CHAPTER 46.

WRITING PROGRAMS SHOULD QUICKLY CREATE UNILATERAL AI POLICIES ✨ *FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD PRECEDE ANY COLLECTIVE AI POLICIES*

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In an effort to quickly adjust to generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies that are reshaping teaching and learning of all kinds, many institutions are grappling with what GenAI policies should look like. *Inside Higher Ed*'s 2024 provosts' survey reports that while 63% of provosts are in the process of drafting a GenAI policy, only 20% have completed and published those policies (Quinn, 2024). Often the bellwether of change, writing programs would likely be early adopters and perhaps even developers of an institutional policy, in part because of the ways that generative AI is increasingly built into writing and research software including Microsoft Office and Google Drive and in part because of the digital writing expertise many faculty in the field have.

Despite efforts across institutions to develop GenAI policies, however, only about one in seven provosts said their colleges or universities had reviewed curricula to determine GenAI's role in any changes (Quinn, 2024), turning the focus more towards policy than towards teaching and learning itself. Many of these policies center around whether or not GenAI use violates academic integrity rather than on developing institution-wide faculty and student understandings of GenAI and how GenAI might be part of our future writing lives. In the absence of institutional policies that address the complexities of student and faculty use of GenAI, writing programs might take it upon themselves to produce a policy aimed at explicitly identifying how instructors should approach GenAI in their classes. In fact, some writing programs have already developed their own GenAI policies, including policies that state faculty need approval to either allow students to use GenAI in any coursework or to prohibit students from using GenAI at all.

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PRESSURES TO CREATE AI POLICIES

The pressure on writing programs to quickly create or adapt prescriptive GenAI policies comes from multiple angles, including faculty who are concerned with how GenAI will impact their approaches to teaching writing, the kinds of work they can expect from students, and even their own job security.

Writing faculty are thoughtful, critical, and careful instructors who work hard to incorporate new disciplinary trends and theories into their teaching. But, they may be fearful that their choices around GenAI may not be "right" and may want more explicit guidance about how their writing program or institution wants them to handle GenAI. Many writing faculty are contingent, too, which means that compounding their concern about best teaching practices is a fear for their jobs and careers.

However, unilateral policies, while well-intentioned, only serve to undermine writing faculty's agency over their own courses. By telling faculty what they want to hear—when and how to use, permit, and forbid the use of GenAI tools in the classroom—policies that have not been built out of faculty expertise and experiences with GenAI remove, in the short-term, the opportunity for faculty to learn more about GenAI and to make informed and deliberate choices for themselves. In the long-term, such unilateral policies would prevent writing instructors and programs from flexibly and nimbly responding to the ongoing evolution of GenAI technologies.

CHANGES TO THE DEFINITION OF "POLICY"

To address the tension between writing faculty's desire for explicit direction in how to use GenAI and the recommended flexibility needed to create a GenAI policy effective in the long-term, we should redefine what we mean by "policy." Chris W. Gallagher's (2016) "What is Policy?" argues that rather than following a conventional understanding of policy as a governing document, policies should be seen as shaping organizational spaces by presenting common understandings of an issue rather than stating exactly what people must do to enact a policy. Potential organizational spaces exist at different levels within the institution. The MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI (2024) claims that multi-tiered policies must be developed at the institutional, program or department, and individual class levels so that student learning in different contexts can be prioritized. At the program or department level, they recommend that GenAI policies are "advisory documents" that offer "direction to faculty members, which might include scenarios, sample syllabus language, and narrowed principles of ethical use based on the specifics of the discipline" (pp. 6-7). In keeping with

these recommendations and Gallagher's framework, writing programs should refrain from the impulse to quickly create overly-specific GenAI policies that are intended to be used by all faculty in their programs, including blanket policies that forbid or allow any use of GenAI. These can flatten important differences between faculty groups, student populations, and course assignments that mean faculty need more leeway to design their own specific GenAI policies.

GENERATIVE IDEA: FACULTY AI PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD PRECEDE FUTURE COLLECTIVE AI POLICIES

Instead of immediately trying to develop GenAI policies, writing programs should slow down similar to the ways Leah Heilig and Josh Chase's chapter in this collection suggests using slow design to sustain classroom practice and not acting too fast to address GenAI (which is also in keeping with Jennifer Sano-Franchini et al.'s work in *Refusing GenAI in Writing Studies, 2024*). Programs could then create resources and offer professional development opportunities that give faculty the organizational spaces to engage with the critical thinking required to understand GenAI and the ethical problems GenAI poses, to consider GenAI's role in various stages of the writing process, to support students as they choose whether or not to use GenAI, and to develop their own policies about GenAI use in their classes. *Inside Higher Ed*'s survey revealed that 92% of institutions had faculty or staff requesting training on artificial intelligence tools and technologies Quinn, 2024). Professional development helps to assuage some of faculty's concerns by providing a stronger foundation from which to work as they re-envision what their courses will look like with this new technology, and almost 80% of institutions surveyed have offered GenAI-related training to faculty. This approach facilitates faculty's own learning about GenAI, which will increase their capacity to make their own well-informed decisions about how GenAI can be used when teaching writing, particularly as GenAI technologies continue to evolve.

In addition to this institutional work, as Laura Proszak's chapter in this collection points out, writing programs need to consider the specific needs of various faculty groups in learning about GenAI—what it is, ethical concerns, student learning implications, etc.—and how they can support faculty making individual, evidence-based decisions about GenAI that they can then clearly communicate with their students. An initial step could involve having a listening session with faculty about what they are noticing with GenAI use in their classes or sending out a survey to gather information about ideas or concerns. Based on listening to faculty, writing programs can then build from work in writing

studies and education such as Annette Vee et al.'s (2023) *TextGenEd: Teaching with Text Generation Technologies* or Jose Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson's (2024) *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* as well as the work happening in other writing programs to help educate faculty about GenAI. In efforts to decrease individual faculty labor and time spent in grappling with GenAI, writing programs should compensate local faculty with GenAI expertise to develop succinct and easy-to-digest recommendations for faculty who are less familiar with GenAI and who may not have time to fully investigate GenAI for themselves. Developing this faculty expertise can help writing programs enact Gallagher's point that policies should be developed with those affected by them.

EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL SPACES

In our own context, we have seen how messy an approach across organizational spaces can be, as well as how it opens doors to faculty having in-depth, crucial conversations about how GenAI use affects teaching and learning across faculty and student groups. At the institutional level, one organizational space in our university is a new Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer who is focused on AI in research and partnerships with companies. Our center for teaching and learning, another organizational space on our campus, has a very flexible stance that includes recommended GenAI syllabus language that we adopted into our program's syllabus guidelines, including alternatives from forbidding GenAI use to allowing use in some instances to open use. In our program's own organizational space, we do not have a program policy, but we had faculty conversations about GenAI in 2023 and developed an initial informative webpage about generative AI. This past year, we compensated faculty with GenAI expertise to offer a workshop about integrating GenAI into writing courses and to create step-by-step resources for faculty interested in experimenting with GenAI in their courses, including in brainstorming, research, and editing/revision. We continue to talk about and add information about the ethical implications, particularly environmental effects, and about teaching implications, such as the effect on English language learners, to these materials as faculty conversations and experimentations continue.

These ongoing conversations and ever-changing resources are not as clear, perhaps, as writing programs simply telling faculty what they can and cannot do with GenAI in their classes. In some ways, stating exactly what faculty should do would be simpler for writing programs and for everyone in the short run. However, in the long run GenAI will continue to evolve and writing programs may struggle to fully account for the many ways faculty and students might

use GenAI in their teaching and learning. Specific guidelines could also alienate faculty and students who may have goals that do not align with a writing program's position on GenAI use but that are valid ones for their own teaching and learning. That said, in the short run, offering a supportive environment in which recommendations are provided to faculty who then make decisions about GenAI use can help faculty be clear with their students about whether or not GenAI can be used in their classes and why. In the long run, this professional development can also build faculty expertise so that, if the day comes when a GenAI guiding document is needed in a writing program, more faculty understand the implications of those decisions and have experiences with their own classes and students that they can bring to bear on any future collective policy a program makes.

Prioritizing faculty support also opens up more opportunities for sharing across writing programs and faculty about how they are approaching GenAI and why. Rather than forestalling conversations and evolving conceptions of GenAI in writing, having a flexible approach at a programmatic level can encourage writing programs and faculty to talk with each other and to work collectively to build knowledge about how GenAI impacts writing students' learning. Such collaborative spaces have already begun at events across the field. These conversations and collaborations are the crucial things writing programs need to focus on now, not drafting policies that try to force all faculty and students to use or not use GenAI in the same way.

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