Examining Student Opinions about Artificial Intelligence at the University of Florida

Julia House
The University of Florida

Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced, it has become a prominent consideration in the academic world, sparking a range of differing viewpoints on its appropriate use. While AI in education holds great potential, it also presents limitations and ethical implications to be considered. Understanding student perspectives is valuable in the conversation about AI, and especially important in guiding its integration into academic settings, such as the shaping of academic policies. This paper serves to explore UF undergraduate student opinions on AI, revealing that they are largely open to the permissive use of AI in their work. Additionally, the results of this research suggest that while UF undergraduate students believe AI is valuable and enhances their work, many students desire clear expectations for its usage. Ultimately, this paper offers insight into the overarching opinions that UF undergraduate students hold regarding AI in the current moment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; AI; Large Language Models; LLMs; Academic Policies

1 Introduction

In the fall of 2022, a new service called ChatGPT emerged on the scene. In the months immediately after its release, ChatGPT grew tremendously and universities and faculty became concerned about how Artificial

Intelligence (AI) would affect their courses and campuses. Of particular interest to academia are Large Language Models (LLMs), a species of AI trained on parameters and text data to understand and generate language based on neural networks (Minaee et al. 2024). LLMs can be used for tasks such as drafting emails, creating presentations, and writing memos—and they are expected to gain even more capabilities as the technology improves (Roose 2023). Some examples of popular LLMs today include ChatGPT by OpenAI, Gemini by Google and Claude by Anthropic.

Naturally, groundbreaking tools like AI bring about new considerations and call for regulations to be put in place. It comes as no surprise that many universities have adopted policies to control the use of AI at their institutions. Academic policies are defined as "those policies which impact academic programs and services to students and facilitate the academic and professional life of the faculty" according to the University of Central Missouri (UCMO 2024). Therefore, a university AI policy must serve as a guideline for students and faculty to follow and its wide impact must be thoroughly considered. One example of a thorough university AI policy is that of UNC Chapel Hill. UNC's policy lays out the limitations of AI before diving into a usage philosophy which includes principles and detailed guidelines (UNC 2024).

The University of Florida (UF) is building itself as an AI University, which means that UF has incorporated AI into its teaching, research and service missions as well as its operations (Glover 2024). UF intends to weave AI into the fabric of the university as AI becomes more widespread across occupations and transforms the economy. UF's "AI Across the Curriculum" strategy aims for every student to become "AI-literate, AI-competent or AI-expert, depending on the student's investment of time and effort." The university feels it is important for every student, no matter their discipline or major, to gain AI exposure. An Inside Higher Ed article reaffirms the validity of UF's aim, stating, "it is our urgent responsibility to teach students how to use the technology in their discipline – their careers depend on us" (Schroeder 2024). UF has strategically invested $18.81 million towards

using AI technologies in 10 UF colleges to benefit Florida, the UF campus and its students (UF 2024). As part of UF's commitment to integrating AI across the university, they are offering several new degree programs focused on AI. In August 2020, UF created an undergraduate degree in data science, and in April 2022, UF created a master's degree in applied data science. In Fall 2023, UF created a master's degree in AI systems.

As an AI university, one might imagine UF students have opinions about AI. These opinions range from being strongly against allowing students to use AI to believing that AI should not be restricted in any capacity, and everything in between. In a free response question, one student said, "I think that AI could eventually be used well in the classroom, but restrictions and guidelines must first be put in place. Until that point, I think that the use of AI should be extremely limited." Contrasting this student's thoughts, another student said, "AI can be extremely useful for generating ideas or finding specific sources that are tailored to research topics or assignment fundamentals. These sources are not giving students answers but are instead fueling ideas and further questions that can give the student a better understanding of the topic." While UF students have a range of opinions on AI at their university, there is currently no official policy in place regarding its use. This research paper will relay and examine UF students' opinions on AI at the current moment.

2 Methods

This study utilizes a multiple-choice survey to gather UF students' opinions on AI within the context of higher education. To achieve a diverse set of data, there is an emphasis on Likert Scales due to the subjectivity of the content. Many of the questions are based upon various AI policies from other universities, incorporating a wide array of different approaches. Those universities include Duke University (Duke 2024), Columbia University (Columbia 2024), Northern Illinois University (NIU 2024) and Vanderbilt University (Vanderbilt 2024). There is a free response question included so that if survey participants so choose, they may further expand on their thoughts. Dr. Zea Miller contributed to the contents of the survey

and advised to collect participants' year in college and which college at UF they are part of to allow for more conclusions to be drawn. Dr. Miller also advised adding a question regarding the protection of students from AI. Before the survey was sent out, a UF undergraduate student tested it to ensure that the questions were comprehensible.

2.1 Target Sample Size

In order to have a representative sample of undergraduate students at the University of Florida, the target sample size was calculated to be 381, based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error with an undergraduate student population of 41,487 according to UF Facts.

Standard Formula

$$\frac{\frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{e^2 \cdot N}}$$

Variables

N = Population Size
e = Margin of Error
z = z-score
p = Standard Deviation

Set Variables

let N = 41487[1]
let e = 0.05
let z = 1.96[2]
let p = 0.5

Result

381

---

1. https://news.ufl.edu/for-media/uf-facts/
2. 95% Confidence Level

2.2 Implementation

On September 3, 2024 the survey was shared with friends of the principal investigator and subsequently friends of friends. On September 3, 2024 Dr. Miller began sharing the survey with his students. On September 5, 2024 the survey was posted on a discussion board for MAN4504, Operation and Supply Chain Management where it became available to all of the students in the class. On September 5, 2024 the survey was shared with all of the members of the UF Global Business Society. On September 10, 2024 the survey was sent out to colleagues of Dr. Miller to be shared with their students. On September 13, 2024 the survey was posted to the UF Snapchat story, which requires a UF email address to join. On September 24, 2024 Dr. Zea and the principal investigator tabled in Turlington Plaza and asked students to scan a QR code to fill out the survey. Turlington Plaza is situated between Marston Science Library and Turlington Hall, which is home to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Also on September 24, the survey was posted on the UF Snapchat story again as well as the UF subreddit. On September 28, 2024, the survey was sent to the Florida Women in Business group chat and reposted on the UF subreddit.

Google Forms was used to conduct the survey, and the response data was then input into Excel and visualized using Tableau. The analysis methods take on two approaches: the first approach analyzes the overall data, and the second approach analyzes the data separated by year in college. For the second approach, the independent variable is year in college and the dependent variable is opinion on AI. Analysis is based on the proportion of respondents who selected each answer choice. Projections on the opinions of next year's freshmen were made by linearly extrapolating the data split up by year. Projections were considered significant if their p-value was less than 0.05, as this is generally accepted as statistically significant (Beers 2024).

3 Results

The final sample consisted of 417 undergraduate students at the University of Florida. The sample of students who took the survey was 34.1% freshmen, 20.1% sophomores, 21.1% juniors and 24.7% seniors. 30.2% of survey participants were from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 23% were from the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering, 18.5% were from the Warrington College of Business, 11.3% were from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, 4.1% were from the College of Journalism and Communications, 3.8% were from the College of Health and Human Performance, 3.4% were from the College of Public Health and Health Professions, 2.9% were from the College of Design, Construction and Planning, 1.7% were form the College of the Arts, and 1.2% were from the College of Nursing.

3.1 Overall Results

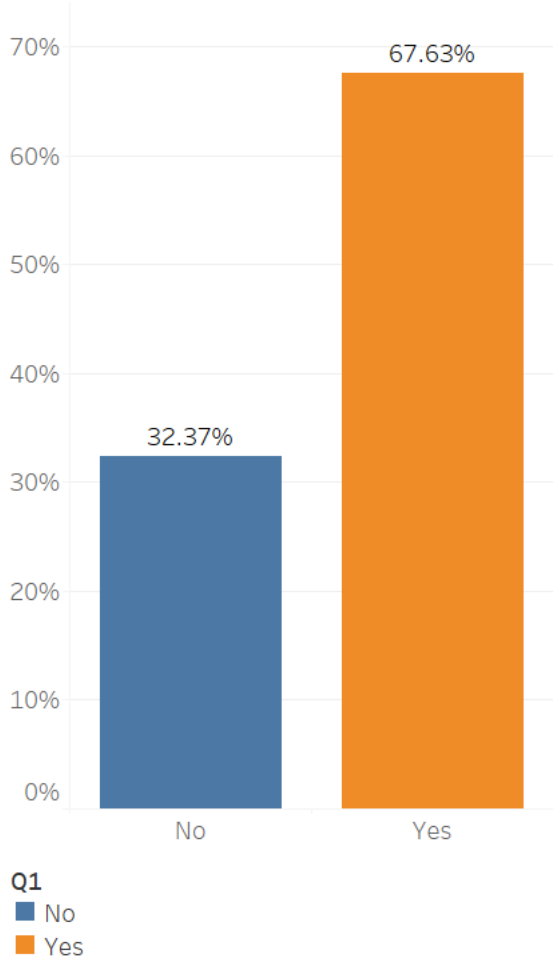

Figure 1: Have you ever used AI to help complete an assignment at UF?

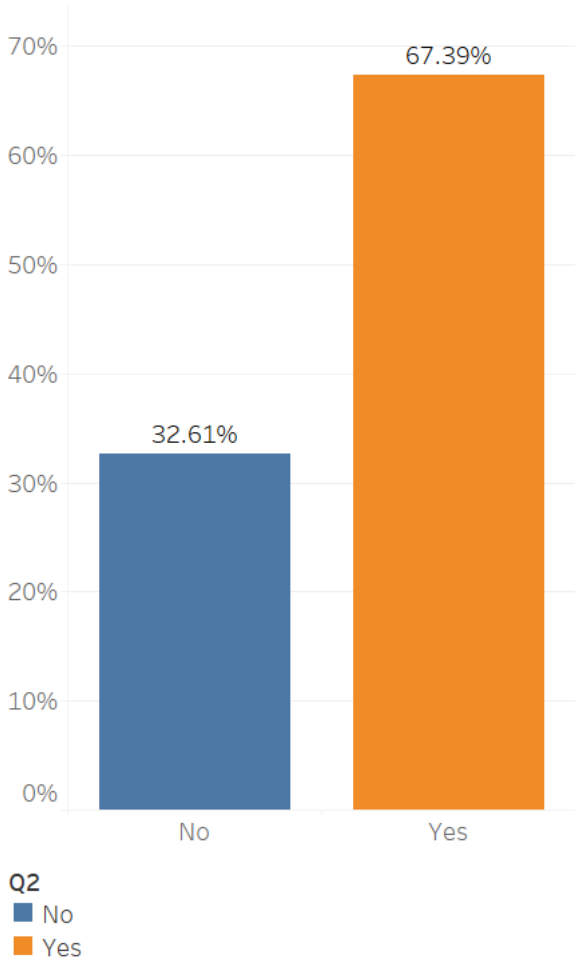

Figure 2: Have you ever questioned the accepted use of AI at UF?

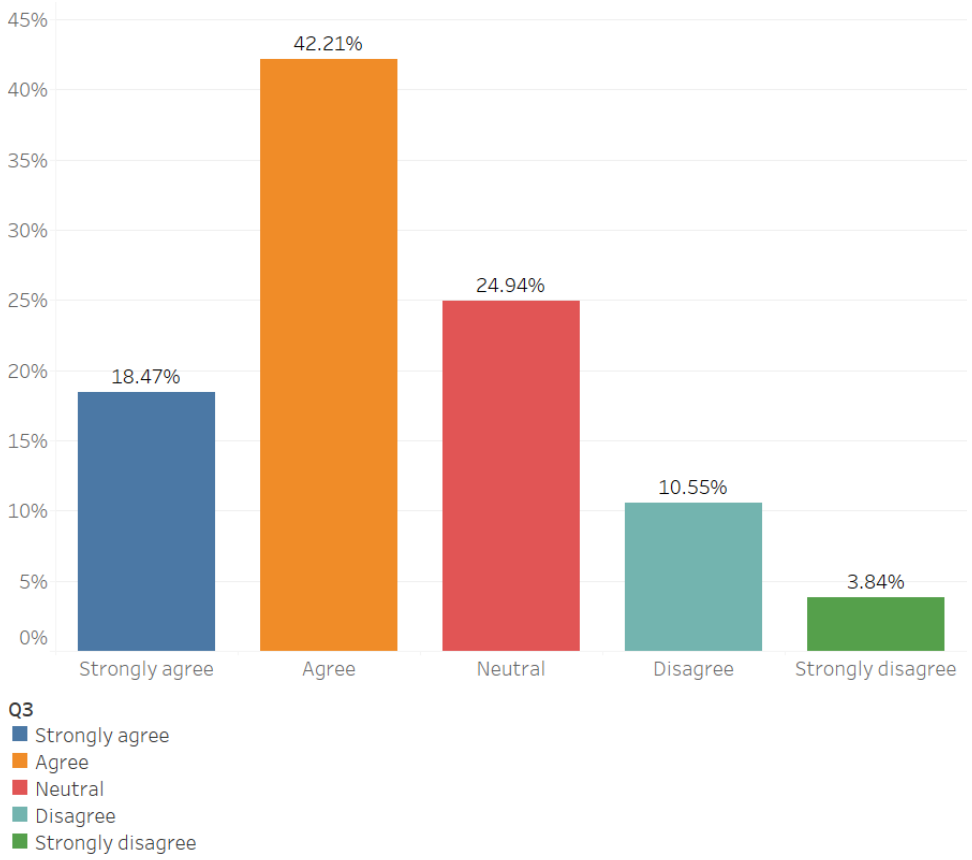

Figure 3: It is fair for UF students to use AI as an aid in completing assignments.

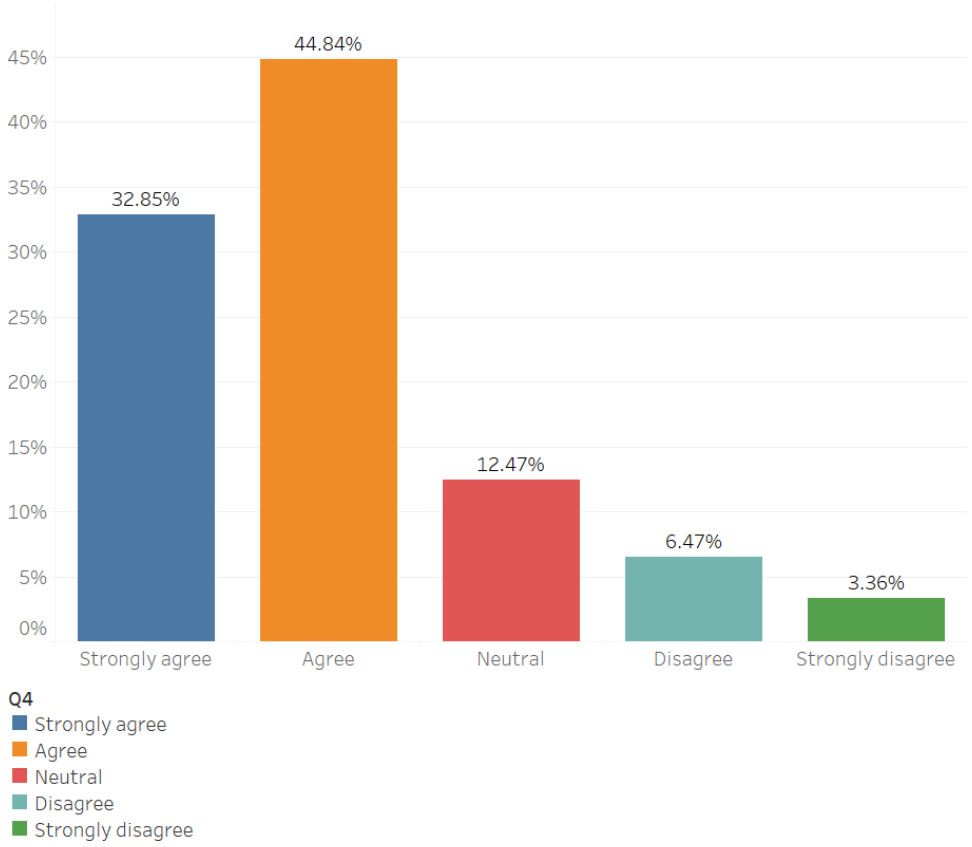

Figure 4: AI is a valuable academic tool.

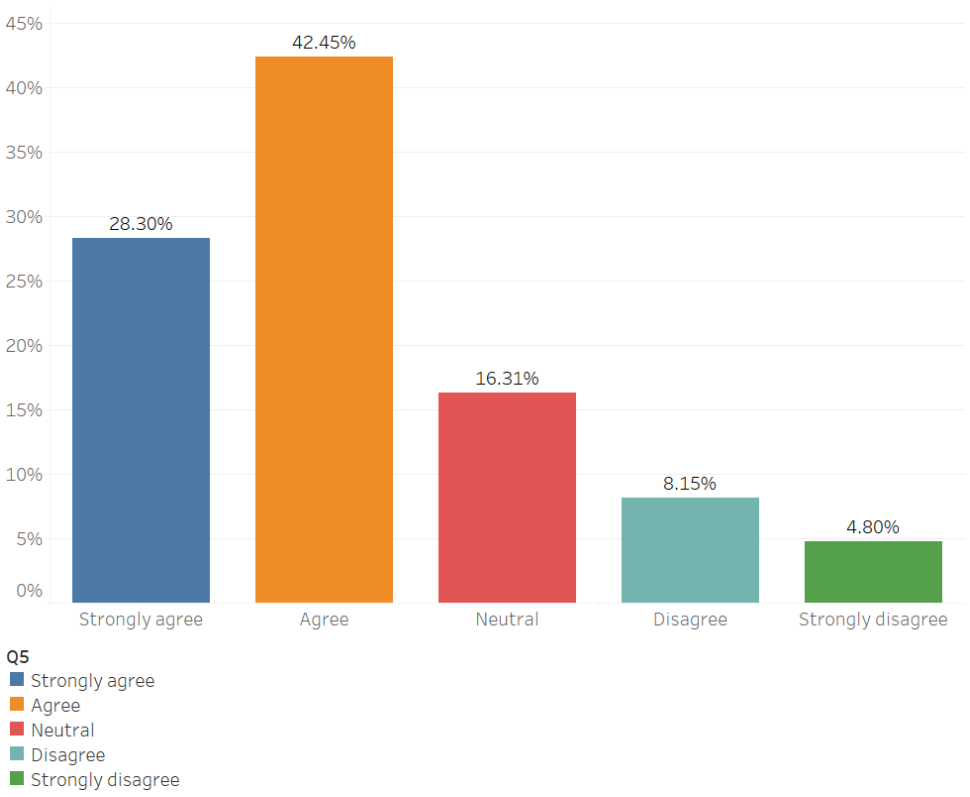

Figure 5: AI can enhance the quality of the work that I submit.

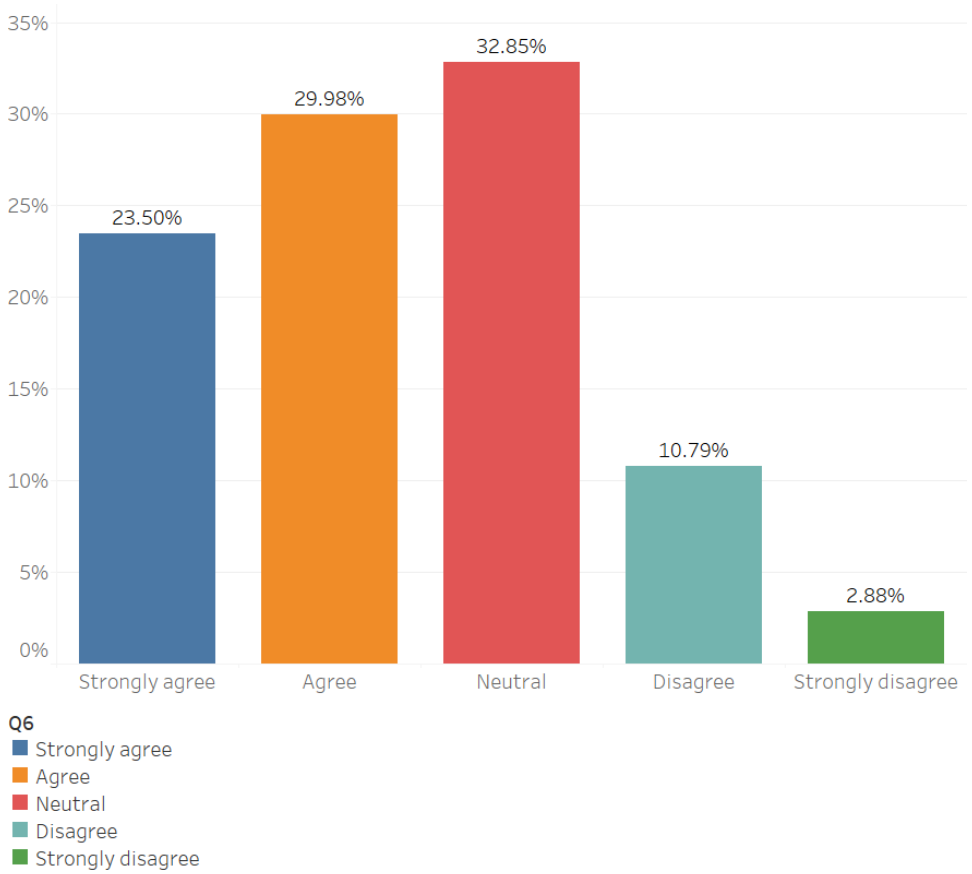

Figure 6: My own work is superior to that created with the help of AI.

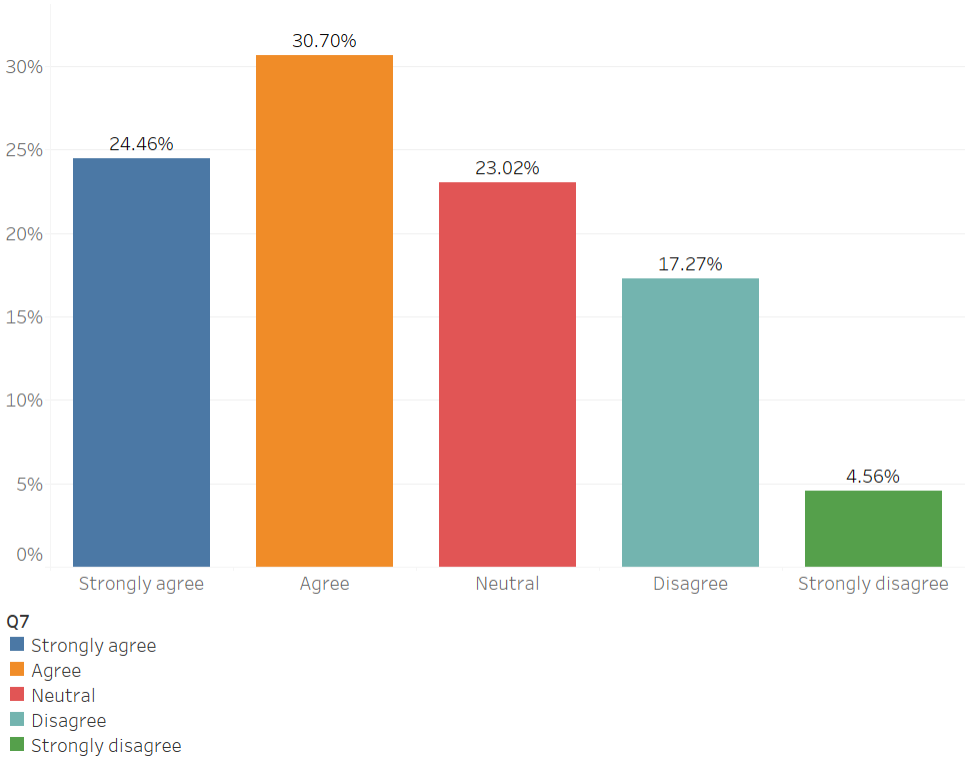

Figure 7: UF students should be required to disclose if they used AI in any capacity to complete their work.

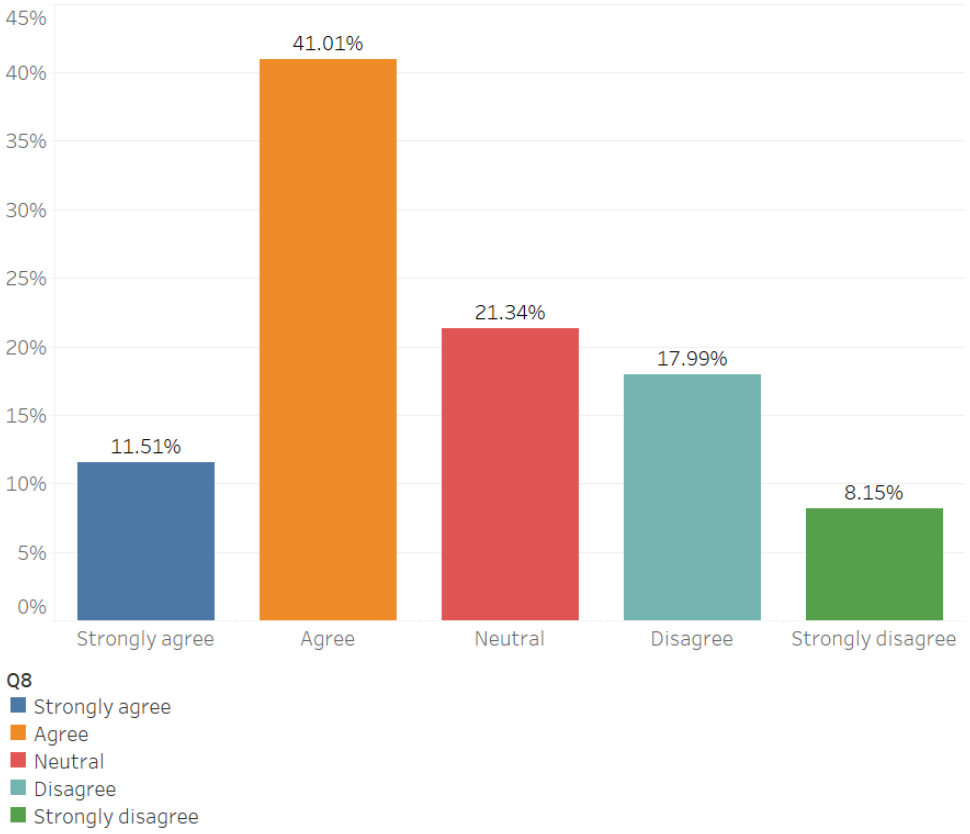

Figure 8: UF students should only be required to disclose the use of AI in particular circumstances.

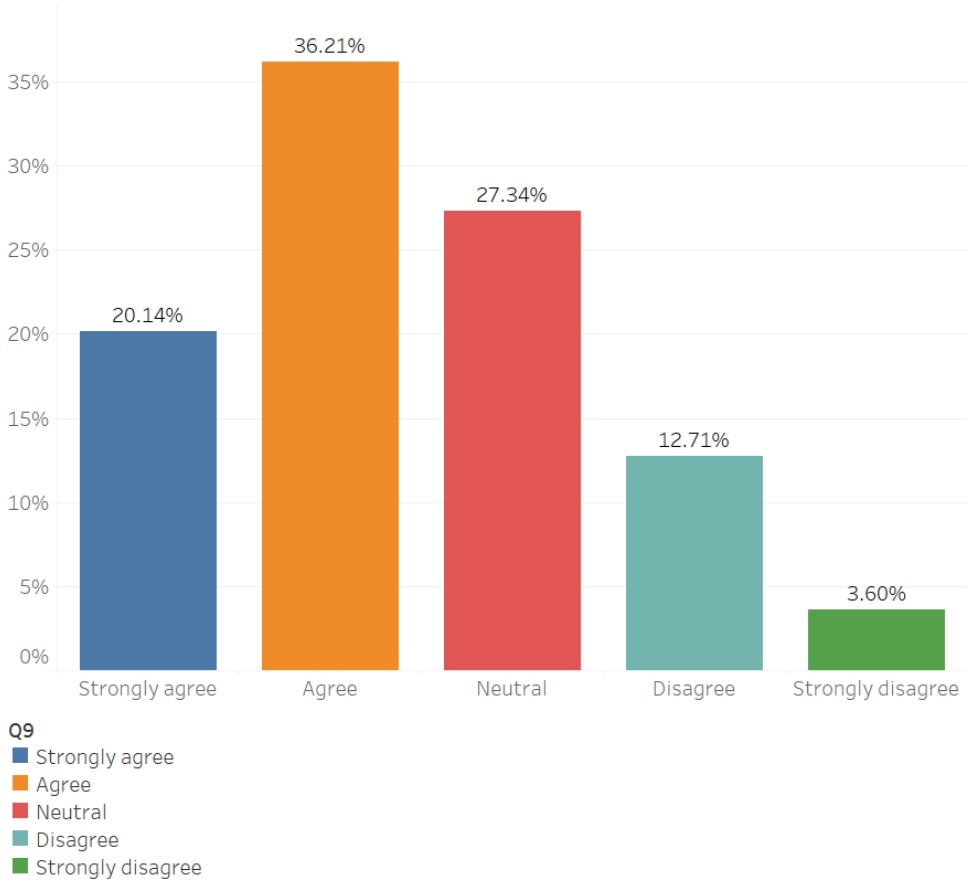

Figure 9: UF should implement a policy to manage students' use of AI in their work.

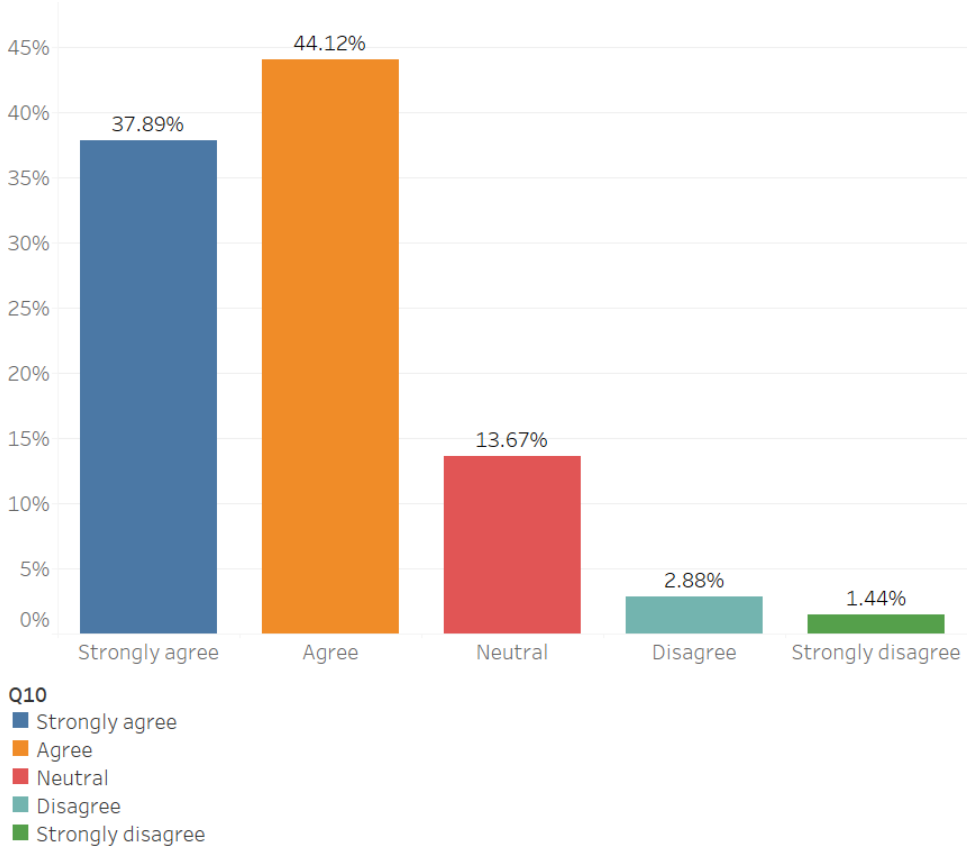

Figure 10: UF should put measures in place to protect students from any negative implications of AI, such as data collection measures.

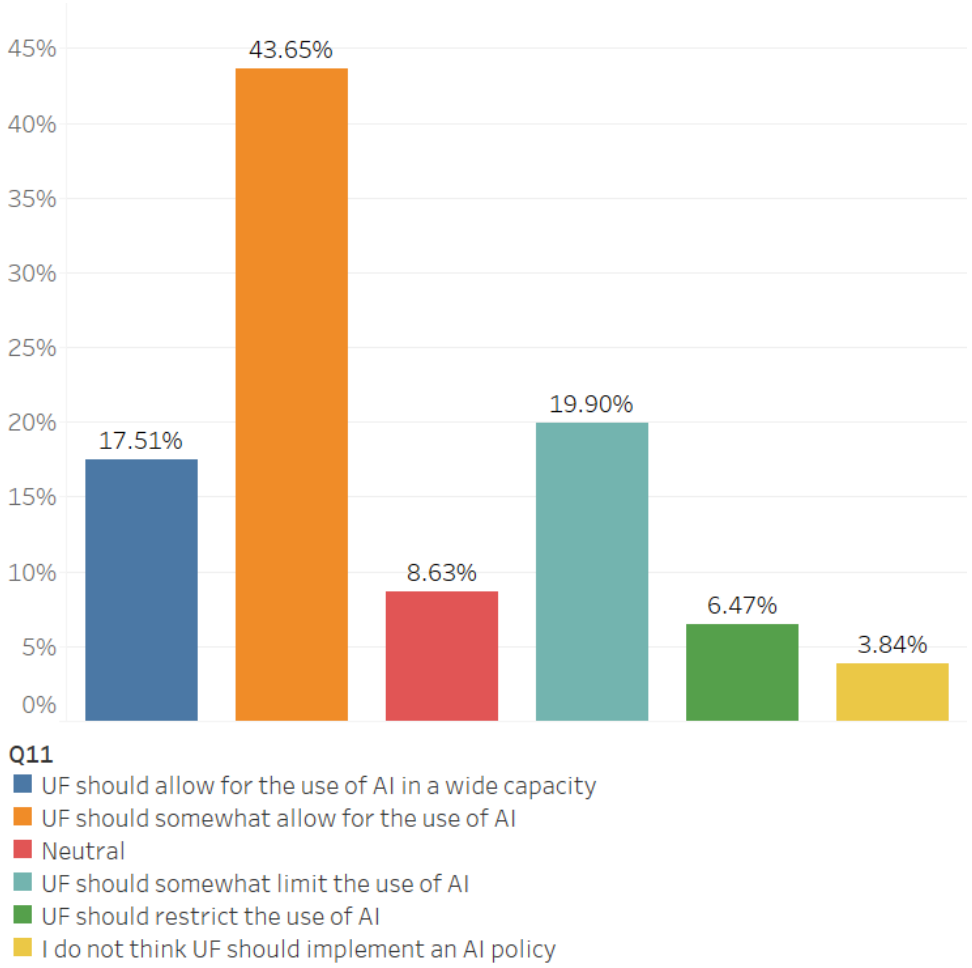

Figure 11: If UF were to implement an AI policy, do you think it should lean towards restricting AI or allowing for expansive use of AI?

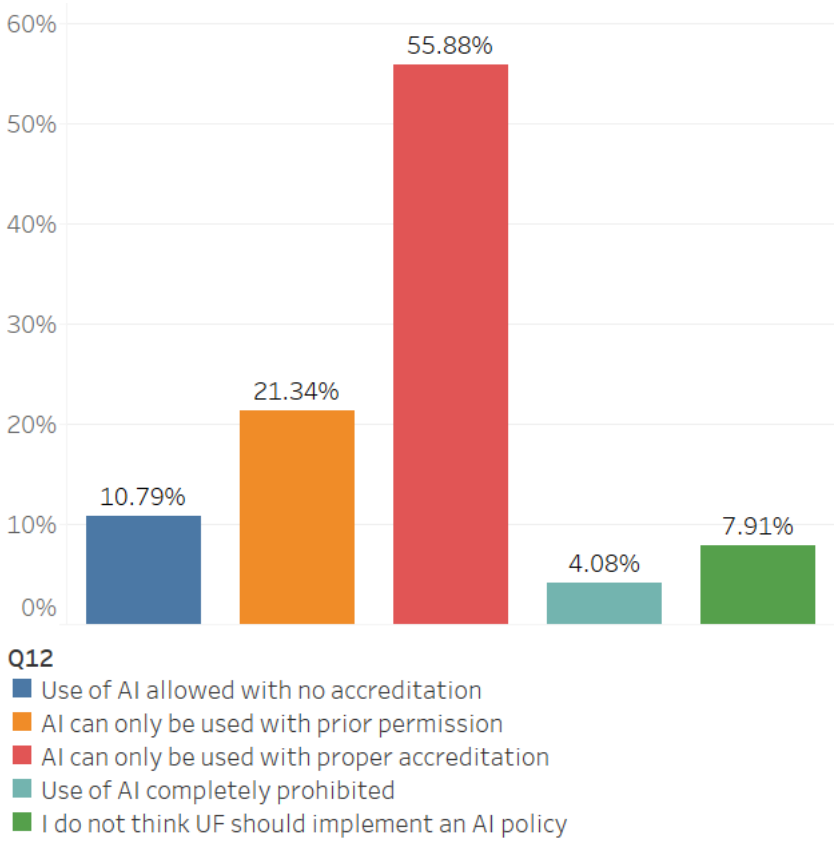

Figure 12: If UF were to implement an AI policy, what specific type of policy would you like to see implemented?

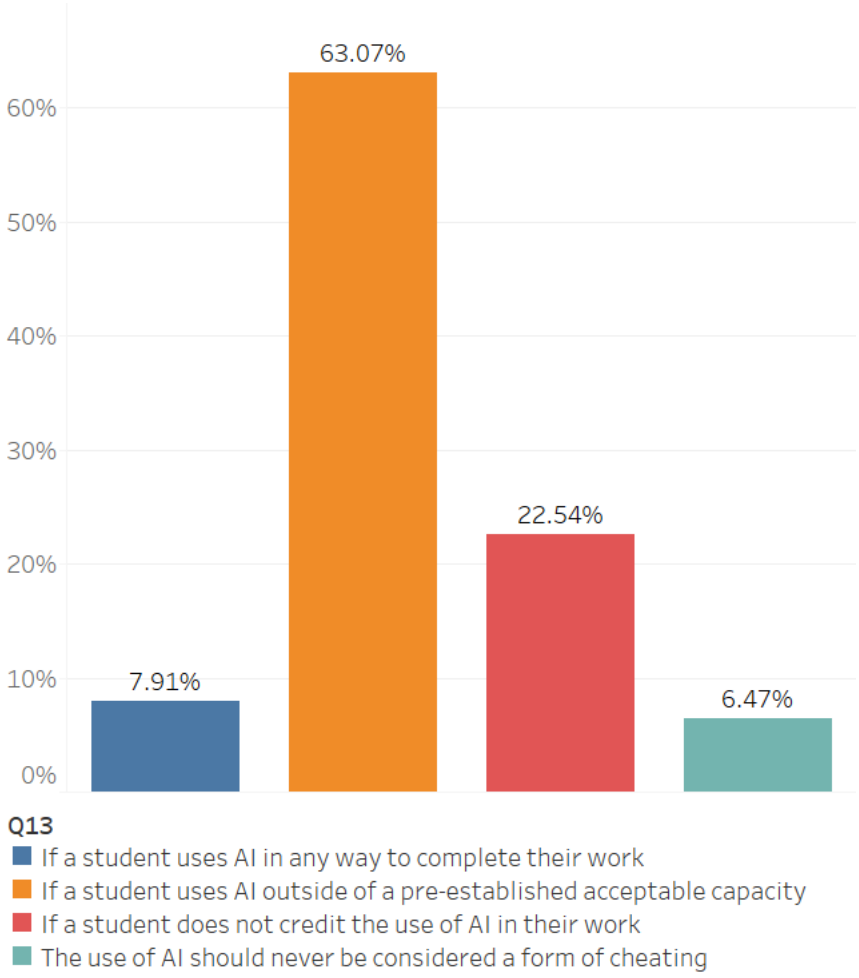

Figure 13: If UF were to implement an AI policy, when should AI be considered a form of cheating?

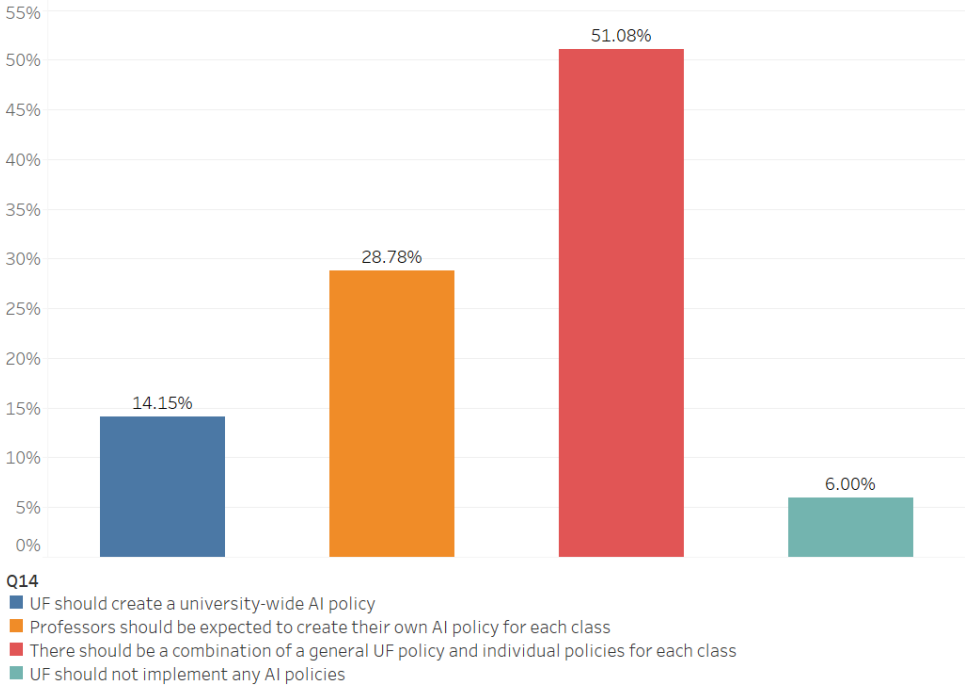

Figure 14: If UF were to implement an AI policy, should it be university-wide or tailored to each class?

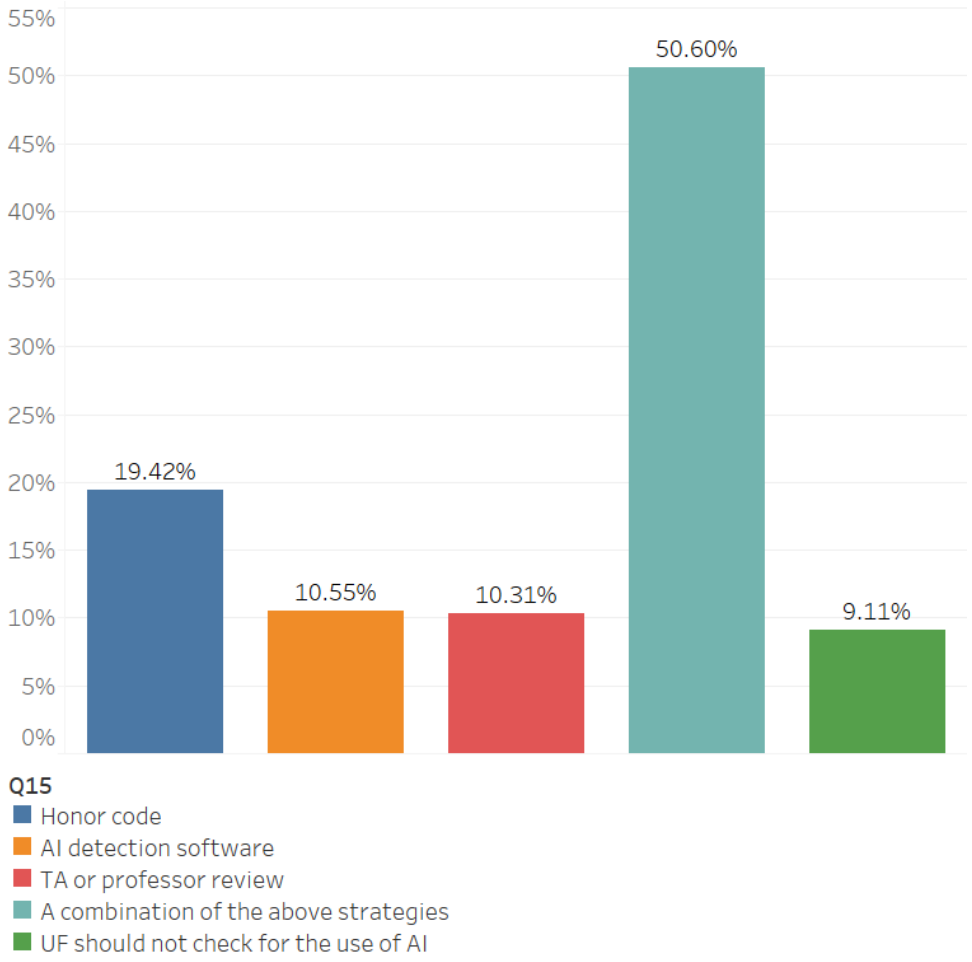

Figure 15: If UF were to implement an AI policy, how should UF hold students accountable in terms of detecting AI-generated work?

3.2 Results By Year

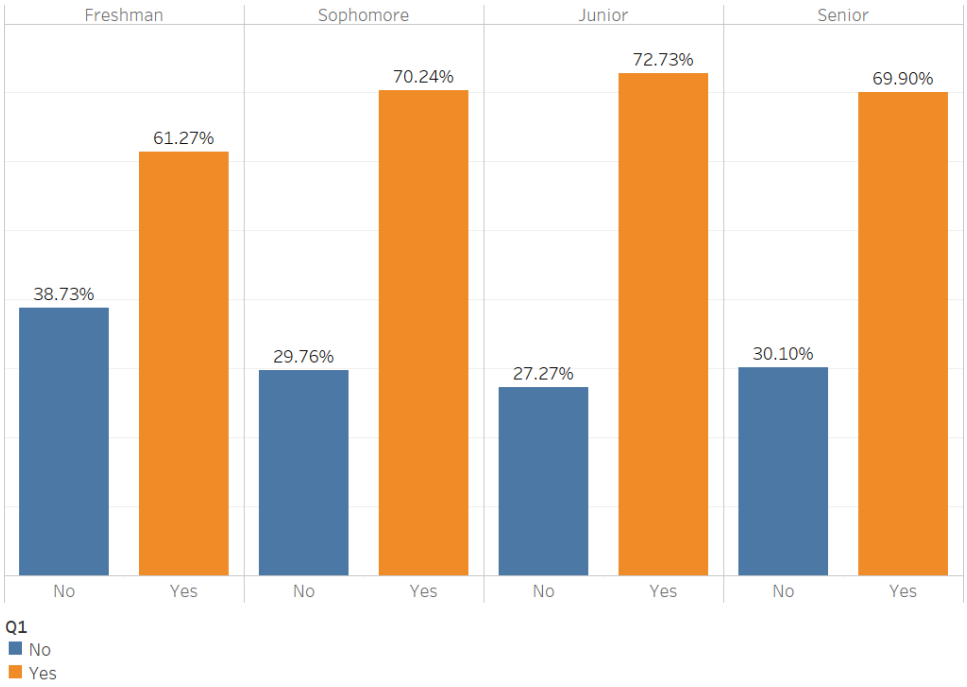

Figure 16: Have you ever used AI to help complete an assignment at UF?

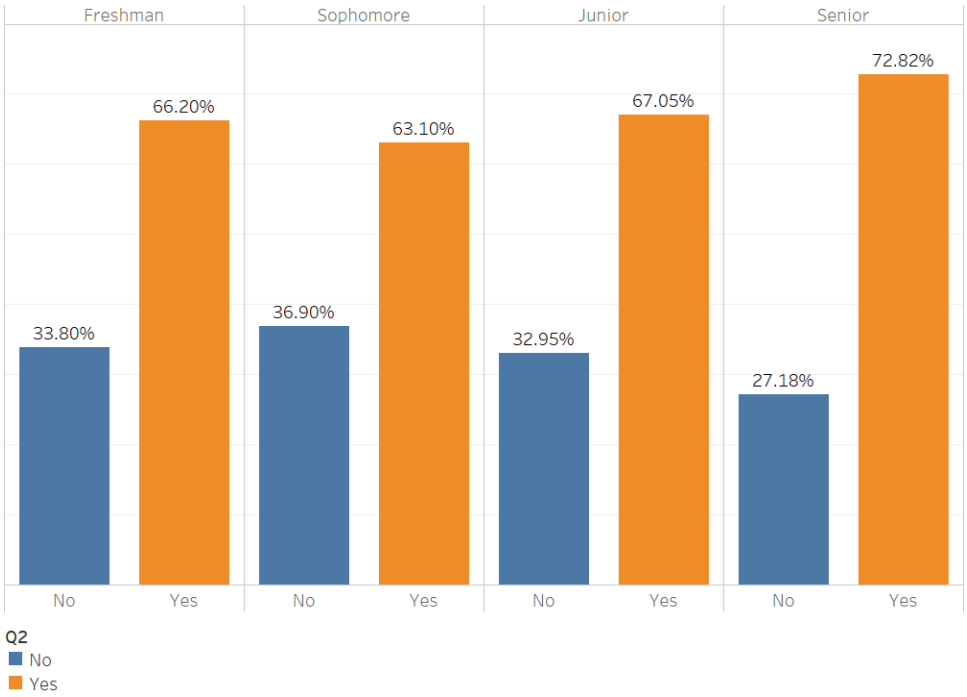

Figure 17: Have you ever questioned the accepted use of AI at UF?

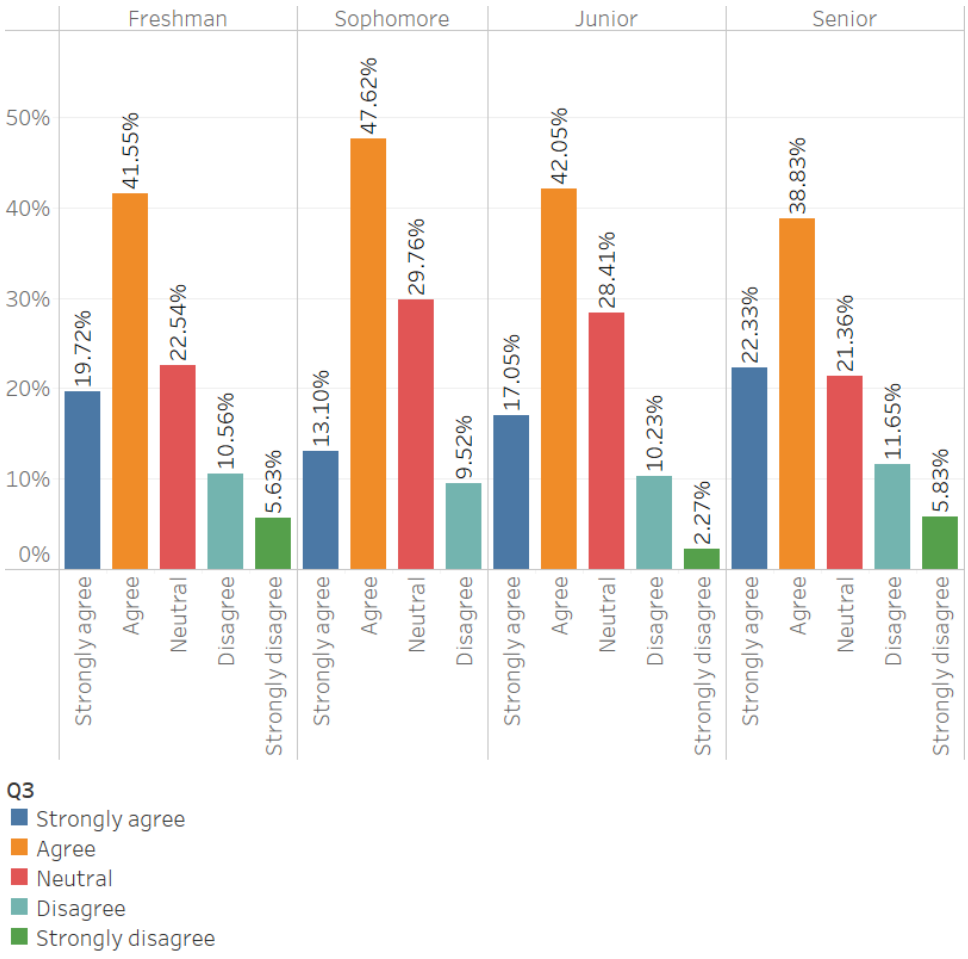

Figure 18: It is fair for UF students to use AI as an aid in completing assignments.

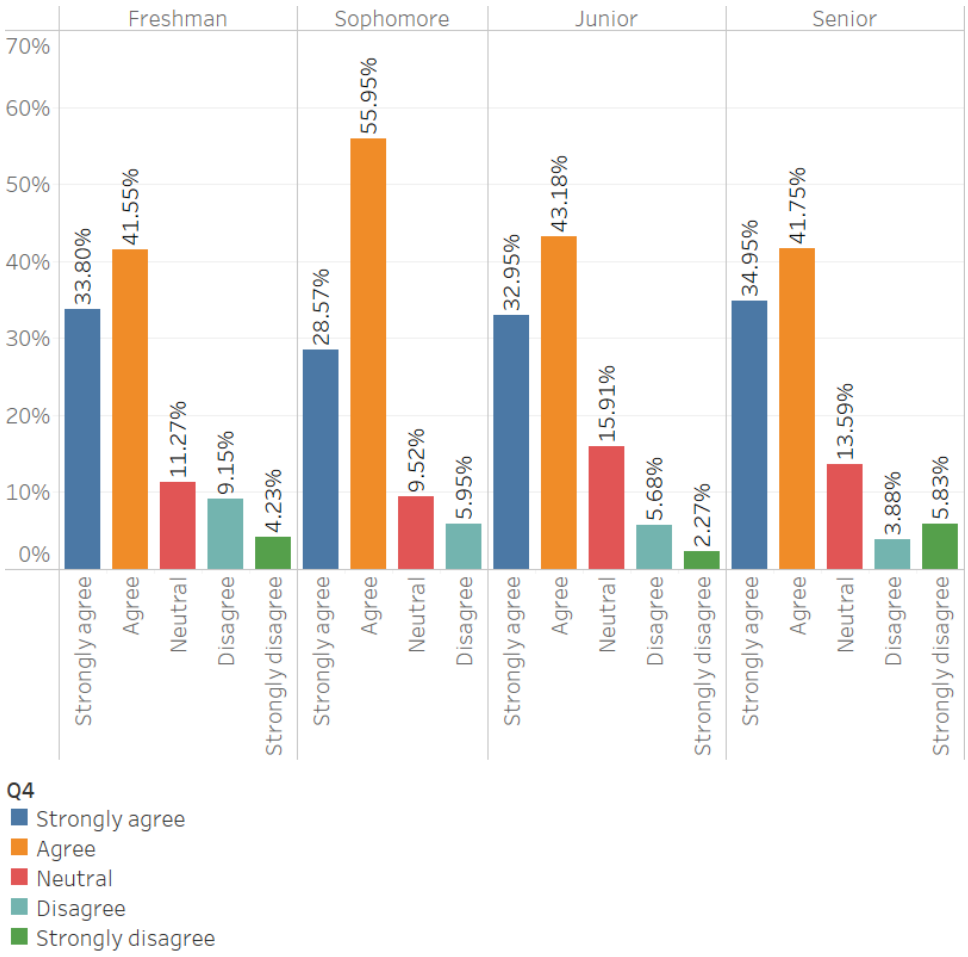

Figure 19: AI is a valuable academic tool.

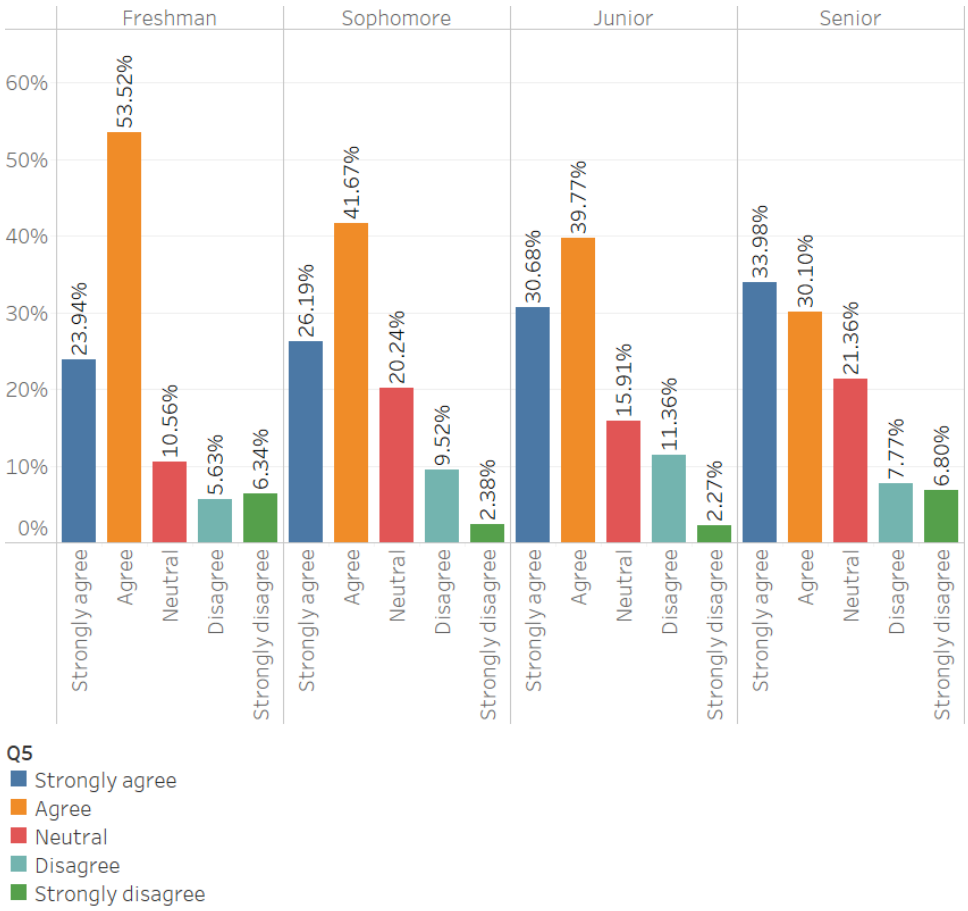

Figure 20: AI can enhance the quality of the work that I submit.

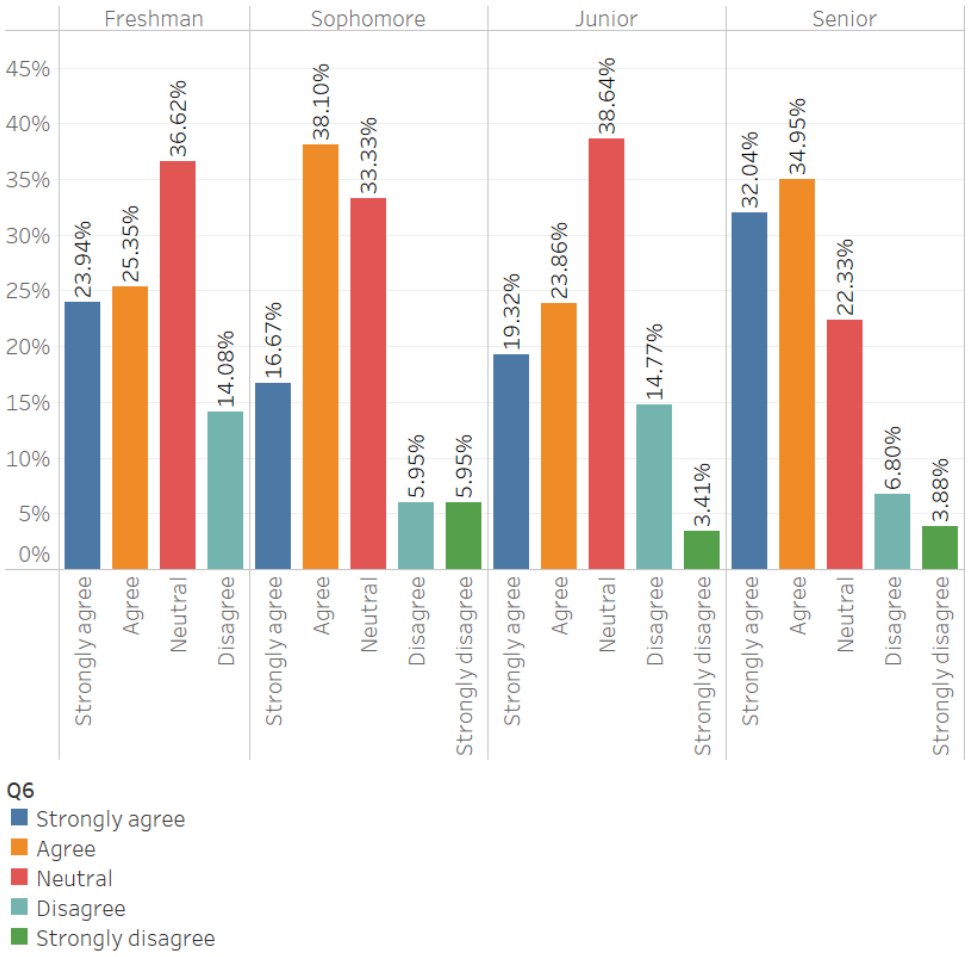

Figure 21: My own work is superior to that created with the help of AI.

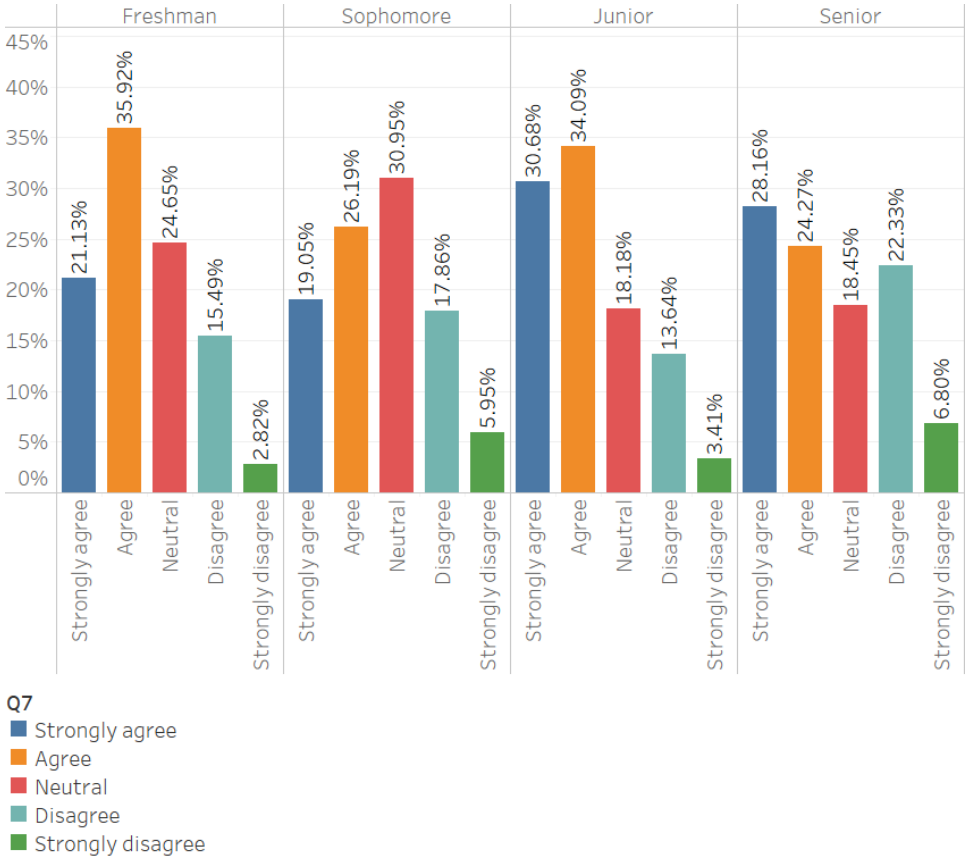

Figure 22: UF students should be required to disclose if they used AI in any capacity to complete their work.

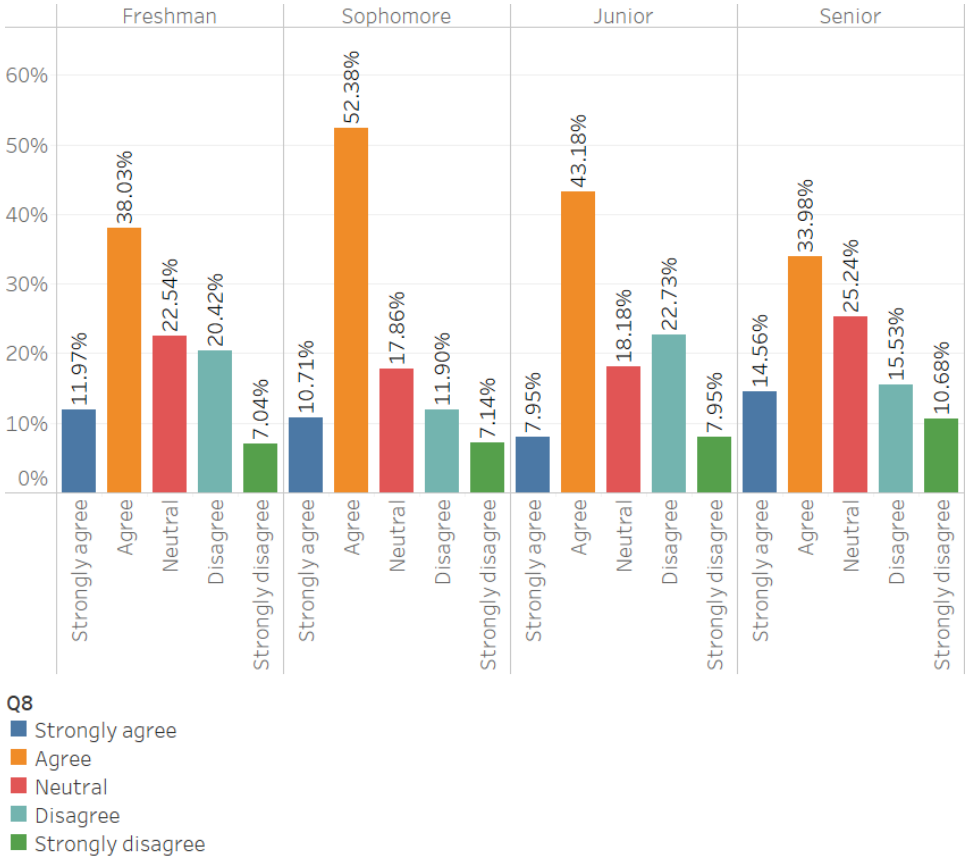

Figure 23: UF students should only be required to disclose the use of AI in particular circumstances.

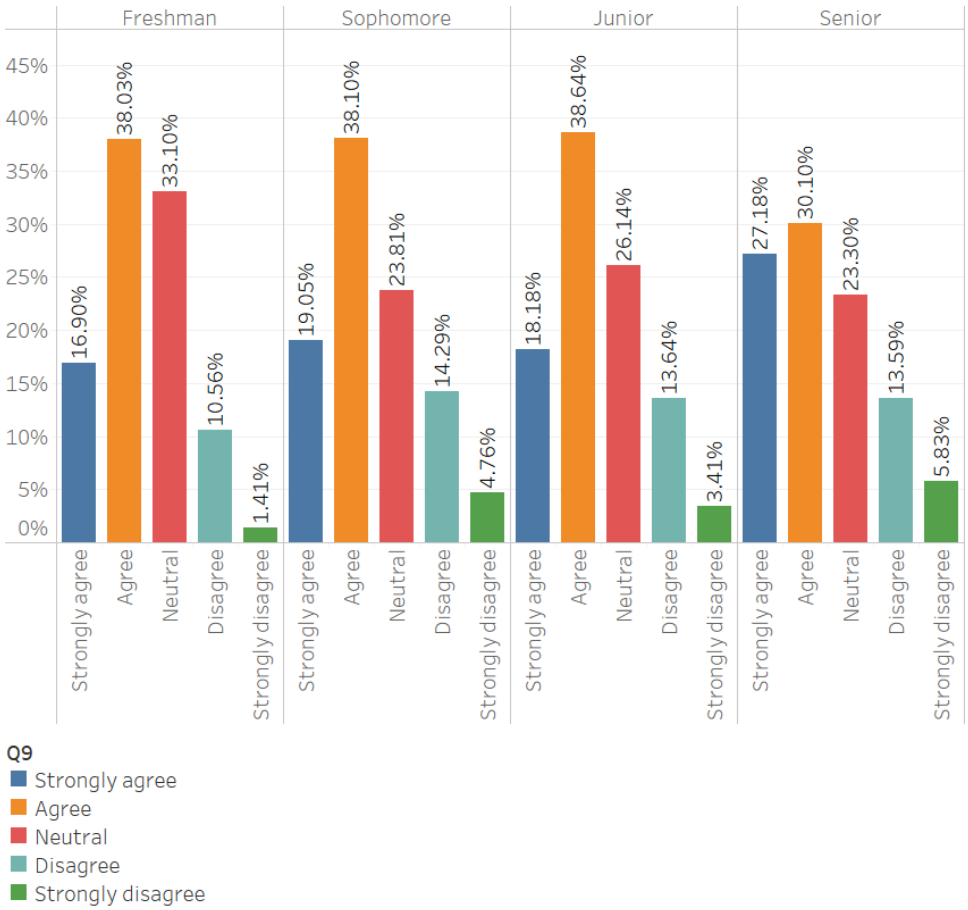

Figure 24: UF should implement a policy to manage students' use of AI in their work.

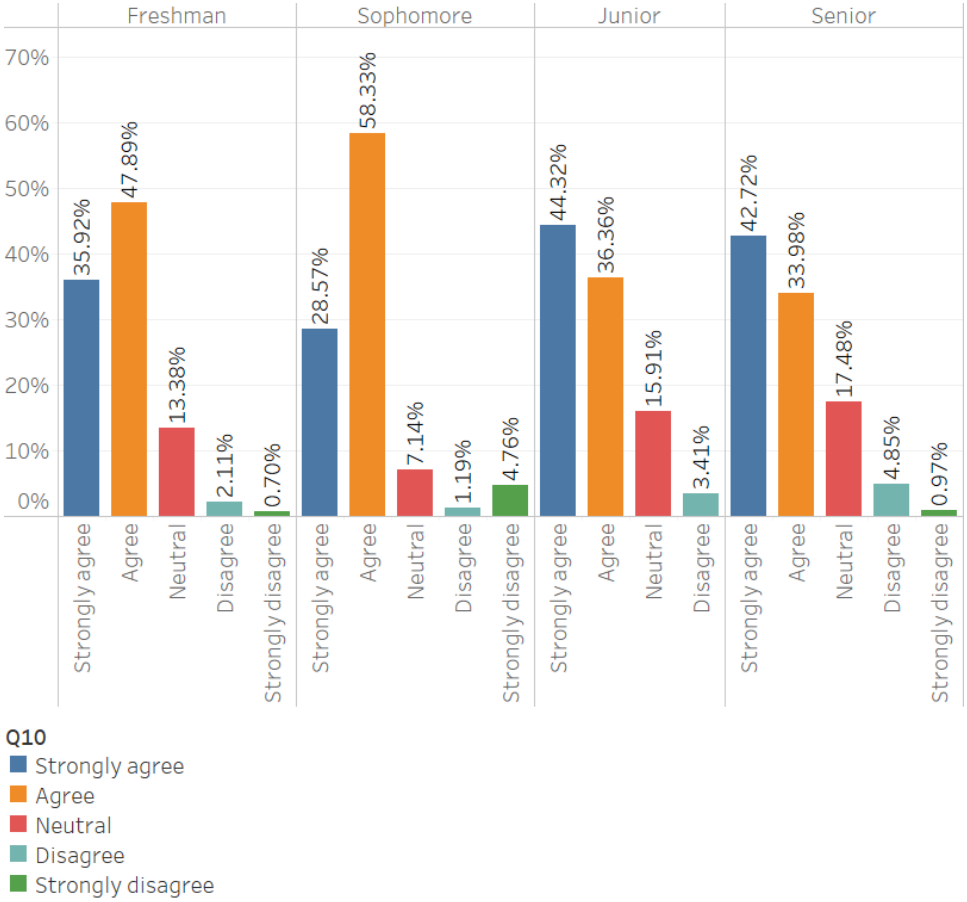

Figure 25: UF should put measures in place to protect students from any negative implications of AI, such as data collection measures.

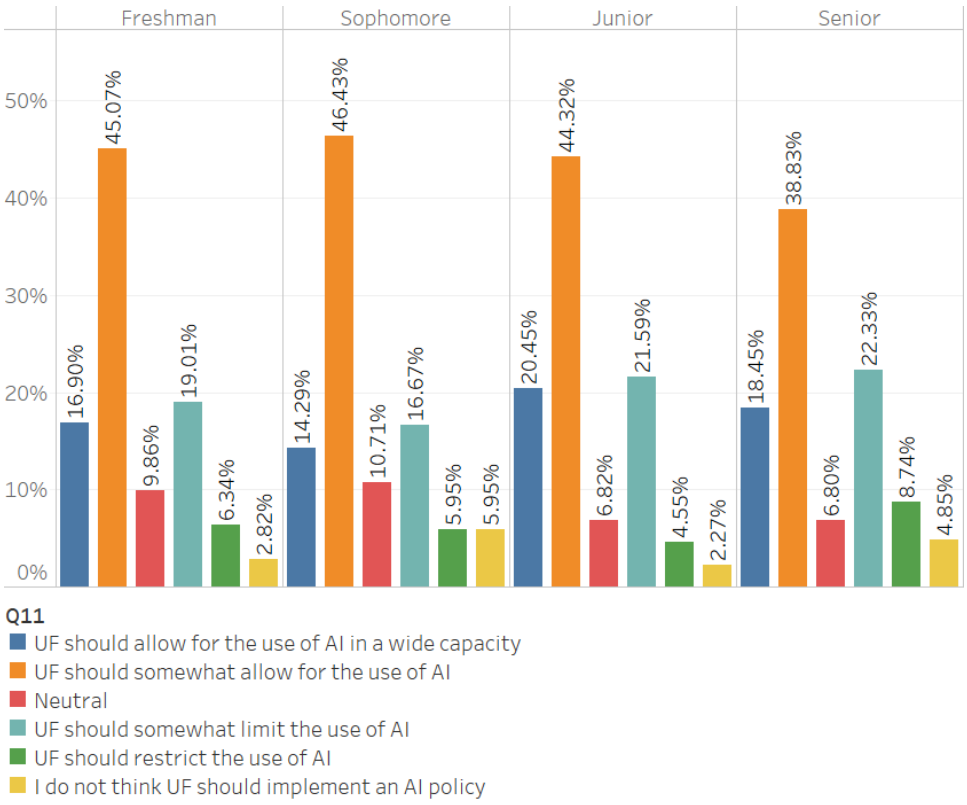

Figure 26: If UF were to implement an AI policy, do you think it should lean towards restricting AI or allowing for expansive use of AI?

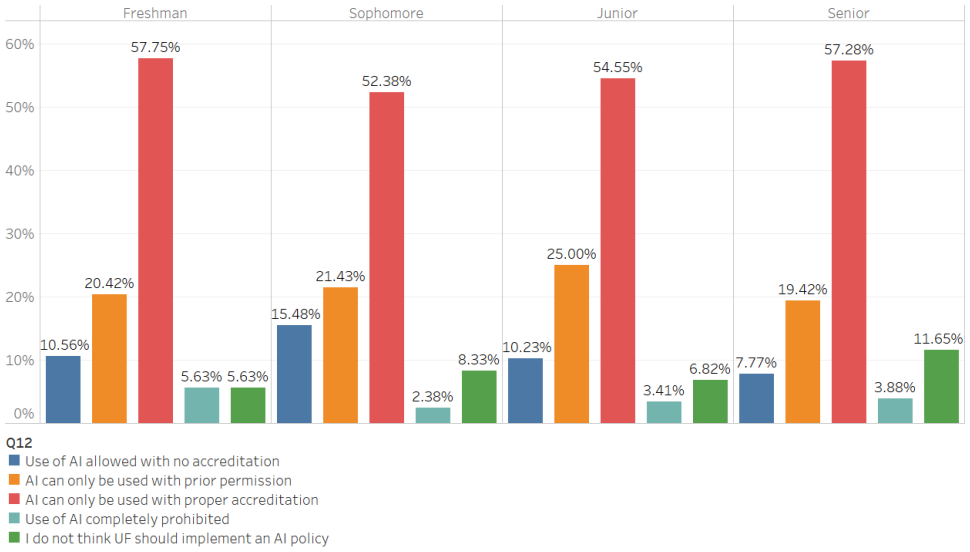

Figure 27: If UF were to implement an AI policy, what specific type of policy would you like to see implemented?

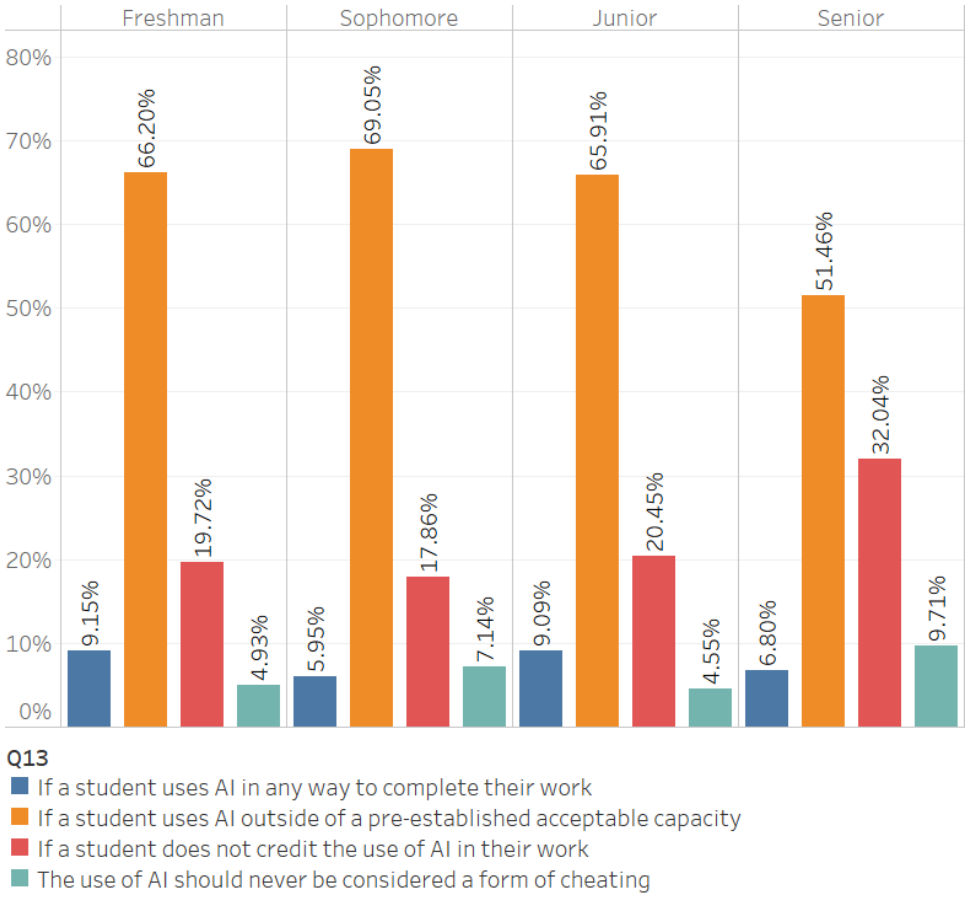

Figure 28: If UF were to implement an AI policy, when should AI be considered a form of cheating?

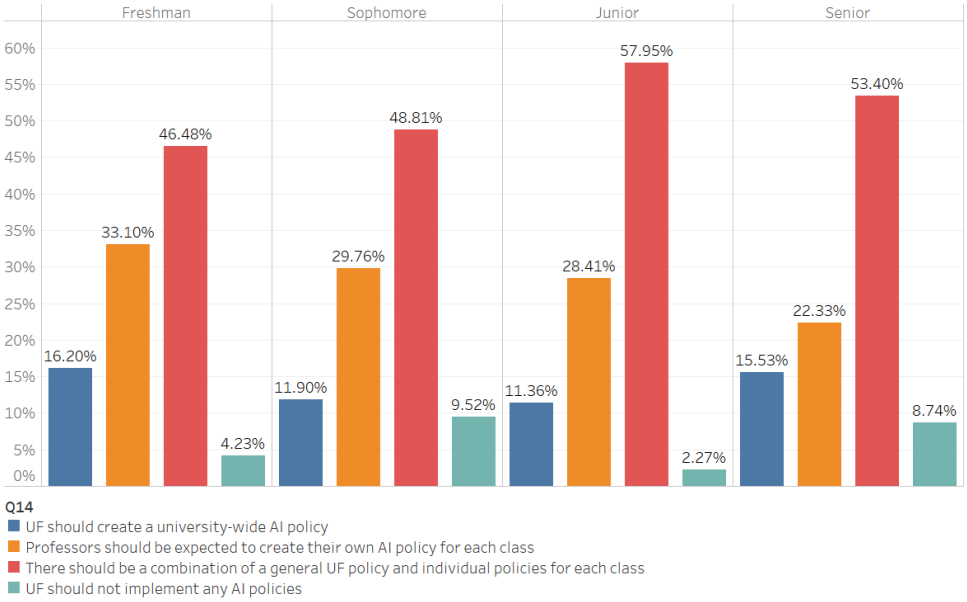

Figure 29: If UF were to implement an AI policy, should it be university-wide or tailored to each class?

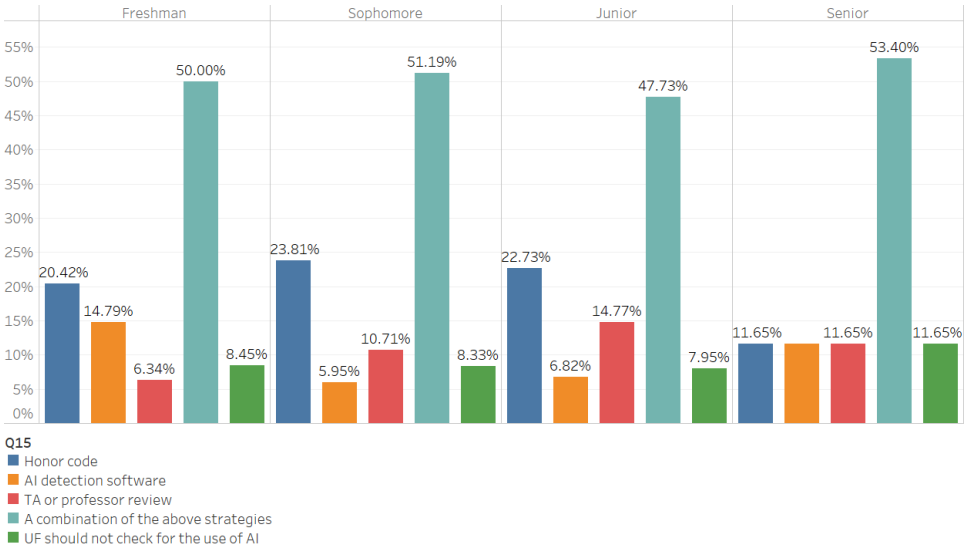

Figure 30: If UF were to implement an AI policy, how should UF hold students accountable in terms of detecting AI-generated work?

3.3 Projections

Question 5 found that a strong majority of students feel that AI can enhance the quality of their work, with over 70% saying they agree or strongly agree. From this data, it is projected that next year there will be a higher proportion of freshman who agree that AI can enhance the quality of their work, with a slope of +7.22% and a p-value of 0.03. It is also projected that there will be a lower proportion of next year's freshman who strongly agree with this statement, with a slope of -3.46% and a p-value of 0.007.

Question 14 found that slightly over half of UF undergraduates feel that there should be a combination of a general UF policy and individual policies for each class if UF were to have an AI policy. From this data, it is projected that next year there will be an increase in the proportion of freshmen who think that professors should create their own AI policy for each class, with a slope of +3.37% and a p-value of 0.03.

4 Discussion

This study revealed that the majority of UF undergraduate students agree or strongly agree that UF should implement a policy to manage students' use of AI. The highest proportion of students believe that if a policy were to be implemented, it should somewhat allow for the use of AI. Similar results were found in a previous study by the *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, which recorded that students desire clear policies on AI use, but they do not wish for these technologies to be banned entirely (Johnston et al. 2024).

When it comes to the specific type of policy students would like to see implemented, this study found that just over half of students desire a combination of a university-wide policy and individual policies for each class. Similar results were found in the study done by the *International Journal for Educational Integrity*. Their study did not provide an answer choice with the option to combine policies, however the majority of students chose either a university-wide policy or departmental policies

as opposed to banning them entirely or allowing AI to be used however students wished.

Based on these findings, UF should consider implementing policies to guide student use of AI in their academic work. These results highlight student desires for laying a groundwork for what is accepted and what is not when it comes to AI. Additionally, UF should consider providing students with information about the negative implications of AI and take measures to ensure student data is secure.

While this study provides valuable insights into the opinions of UF undergraduate students regarding AI, it was limited to demographic percentage distributions that may not reflect the actual population of UF undergraduates. In particular, the sample proportion of college and year may not reflect the true population proportion. For example, when the sample is broken down by college, 30.2% of the responses came from students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. This could be due to many survey responses being collected outside of Turlington Hall, which primarily houses the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Other demographic factors such as gender and ethnicity should also be considered. Future work could address these limitations through acquiring a larger sample size or using stratified sampling.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals that undergraduate students at the University of Florida are open to the permissive use of AI in higher education. However, students expressed a desire for clear expectations on when AI is considered appropriate in their work and when it is not. These results reflect the importance of helping students navigate the implications of AI in academia, ensuring its responsible and effective use.

The results of this research could be used to help influence and formulate a policy for AI use at UF that is reflective of their students' values. This research could also be beneficial to informing AI policies at other universities, but it is important to consider that each university's culture and

practices differ. So, other universities should also collect research from their own student bodies in order to create the most relevant policies.

Future research could benefit from surveying a larger sample of students and exploring more specific topics. Honing in on the implications of AI use in writing courses, for example, could provide more well-defined information on student opinions. Ultimately, this research offers a snapshot of UF students' current feelings on AI, so it will be important to continuously explore their inevitably evolving opinions in the future.

Publication Details and Disclosures

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Zea Miller for serving as my Honors Thesis Advisor. I am deeply grateful for his unwavering guidance and mentorship throughout the process of conducting, analyzing and presenting this research, and this project would not have been possible without his support. I would also like to thank the attendees and organizers of the 2024 Teaching in the Age of AI Conference at the University of Florida for the opportunity to present our findings and for their thoughtful questions and discussion. I would also like to thank the peer reviewers at JWAI for their recommendations for revision. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to all of the undergraduate students at the University of Florida who took the time to participate in our AI survey.

Funding

No funding supported this research.

Generative AI Use

AI was not used to complete this project, all of the writing in this text was composed by humans.

Biography

I am a graduate of the University of Florida Warrington College of Business with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Magna Cum Laude designation.

Editorial Note

This work, an adaptation of an honors thesis, was undertaken by an undergraduate student supervised by the managing editor of the journal. Therefore, the peer review process was overseen by the associate editor.

Copyright

"Examining Student Opinions about Artificial Intelligence at the University of Florida" © 2025 by Julia House is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 to the *Journal of Writing and Artificial Intelligence*.

References

BEERS, Brian, 2024. P-value, What It Is, How to Calculate It, and Examples. *Investopedia*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/p-value.asp

COLUMBIA, 2024. Generative AI Policy. *Columbia University Office of the Provost*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://provost.columbia.edu/content/office-senior-vice-provost/ai-policy

DUKE, 2024. Artificial Intelligence Policies. *Duke Learning Innovation & Lifetime Education*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://lile.duke.edu/ai-and-teaching-at-duke-2/artificial-intelligence-policies-in-syllabi-guidelines-and-considerations/

GLOVER, Joe, 2024. Building an AI University: an Administrator's Guide. *University of Florida*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://www.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/11/Building-an-AI-university-An-administrators-guide.pdf

JOHNSTON, Heather, WELLS, Rebecca, SHANKS, Elizabeth, BOEY, Timothy and PARSONS, Bryony, 2024. Student perspectives on the use of generative artificial intelligence technologies in higher education. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://edintegrity.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1007/s40979-024-00149-4

MINAEE, Shervin, MIKOLOV, Tomas, NIKZAD, Narjes, CHENAGHLU, Meysam, SOCHER, Richard, AMATRIAIN, Xavier and GAO, Jianfeng, 2024. Large language models: A survey. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2402.06196*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://arxiv.org/pdf/2402.06196

NIU, 2024. Class Policies for AI Tools. *Northern Illinois Univeristy Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/class-policies-for-ai-tools.shtml

ROOSE, Kevin, 2023. How Does Chat GPT Really Work?. *The New York Times*. Online. March 2023. Available from: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/28/technology/ai-chatbots-chatgpt-bing-bard-llm.html

SCHROEDER, Ray, 2024. Our Responsibility to Teach AI to Students. *Inside Higher Ed*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/blogs/online-trending-now/2024/07/31/our-responsibility-teach-ai-students

UCMO, 2024. Academic Policy Processes. *University of Central Missouri*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://www.ucmo.edu/offices/general-counsel/university-policy-library/academic-policies/academic-policy-processes/

UF, 2024. Florida's Strategic Investment in AI. *University of Florida*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://ai.ufl.edu/about/ai-initiatives/

UNC, 2024. Generative AI Usage Guidance. *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://provost.unc.edu/student-generative-ai-usage-guidance/

VANDERBILT, 2024. Syllabus AI Policies. *Vanderbilt College of Arts and Science Grand Challenge Initiative - Artificial Intelligence*. Online. 2024. Available from: https://as.vanderbilt.edu/gci-ai/syllabus-ai-policies/