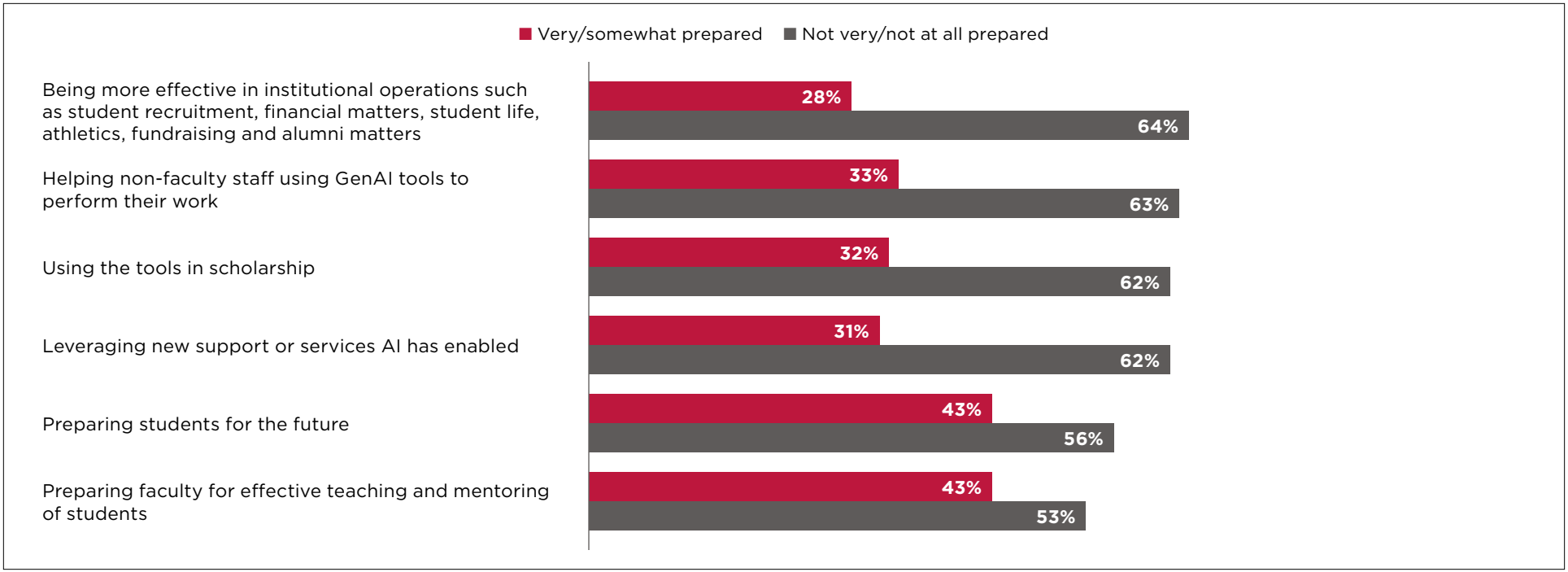
Many higher education leaders say their schools are not yet prepared to use GenAI effectively to help students, faculty, and staff

In key ways, these college leaders are **anxious about the challenges posed by GenAI to their current teaching and learning models** and campus administration. Six-in-ten of them say they are not very or not at all prepared to use GenAI tools effectively when it comes to handling wide-ranging institutional operations, helping staffers use GenAI to perform their work, use these tools in scholarship, and leverage GenAI to create new support and services.

The majority do not feel ready to use the tools to prepare for the future and prepare faculty for effective teaching and engagement.

Indeed, only **a small fraction think most faculty members are well prepared to use GenAI in their teaching**. Asked about their spring 2024 graduates, most think those students were **not prepared** to understand how GenAI works, in knowing the ethical issues raised by the tools, and in being equipped to work in companies where skill in use GenAI is important.

How prepared do you feel your institution is to use Generative AI tools effectively for these purposes?



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

2%

of higher ed leaders think that a clear majority of their faculty members are **well prepared** to use GenAI tools in their teaching

65%

feel their spring 2024 graduates were **not prepared** to work in places where skill in using GenAI tools is important

59%

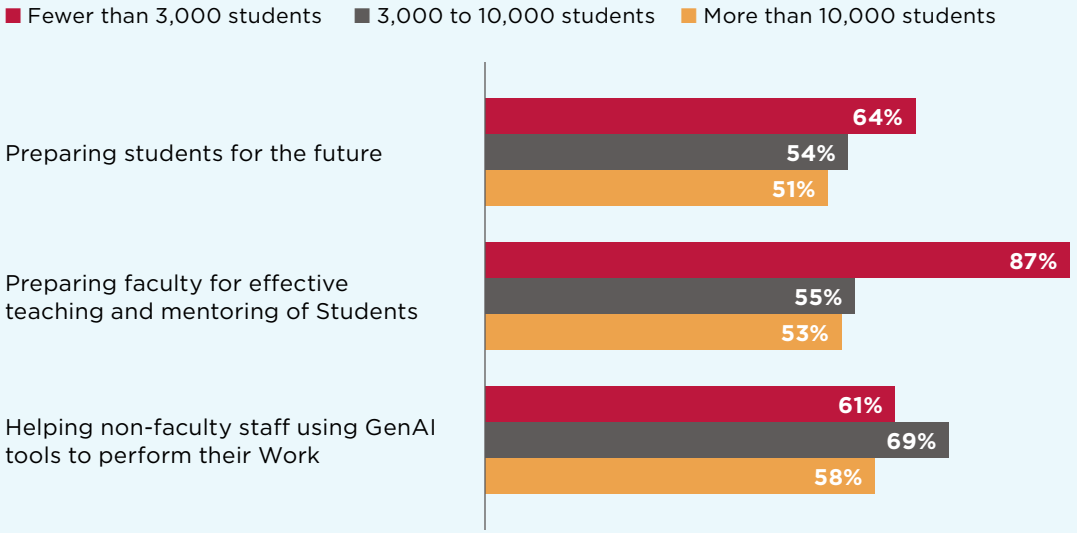
feel those graduates were **not prepared** in their overall understanding of GenAI tools

59%

feel those graduates were **not prepared** in their overall sense of the ethical issues raised by GenAI

Who feels unprepared for key challenges posed by GenAI for these purposes?

*% of schools in each category by enrollment size whose leaders say their schools are **not very or not at all prepared** to use GenAI effectively for ...*



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

"I use ChatGPT to quickly make first drafts of policies, as it is just doing what every other academic is doing very quickly: grabbing similar policies from other institutions and synthesizing it into a coherent one based upon the prompt written. I then edit what it gives me to a better draft."

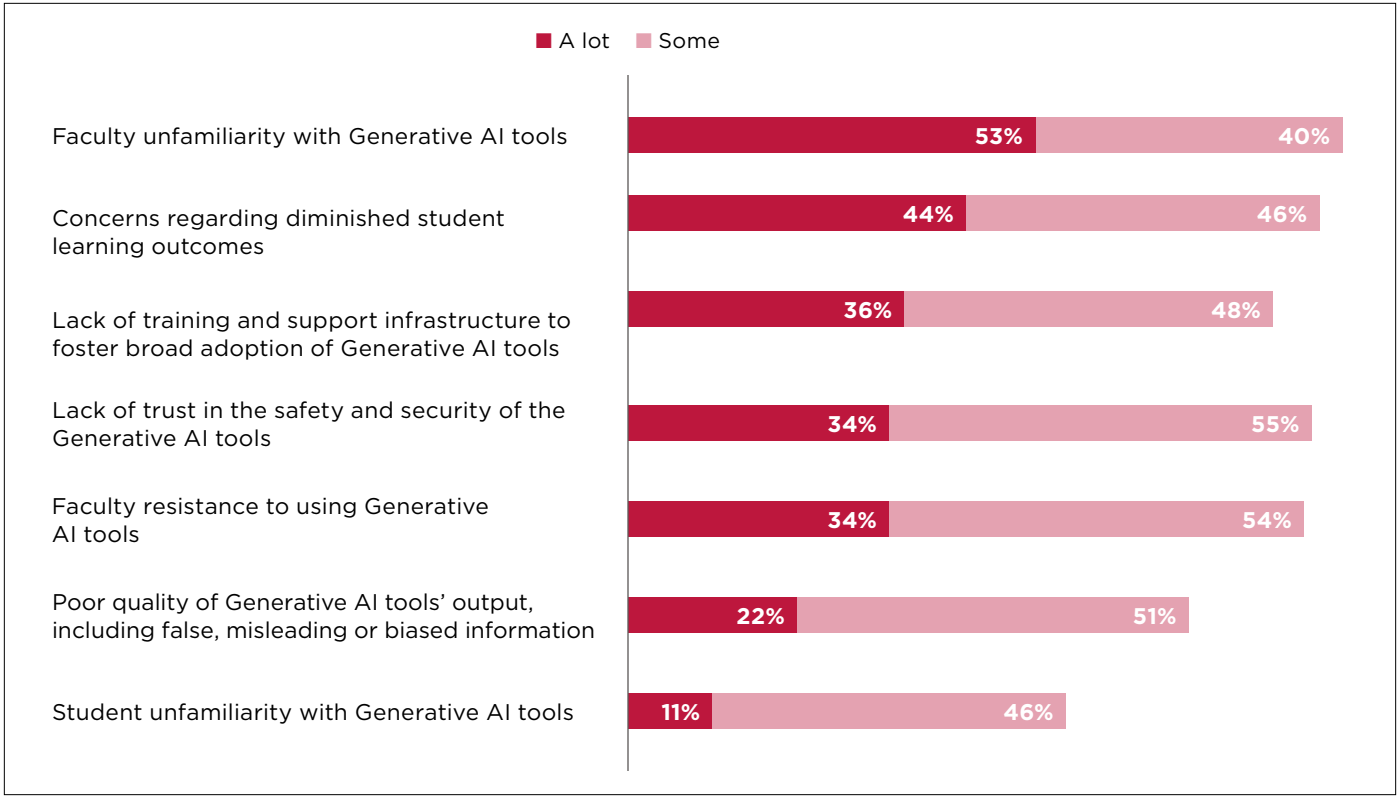
– President

Identifying the challenges and resistance to classroom use of GenAI tools

In response to questions about possible challenges to adopting GenAI tools, large shares of these college and university leaders highlight a number of issues: **faculty unfamiliarity with the tools and resistance to the tools**, concerns about diminished student outcomes, **lack of training and support** to foster broad adoption of GenAI tools, the **poor quality of GenAI outputs**, and students' unfamiliarity with GenAI tools.

A portion of respondents report that challenges other than those listed in this question are also hindrances to using GenAI tools in classrooms. Among their answers: faculty concerns about losing their jobs, the **environmental costs of using GenAI**, the expense of making the tools available to students, and the ineffective governance rules over GenAI systems. One leader gave an existential answer: "Use of these tools is an attack on everything we do."

To what extent do you think the following are challenges to adopting Generative AI tools in existing courses at your institution?



71%

of college leaders do not see student resistance to GenAI as much of a problem to adopting the tools in existing courses

*Those who did not answer are not shown
*Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

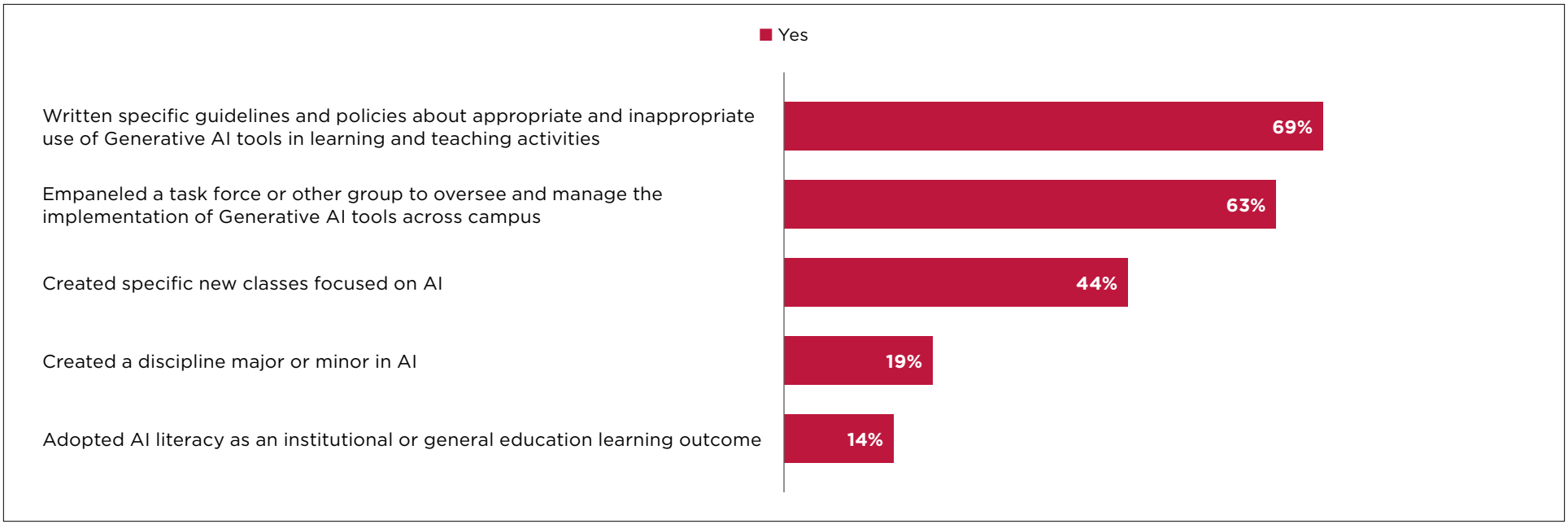
Most schools have begun to address issues raised by GenAI, and some new spending is being devoted to it

A majority of the schools represented in this sample have started to address some of the basic issues raised by the arrival of GenAI on campus and are putting money into the effort. About two-thirds have written specific AI guidelines and policies and/or created task forces or other groups to oversee the implementation of GenAI across campus. Some 44% have created new classes focused on GenAI, with much smaller numbers creating majors or minors on the subject or setting AI literacy as a general education learning outcome.

There are some differences in each of these responses depending on the size of the student body. Larger schools are more likely to have created task forces and new classes, while smaller schools are more likely to have simply created policies about GenAI use.

Overall, 63% of these schools say they are spending more in the current academic year on personnel, hardware, and software to integrate GenAI tools into their institutions – 10% say they are spending a lot more, and 53% say they are spending a little more. Of the schools spending more, 86% say the new spending came from reallocating existing resources, 15% say the funds came from outside sources like grants, 9% say the funds came from an institutional "rainy day" fund, and 9% cite other sources.

Have you done any of the following at your institution in response to the rise of generative AI tools?



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

10%

of colleges and universities have begun to **spend a lot more** in the current academic year on personnel, hardware, and software to integrate Generative AI tools into their institutions

53%

have begun to **spend a little more**

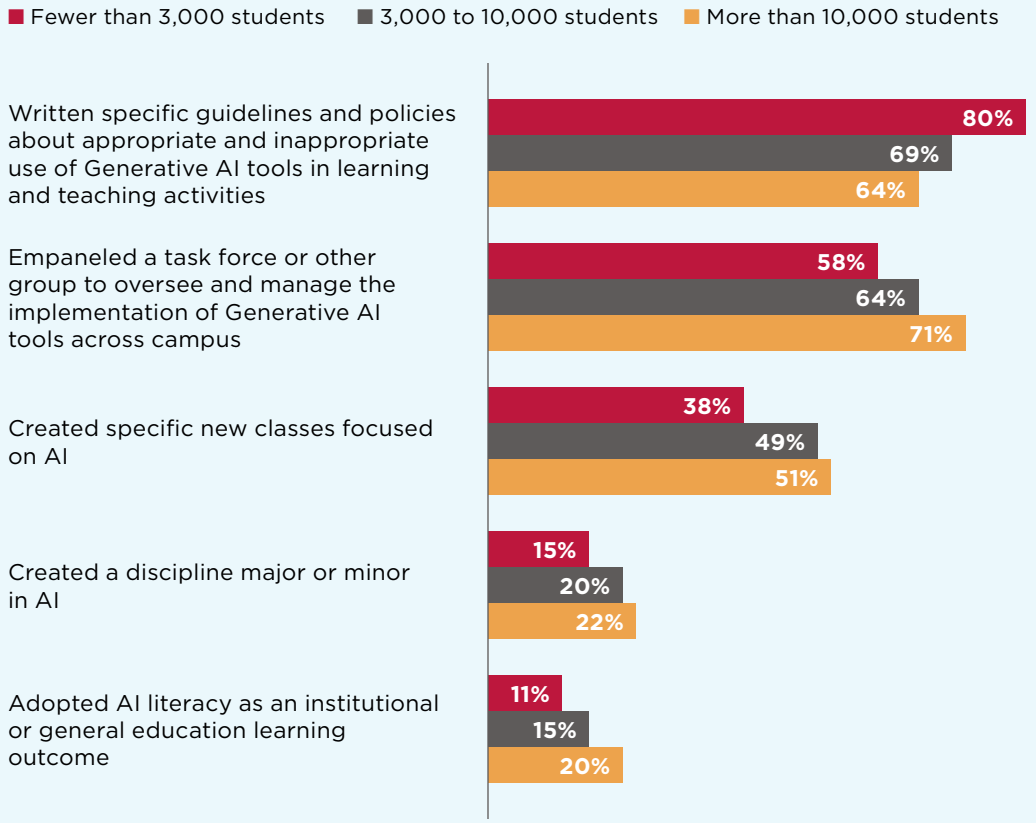
22%

have formed partnerships with private industry and other outside organizations related to AI

How different sized schools have responded to the rise of GenAI.

% of schools in each category by enrollment size whose leaders say their schools have done these things in response to the rise of GenAI

% of schools in each category by enrollment size that have taken the following steps:



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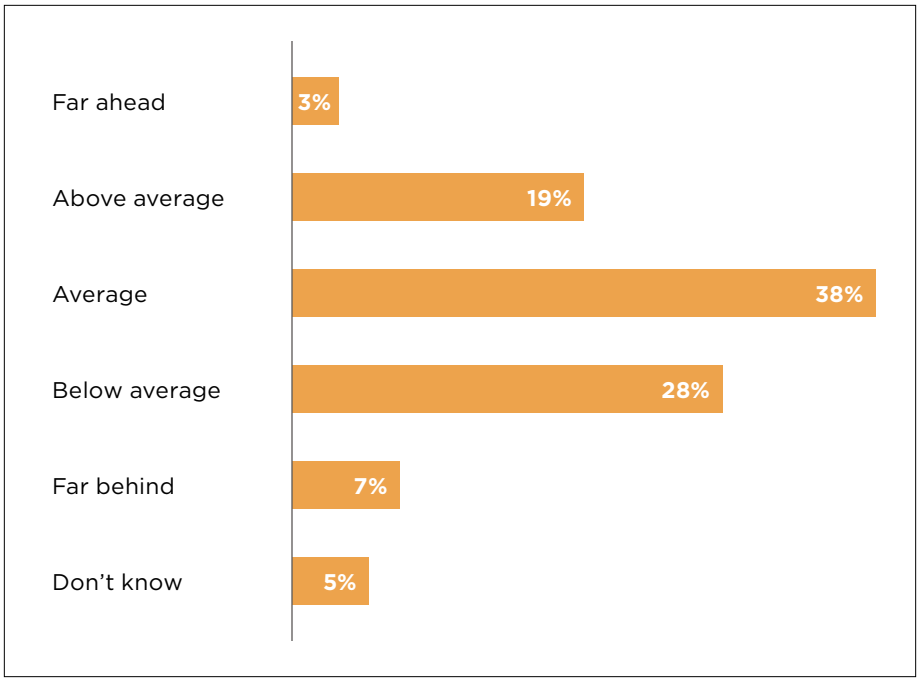
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

The bottom line: How schools see their performance with GenAI tools

Asked where they think their institution stands in comparison with other schools across the nation in using GenAI tools, these higher education leaders voiced varying views. About a fifth see themselves as far ahead or above average; 38% rate themselves as average, and 35% believe they are below average or far behind.

The largest schools – those with more than 10,000 full-time undergraduates – are more likely than small schools to rate themselves far ahead or above average and less likely than smaller schools to rate themselves below average or far behind. Smaller schools are a bit more likely to see themselves as about average in:

Compared with other US colleges and universities, where do you think your institution stands when it comes to using Generative AI tools in teaching, learning and other campus activities?



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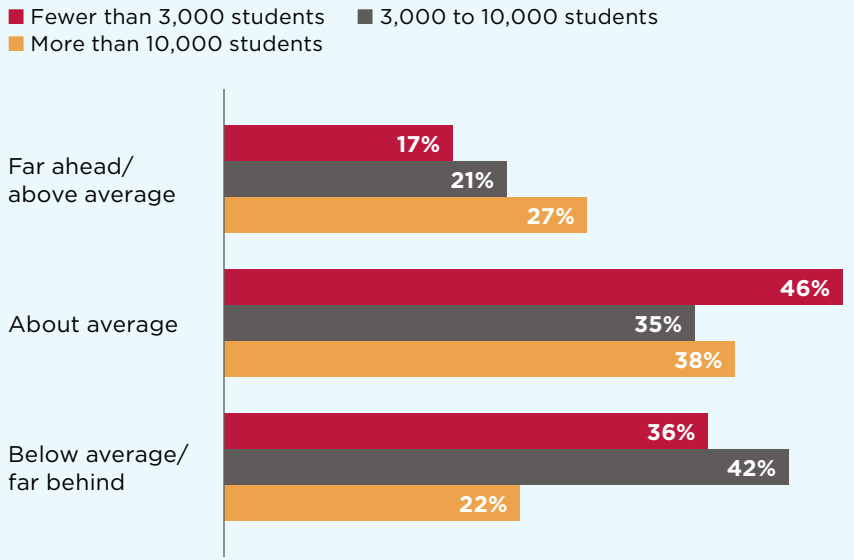
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

% of schools in each category by enrollment size that rate their use of GenAI tools this way, compared with other schools



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

Spotlight: How college and university leaders themselves use GenAI

Fully 83% of these leaders say they use GenAI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or CoPilot. However, there is a wide spectrum of ways they are using these tools. Some are at the very early stages of exploration, while others are power users. The most frequent users say they employ GenAI daily and have integrated it into key workflows.

The most common uses fall into four categories:

1 **Writing and communication:** The leaders report using GenAI for drafting emails, letters of recommendation, speeches, policies, reports, and marketing materials.

2 **Information gathering and summarization:** A share of them, especially academic deans, use GenAI to summarize research papers, meeting notes, survey data, and lengthy documents.

3 **Brainstorming:** A number of these leaders say they use these tools to develop course descriptions, outline presentations, brainstorm research topics, and synthesize policy options.

4 **Data analysis:** Some feed GenAI tools unstructured data and datasets, seeking insights into trends in qualitative data and analyzing student feedback.

"[I used] ChatGPT to establish a framework for an Academic Strategic Plan. We refined and rewrote from the outline provided over the remainder of academic year AY23-24."
– Dean

"I deliberately use Generative AI tools every day for at least 30 minutes. If I don't have a specific project in mind, I look through my notes to see which recently released GenAI tool I want to try. I use them for drafting outlines of blog articles and speeches, I use them for generating PowerPoint's, I use them for summarizing papers and articles, etc."
– President

SECTION 3:

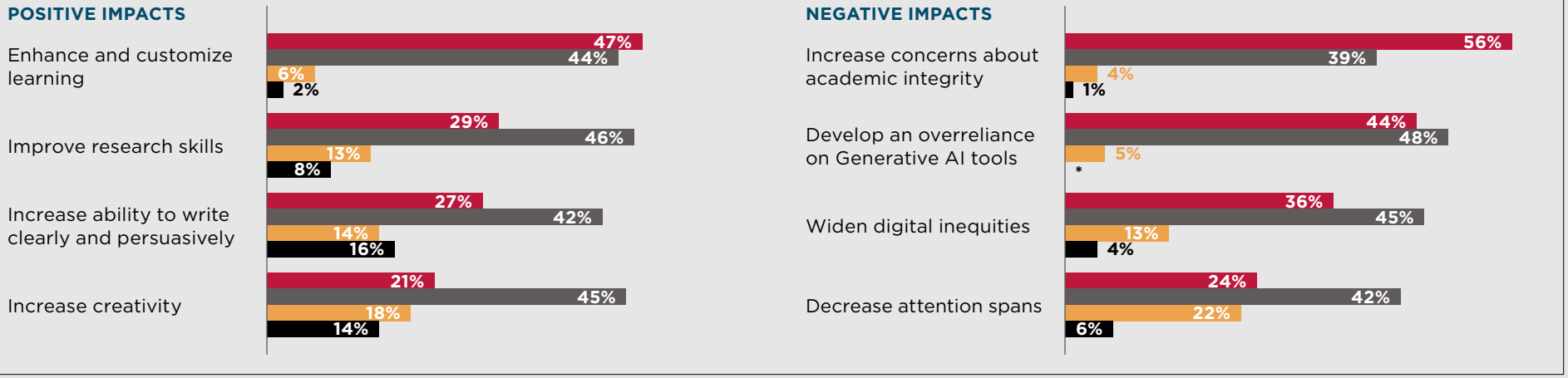
Change Is Coming and the Impact Will Be Both Positive and Negative

Large numbers of college leaders believe GenAI will have important effects on future students – both positive and negative

These college and university leaders foresee some notable changes in the way GenAI will impact students in the future. On the positive side, many think GenAI tools will enhance and customize learning, improve students' research skills, increase students' ability to write clearly and persuasively and increase creativity.

On the negative side, most of these leaders expect future students will face increased concerns about academic integrity and develop an overreliance on GenAI tools. They say these tools will widen digital inequities and decrease students' attention spans.

To what extent do you believe Generative AI tools may impact students in the future when it comes to these aspects of their academic lives?



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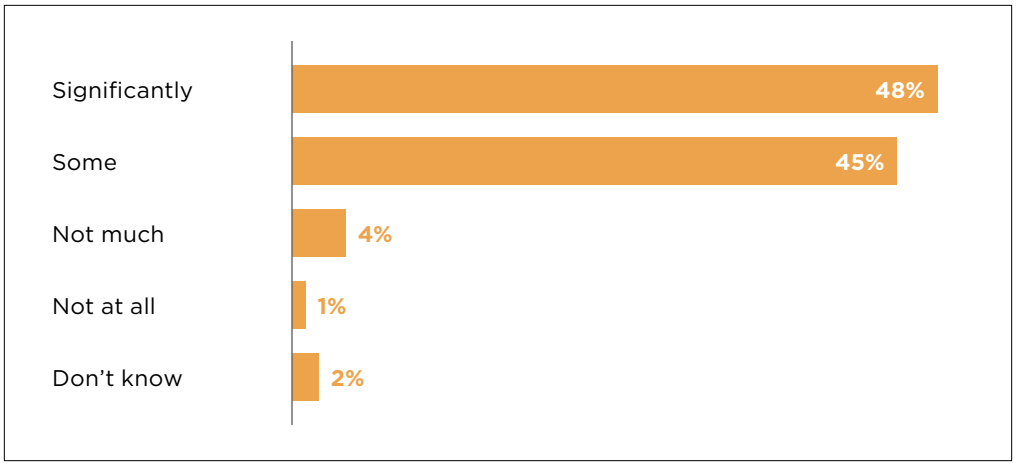
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

Nearly half of college leaders believe the teaching model at their school is likely to change significantly

Nearly all these leaders believe the typical teaching models at their schools will change – and about half believe the change will be significant. These views stretch equally across the spectrum of schools: Those at both large and small schools and those in every region hold these views.

In the next five years, how much do you think Generative AI tools will affect the typical teaching model at your institution?



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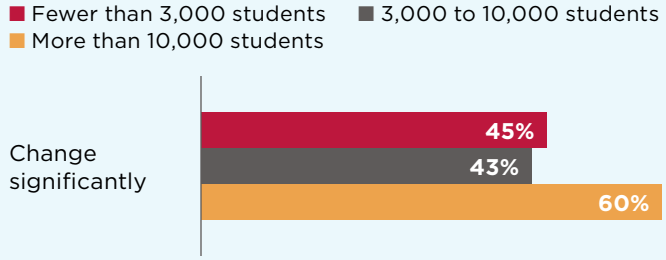
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

The teaching model is more likely to change at bigger schools than smaller schools

*% of schools in each category by enrollment size whose leaders say the typical teaching model at their institution will **change significantly***



*Those who did not answer are not shown
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

35%

of higher ed leaders say in the next five years their schools will likely offer a lot or some self-paced and personalized instruction to students built around GenAI tools

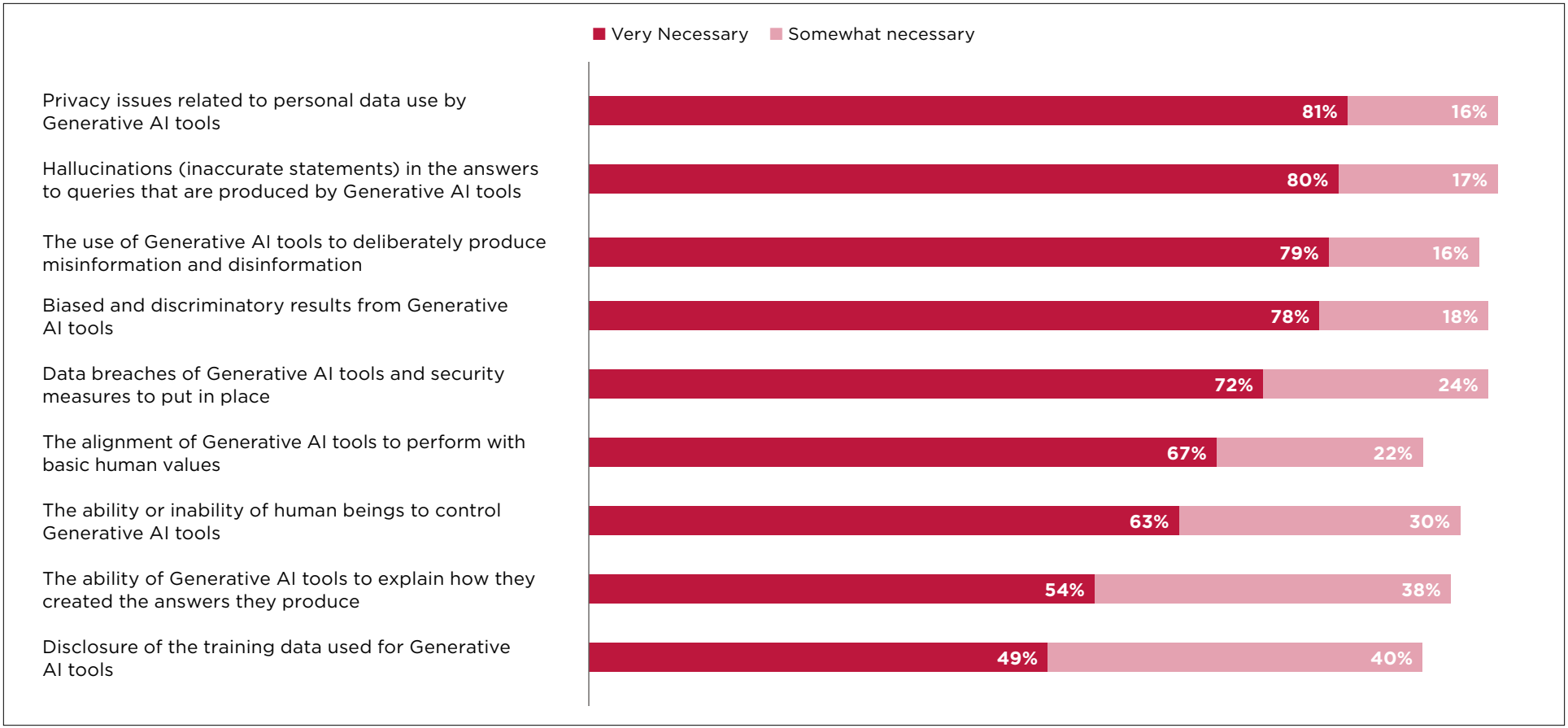
18%

say they will offer a little such instruction

Large majorities of college leaders think ethical issues tied to GenAI need to be taught in their classrooms

These higher education leaders overwhelmingly say it is necessary to address ethical issues spawned by the spread of GenAI tools. Large majorities say it is very necessary to cover many specific issues in classrooms: privacy, GenAI hallucinations, GenAI use in producing misinformation and disinformation, the risk of data breaches, alignment issues between GenAI tools and human values, and the ability of humans to control the tools. About half of the leaders also say it is very necessary for classroom work to cover issues tied to the ability of GenAI tools to explain how they create their answers and the importance of creators of GenAI tools to disclose the training data they use.

How necessary do you feel it is that the following issues be addressed in classroom discussions and activities?



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

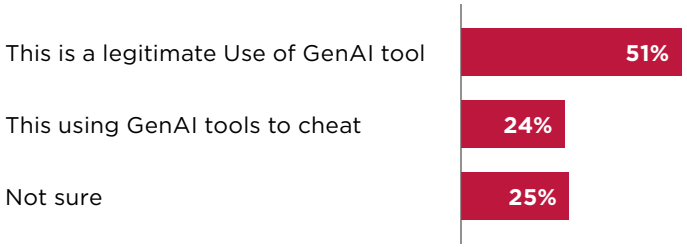
Case studies: Most college leaders think there are helpful and legitimate ways for students to use GenAI tools

In this survey, we asked leaders of higher education to react to four scenarios of possible GenAI use by students. These leaders are generally open to some common uses of GenAI as a helper or adjunct to learning.

In terms of academic integrity, would you consider the following examples to be legitimate student uses of Generative AI tools?

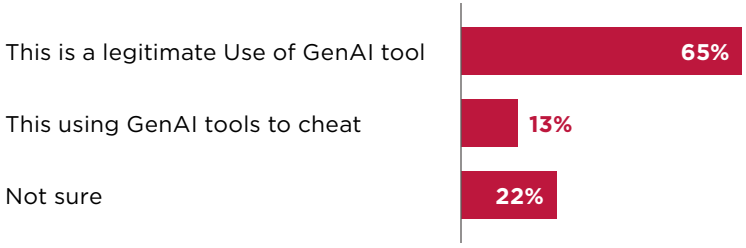
Scenario 1: A student receives a writing assignment and asks AI to provide a detailed outline of an appropriate response. The student then follows the outline to write the paper.

The response of higher ed leaders:



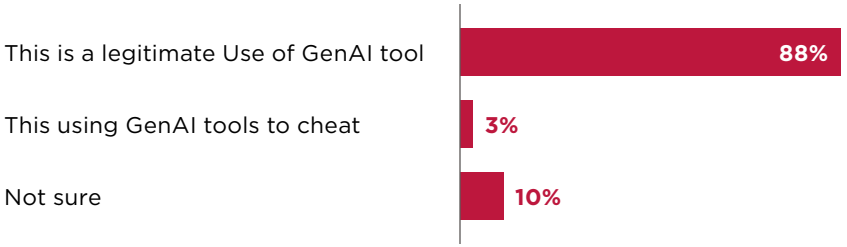
Scenario 2: A student writes a paper and provides a Generative AI tool with their draft, the writing assignment, and the grading rubric. The student asks for feedback on their paper, specifically seeking guidance that, based on the rubric, would result in an A on the assignment. The student then makes the recommended edits.

The response of higher ed leaders:



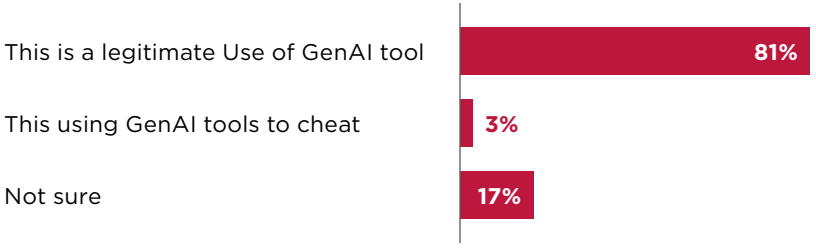
Scenario 3: A student uses a Generative AI tool to help brainstorm and refine project ideas that she/he then adopts for the assignment.

The response of higher ed leaders:



Scenario 4: A student uses a Generative AI tools tool to make improvements to their work. This might include fact-checking claims, fixing citation formatting, and adjusting a paper's structure.

The response of higher ed leaders:



*Those who did not answer are not shown
*Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

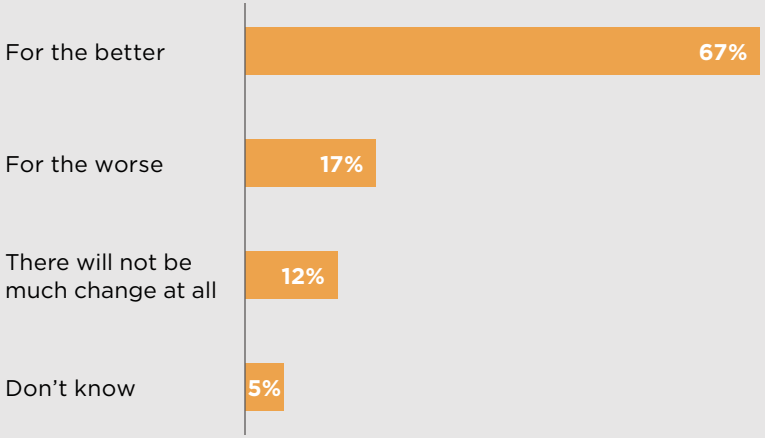
SECTION 4:

Looking Ahead at GenAI's Potential Influence on Higher Education

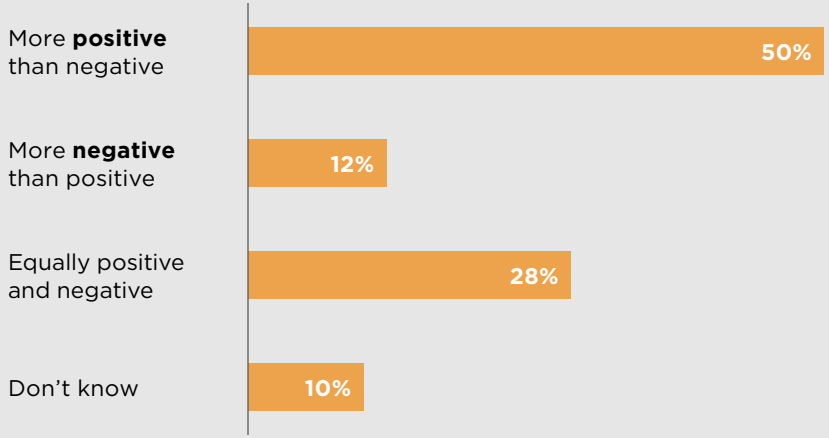
Student outcomes and the lives of students are more likely than not to improve in the years ahead

The leaders in this survey tend to be upbeat about their expectations for future student learning outcomes and the lives of students as GenAI moves more deeply into students' lives, despite the concerns they voice about GenAI's impact on their schools.

Considering the positives and negatives of Generative AI tools, in the next five years, how much do you think the use of these tools is most likely to impact student learning outcomes at your institution?



Overall, how do you think the increased use of Generative AI tools in the next five years is most likely to affect the overall lives of students at your institution? The impact of generative AI tools will be …



*Those who did not answer are not shown
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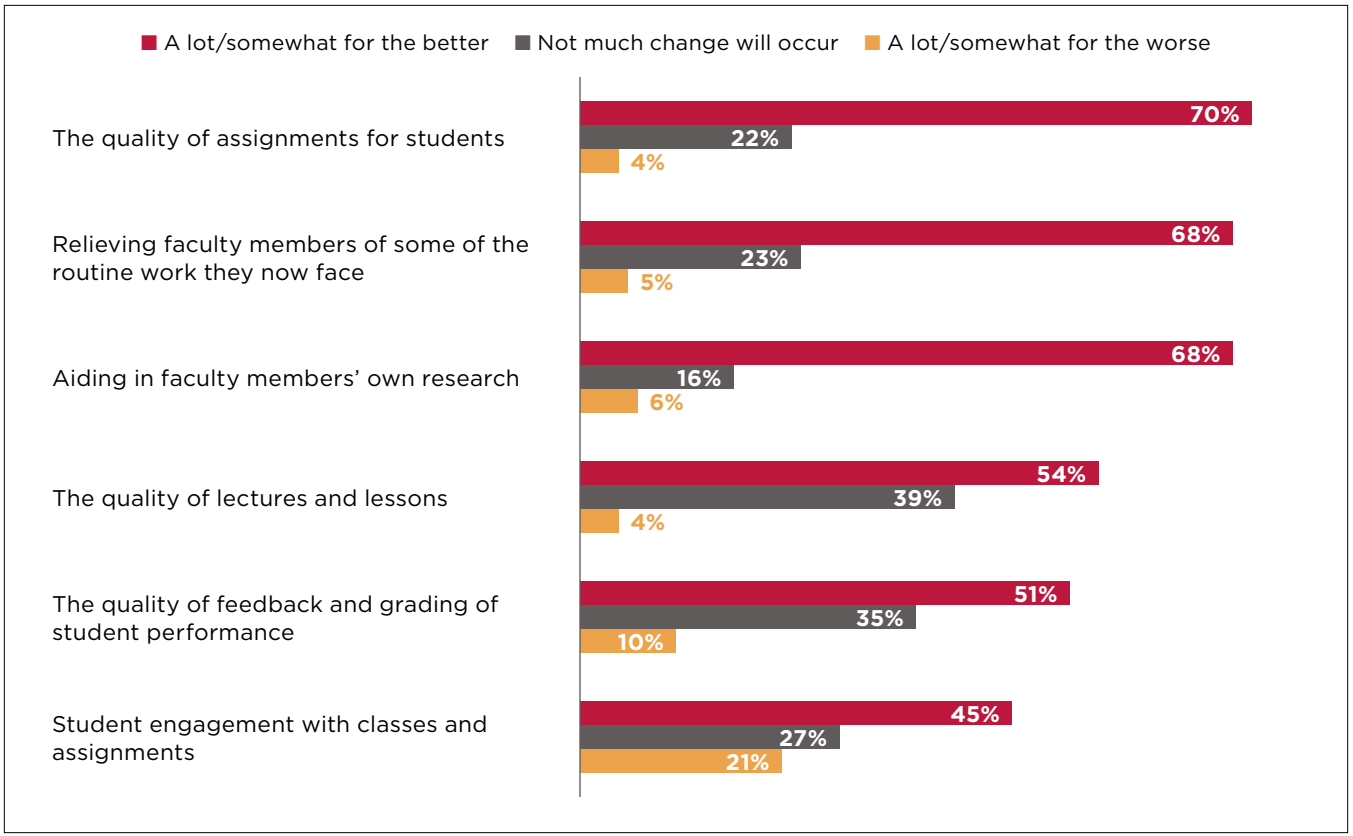
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

Majorities of leaders foresee change for the better in the way GenAI will affect essential elements of learning and teaching

These college and university leaders are more likely to be hopeful than overly concerned about the ways GenAI tools are likely to change key aspects of the learning environment. They imagine improvements in the quality of assignments, the opportunity to relieve faculty members of time-consuming routine work, improved faculty research, a rise in the quality of lectures and lessons, more-refined feedback and grading, and better student engagement with classes and assignments.

How much, if at all, do you think the use of Generative AI tools will change these things at your institution?



*Those who did not answer are not shown
*Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

17%

of college leaders say GenAI has had a lot or some impact on **faculty research** at their school, while **22%** think it has had a little impact. Some **40%** say they don't know the impact.

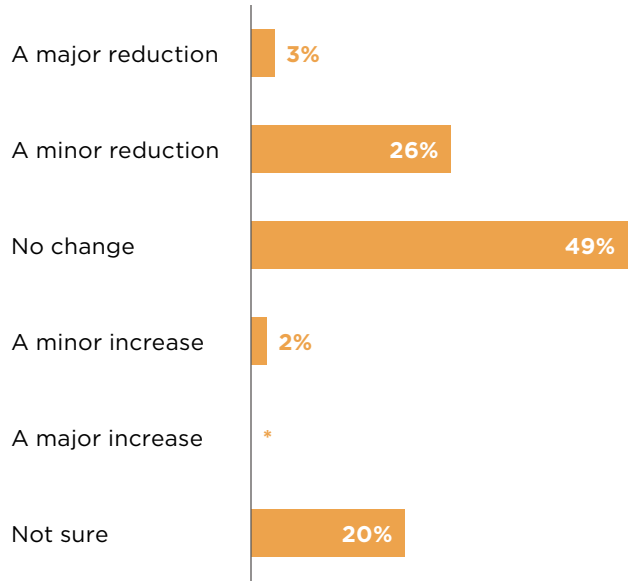
26%

say GenAI has had a lot or some impact on student research, while **22%** think it has had a little impact. Some **37%** say they don't know the impact.

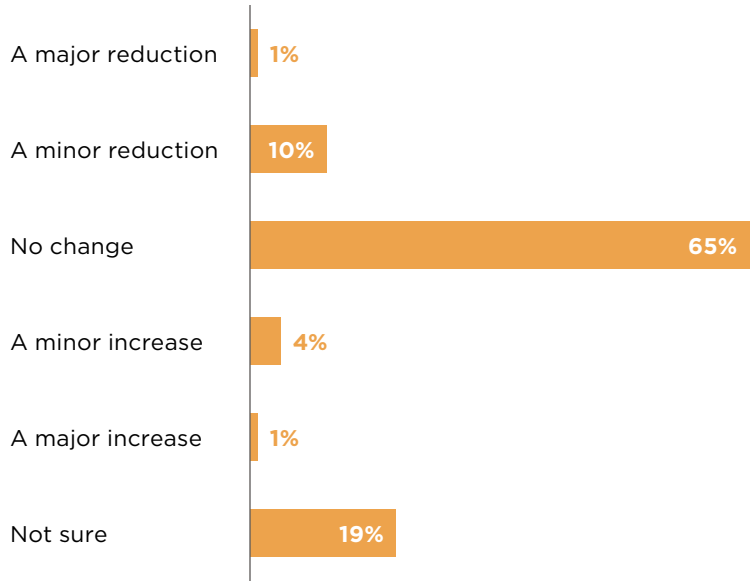
Some school officials predict minor reductions in staff and faculty in the next five years as GenAI tools are adopted

A major question about the impact of GenAI throughout the labor force is: What will happen to jobs? Some 29% of these leaders of higher education see **staff reductions** coming in the next five years, but most say the reductions will be minor. Additionally, 11% think there will be cutbacks on the **number of faculty and teaching assistants** – with almost all saying the cutbacks will be minor. It's important to point out that about a fifth of the respondents say they are **not sure** about the impact of GenAI on staffing and faculty levels.

In the next five years, how much impact will the use of Generative AI tools have on the number of staff working at your institution?



In the next five years, how much impact will the use of Generative AI tools have on the number of faculty and teaching assistants working at your institution?



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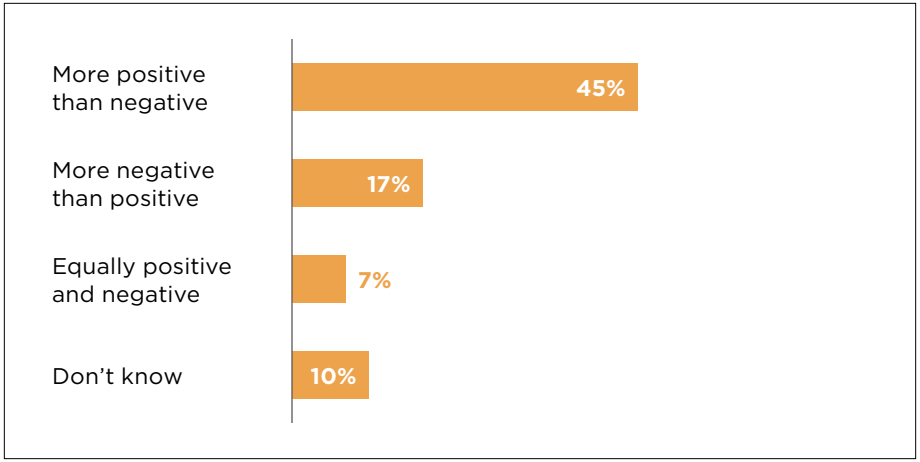
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

The future of higher education in American society

These respondents were asked in two ways about the implications of GenAI for higher education and its place in the society. A plurality of these leaders say the impact of GenAI in the broad society will make the public feel **more positive than negative** about institutions of higher learning. They perhaps are thinking about the role institutions of higher learning will play in helping the culture understand and utilize these new tools.

At the same time, they render a mixed verdict when asked: What impact do you expect Generative AI tools will have in **affecting the role of colleges and universities in society** over the next few years? Fully 62% think Generative AI tools will enhance some aspects of the role of colleges and universities play in society and diminish others.

Overall, how do you think the increased use of Generative AI tools in the broader society is most likely to affect the future of your institution over the next five years? The impact of generative AI tools will be:



*Those who did not answer are not shown
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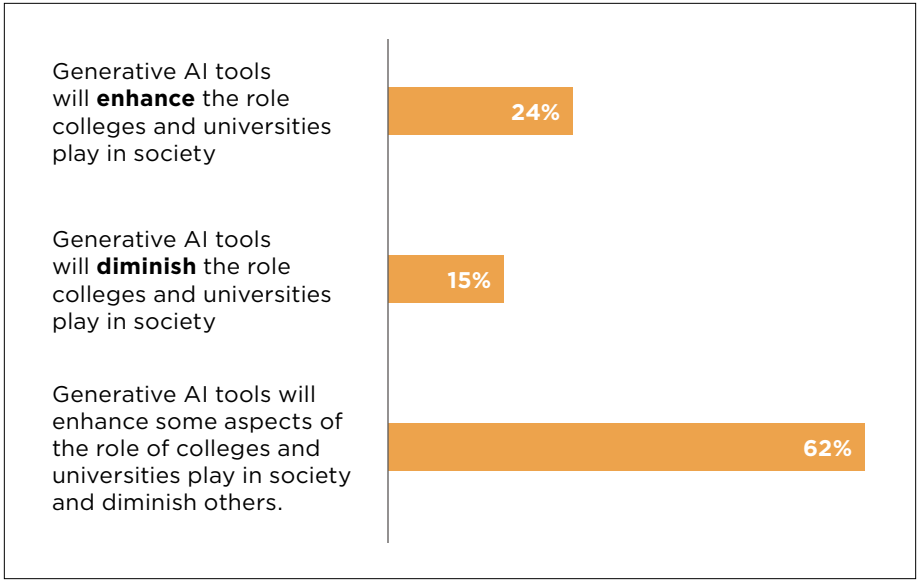
Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

What impact do you expect Generative AI tools will have in affecting the role of colleges and universities in society over the next few years?



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Source: Survey by AAC&U and Elon University, Nov. 4-Dec. 7, 2024

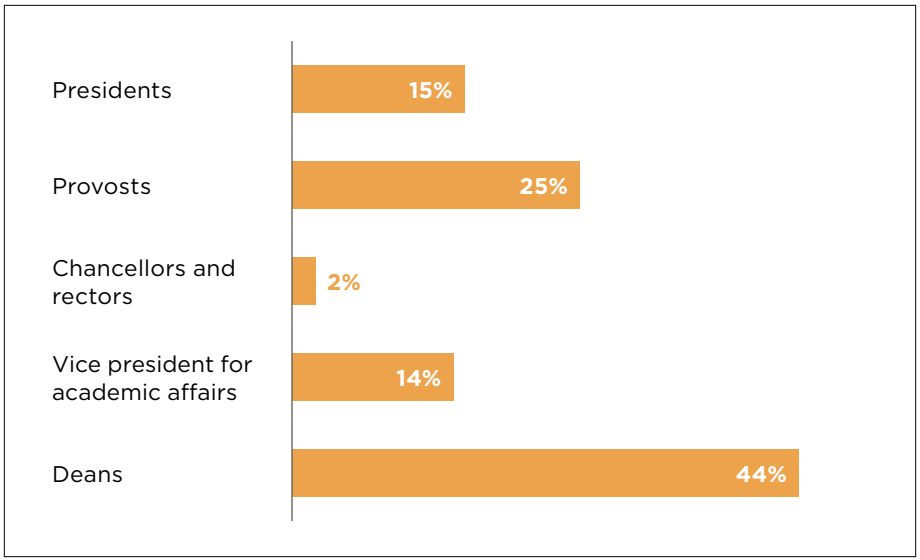
SECTION 5:

Methodology

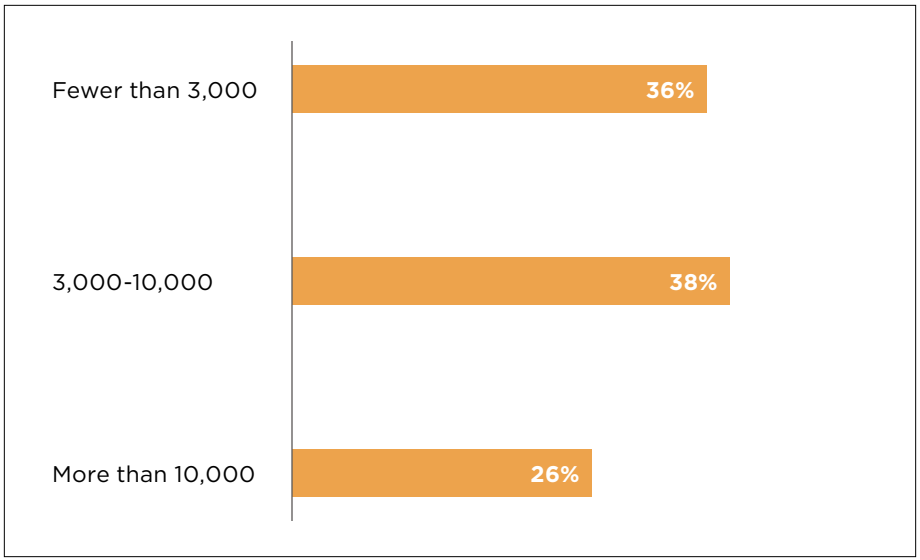
This report covers a survey of college and university leaders whose names are known to the American Association of Colleges & Universities and Elon University. The sample frame was presidents, provosts, chancellors, rectors, academic affairs officials, and high-ranking academic deans. An invitation was sent to participate on November 4, 2024 and the survey was closed on December 7, 2024.

In all, 337 higher education leaders responded to at least some of the questions on the survey and the profile of respondents looks as follows:

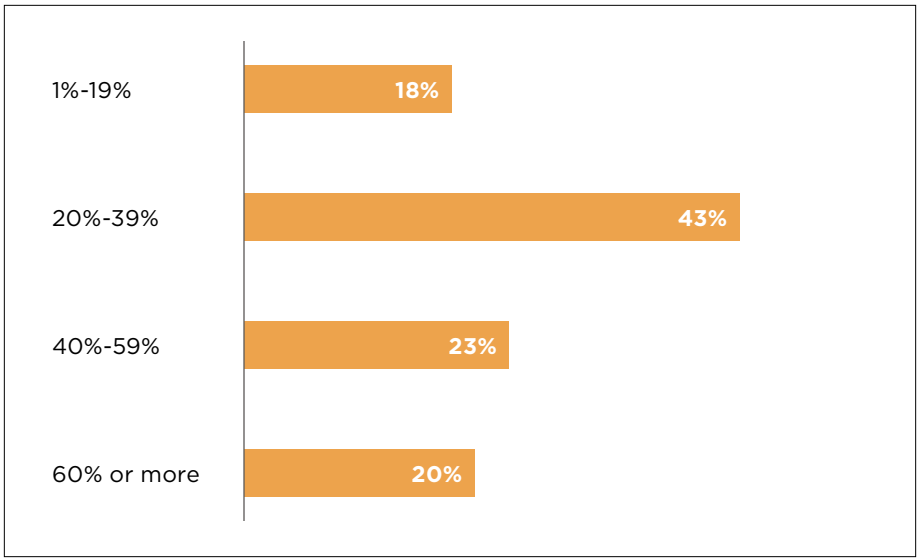
Job title



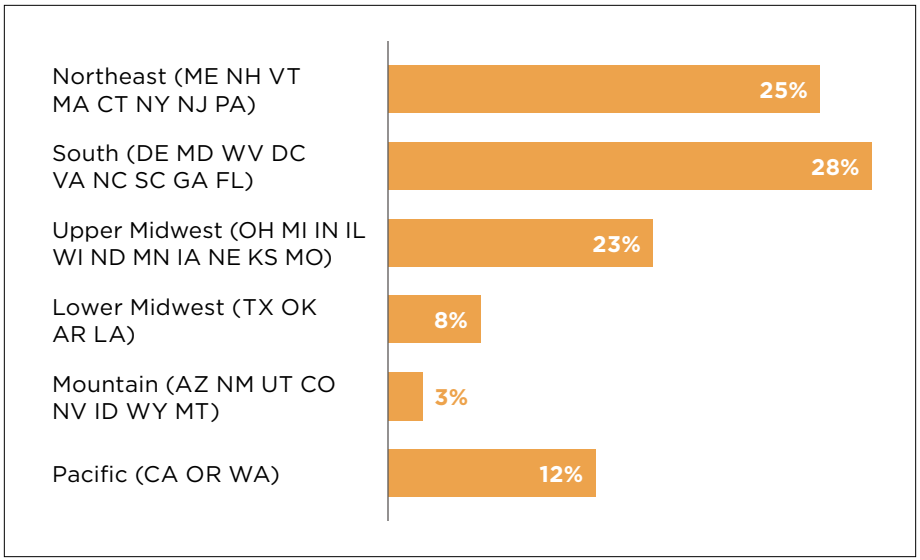
Full-time student population size



Percentage of student body eligible for Pell Grants



Region



Topline findings for the survey questions can be found here

"If we rise to meet the moment, generative AI will greatly enhance the role of higher ed in society because we'll need humans in the center of the loop with the vital skills that universities offer (particularly the liberal arts), such as critical thinking."

– Dean

About AAC&U

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is a global membership organization dedicated to advancing the democratic purposes of higher education by promoting equity, innovation, and excellence in liberal education. Through our programs and events, publications and research, public advocacy, and campus-based projects, AAC&U serves as a catalyst and facilitator for innovations that improve educational quality and equity and that support the success of all students. In addition to accredited public and private, two-year, and four-year colleges and universities and state higher education systems and agencies throughout the United States, our membership includes degree-granting higher education institutions around the world as well as other organizations and individuals. To learn more, visit www.aacu.org.

C. Edward Watson
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C. Edward Watson is the Vice President for Digital Innovation at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and formerly Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Georgia. He is the founding director of AAC&U's Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum. His most recent book is *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2024).

About Elon University's Imagining the Digital Future Center

Imagining the Digital Future is an interdisciplinary research center focused on the human impact of accelerating digital change and the socio-technical challenges that lie ahead. The center's mission is to discover and broadly share a diverse range of opinions, ideas and original research about the likely evolution of digital change, informing important conversations and policy formation. The center was established in 2000 as Imagining the Internet and renamed Imagining the Digital Future with an expanded research agenda in 2024. It is funded and operated by Elon University, a nationally ranked private university in central North Carolina.

Lee Rainie
lrainie@elon.edu

Lee Rainie is Director of the Imagining the Digital Future Center at Elon University. He joined the university after serving for 24 years as the founding Director of the Pew Research Center's internet and technology research team. While at PRC, he and his colleagues produced more than 850 reports about the social impact of the internet, mobile connectivity, social media, and artificial intelligence. He co-authored *Networked: The New Social Operating System* (MIT Press).

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