JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Volume 2, Issue 2 Fall 2025

How Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technologies Are Used to Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) from the Perspective of Higher Education Practitioners

Juanita Wooten
West Chester University

Shama Grimmage
Purdue University Global

Cynthia Steele
Alabama State University

Abstract

In higher education, artificial intelligence (AI) continues to be widely used to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. April (2021) defines diversity as the recognition of physical and socio-cultural differences, equity as fair access to opportunities and resources for everyone, and inclusion as fostering a respectful, welcoming environment where all feel valued and empowered. AI has been observed to be an innovative technological tool used to foster DEI for learners at higher education institutions. According to Popenici & Kerr (2017), AI refers to computer systems that can perform tasks similar to human abilities, such as learning, adapting, problem-solving, correcting mistakes, and using data to carry out complex tasks. This study gathered insights from National Organization for Student Success (NOSS) members on how AI is used to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at two- and four-year institutions. Participants believe AI can improve DEI but are uncertain about specific strategies.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), higher education

Recommended Citation

Wooten, J., Grimmage, S., & Steele, C. (2025). How artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are used to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) from the perspective of higher education practitioners. *Journal of the National Organization for Student Success*, *2*(2), 62-78. https://doi.org/10.61617/jnoss.52

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) systems and tools can spark a paradigm shift toward equity in education in the rapidly evolving field of higher education. To minimize inequality and promote inclusion, equity in education essentially means providing individualized learning opportunities, resources, and environments that meet the specific needs and abilities of each student (Roshanaei et al., 2023). Consistent disparities, including socioeconomic disparities, geographic barriers, racial and gender biases, and differences in opportunities and resources, have historically plagued the education sector. Artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced with the ability to analyze data, recognize patterns, and perform predictive analytics. These opportunities provide subtle opportunities to support more equitable learning environments. Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a critical component in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in today's educational environment (Slimi & Carballido, 2023). Over the past few years, AI has made great strides in a variety of fields, including education.

In recent years, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have faced growing scrutiny and resistance both nationally and in higher education (Claville, 2024). In recent executive orders given to the Department of Education, it seems many institutions are going to see large-scale changes. As a result, adjustments that are occurring are leading educational institutions to consider how they will be able to remain diverse while following new rules, which speaks to flexibility and foresight.

This study was conducted prior to recent legislative and executive actions that have significantly impacted DEI initiatives in higher education. While the policy environment is shifting, the importance of fostering diverse and inclusive learning environments remains widely recognized. As institutions adapt to new regulations, questions of how to sustain diversity efforts within these frameworks highlight the need for flexibility and long-term planning. Regardless of how DEI is defined—whether as a theory, practice, or mindset—research has long underscored its multifaceted role in higher education (Carleton, 2021), extending beyond race to encompass a broad range of human experiences.

The role of artificial intelligence in higher education is gaining recognition as a competitive edge, with its impact extending beyond enhancing teaching and learning in higher education. AI has the potential to change the traditional operational structure of the education industry, enabling significant changes to be made in teaching and learning processes in higher education, which are made easier through a modern technology infrastructure (Roshanaei et al. 2023). This transformation of education will supplant the conventional uniform education system with a more sophisticated, accommodating, and adaptable one (Roshanaei et al. 2023).

It is essential to recognize and address the many challenges that AI presents regarding DEI to harness its full potential in teaching and learning. Leaders today must recognize the relationship between AI and DEI to aid in preventing unbiased decisions, resulting in the promotion of equal opportunities and mitigating biases brought on by AI systems.

In an attempt to understand the role of AI technologies in actualizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at a post-secondary level, this study aims to understand the perspectives of professionals working within the higher education field. The combination of AI and DEI concepts provides advantages and problems to be solved. Adopting these technologies would enable more precise and personalized educational support for all students. They can also help identify a student's needs, biases in institutional policies, and improve equitable access to under-resourced sources, all of which would lead to making it easier for students to be provided with a

quality education. Additionally, this study will focus on the ways institutions can begin to incorporate AI technologies and ensure they are implemented in a way that positively impacts DEI goals. This is done by anticipating the issues that might arise from AI implementation and giving suggestions on how to solve these problems.

Literature Review

Until recently, several higher education institutions emphasized DEI as core institutional values in their programs, mission, leadership, and culture (Colleges of Distinction, n.d.). Integrating AI tools can help faculty streamline DEI efforts within their courses, promote a more inclusive learning environment, and fulfill the university's commitment to diversity and equity (Bitton-Bailey et al., n.d.). Various studies have identified how AI can be beneficial in supporting DEI efforts at institutions. AI has been around for approximately 70 years but has been rapidly growing in higher education in recent years (Khatri & Karki, 2023). Chen et al. (2020) stated that AI technologies may be implemented in a way that provides equitable and inclusive educational access to marginalized learners, such as individuals with disabilities, refugees who are not in school, and those who are in remote locations. Chen et al. (2020) further stated that Telepresence robotics, an example of AI technologies, allow students with special needs to attend school from home or the hospital. As a result, this technology supports inclusion, giving students access to their education and the ability to keep learning regardless of their disability. By implementing AI technology in learning environments, educators can meet the unique needs of each student in an effective and engaging manner; AI has the potential to transform education by offering personalized learning and transforming teaching methods (Onesi-Ozigagun et al., 2024).

Johnson and Davis (2024) provide an analysis of how the use of AI-powered tools can help to bridge the gap for underserved and underrepresented populations who are more inclined to experience access and academic barriers through individualized assistance. AI tools can help to provide opportunities to students with educational, financial, and social resources, which can increase their ability to be successful. If a student’s initial language is not English, an AI language tool can translate the student’s primary language into English, which then increases the student’s opportunity toward academic success. Similarly, AI technologies can help to address disparities in STEM-related programs in higher education and promote equitable access and inclusivity for minoritized students (Garcia Ramos & Wilson-Kennedy, 2024).

McDonald et al. (2024) suggested that, similar to other digital technologies, Generative AI (GenAI) is creating an optimistic path for equity; for example, learners can use GenAI for writing support and other academic skills. McDonald et al. (2024) further stated that this type of writing support can assist non-native English speakers or provide access to educational resources that might otherwise be limited by financial constraints for others. To meet the needs of today's diverse learners, the traditional one-size-fits-all approaches are not effective solutions; however, AI has the potential to accommodate learners' needs to receive instruction tailored to their specific learning styles and strengths (Onesi-Ozigagun et al., 2024). As with all technologies, there are benefits and challenges to utilizing technology. When used properly, AI can help to support and empower administrators, teachers, and students, especially when the tools enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to Roscoe et al. (2022), AI in Education (AIED) can enhance learning opportunities for a broad range of students, and the research can further deepen our understanding of DEI. The relationship between AI and DEI can be bi-directional in the

sense that they can both work to improve learners' experiences. It is stressed that in order for AI to be effective in this context, it is imperative for the data to be well prepared by individuals who are familiar with the benefits of any DEI policies and the diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and learning backgrounds of students.

> Slimi and Carballido (2023) examine the importance of policies being in place that effectively limit biases and promote fairness and equity in AI. In their findings, the researchers recommend that institutions provide training, put policies in place to protect individuals' learning, and ensure there is transparency in the algorithms. This would help to avoid biases based upon race, gender, or protected status so that AI does not displace people from their higher education jobs. As it relates to DEI, AI technologies have the potential to support and provide access to learning to all regardless of any barriers due to race, gender, cultural background, financial status, location, and learning abilities, but substantial training of the AI tools, transparency, and policies must be put in place by colleges and universities for its effective usage and benefits for serving the identified populations (Khatri & Karki, 2023).

Based on the research, AI can benefit learning in varied ways; however, there are challenges in teaching, research, and scholarship, as well as ethical concerns related to academic integrity and originality (Dubose & Marshall, 2023). Other researchers have similar concerns regarding AI in an academic setting. According to Khatri and Karki (2023), the use of AI raises concerns surrounding academic integrity, ethical issues, and pedagogical concerns since there is an increased capability to plagiarize material and to become less creative or authentic when producing original work. There is also the issue of privacy and protecting sensitive information but still maintaining the integrity of scientific research.

This literature explores methods in which AI can be used as a tool for expanding equity for students (Chen et al., 2020; Johnson & Davis, 2024; Nye, 2015). It also suggests ways in which personalized learning and instructional innovation can further provide successful pathways for students (McDonald et al., 2024; Onesi-Ozigagun et al., 2024). It examines the necessity for ethical, pedagogical, and policy considerations (Dubose & Marshall, 2023; Khatri & Karki, 2023; Roscoe et al., 2022; Slimi & Carballido, 2023). The literature reveals a consensus that AI, when utilized appropriately, has the potential to advance DEI in higher education. By providing access, personalized learning, academic, financial, and social support to underserved student populations, and training to users, an opportunity for positive outcomes exists. Policies that address ethical concerns, the elimination of bias, and the proper integration of AI technologies would help improve educational practices for students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

Methods

Study Design, Population, and Setting

This research aimed to explore how AI technologies are used to promote DEI from the perspective of higher education practitioners. Proper research approval was received before the study. Using a qualitative design approach, the researchers gathered 36 responses from professionals at two- and four-year universities, including faculty, staff, administrators, and others located across various regions of the United States. The remote study was conducted with active members of the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS). Participants received

an email containing a cover letter explaining the study overview, objectives, and timeline, along with a link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey. The cover letter explicitly stated that participation was voluntary.

This study allowed the researchers to explore how NOSS higher education practitioners perceive and respond to the use of AI technologies at their institutions in promoting DEI. Participants shared their experiences with the topic to the extent that they felt comfortable.

Survey and Data Analysis

The researchers created an original survey using the anonymous Qualtrics tool to explore how AI technologies are used to promote DEI from the perspective of higher education practitioners. The survey included basic demographic questions (e.g., participants' job role, work modality, work location, type of institution, and years of employment). Participants were also asked open-ended questions to gather their views on how their institutions use AI technologies to promote DEI, what actions higher education leaders should take to ensure AI tools are used ethically and effectively, and their opinions on the best ways to leverage AI technology to support DEI-related programs. Additionally, participants shared their thoughts on how AI has impacted DEI policies at their institutions and how AI can improve DEI efforts.

The researchers employed a visual data mapping approach to organize and analyze qualitative responses, grouping thematically or by recurring related perspectives using distinct visual markers. This approach facilitated the easier identification of patterns and relationships among participants' responses. The method was informed by principles of thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which emphasizes systematic coding and categorization (organizing data) to identify and analyze key themes within qualitative data. The Qualtrics survey link was distributed via email, and all data collected remained anonymous. The survey data were stored on an encrypted server, accessible only to the researchers. Once submitted, the anonymous data could not be withdrawn, as it was unidentifiable. Data analysis took place in a private setting, during a team Zoom call with the researchers, ensuring confidentiality and minimal risk of external observation.

Results

The targeted population for this study included 36 members of the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS) who occupy diverse roles in higher education, such as administration, faculty, staff, and others. Respondents who indicated at the beginning of the survey that they were not currently performing in a specific role within post-secondary education were excluded from the results. The survey consisted of ten questions, including five open-ended and five short-answer questions, administered via an electronic Qualtrics survey. (See Appendix A for survey questions.)

Table 1 shows the range of professional roles among participants in higher education. Nearly half (47%) identified as faculty, followed by 28% in administrative roles and 19% as staff. A smaller group (6%) selected "Other" to describe their role. These responses were provided in an open-ended format via an electronic Qualtrics survey. The percentages reported reflect the distribution of participants across the different job categories.

Table 1

Participants' Job Roles (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Faculty	17	47
Administration	10	28
Staff	7	19
Others	2	6

Table 2 presents the distribution of participants across four reported work modalities: on-campus, multiple, hybrid, and virtual. Half (50%) of the participants reported working primarily on campus. A quarter, 25% indicated they engaged in multiple work modalities, while 14% reported working in hybrid environments. A smaller group (11%) indicated that they worked fully virtually. The “multiple” category refers to those who selected more than one primary work modality.

Table 2

Participants’ Work Modality (N=36)

Category	Count (36)	Percentage (%)
On Campus	18	50
Multiple	9	25
Hybrid	5	14
Virtual	4	11

Table 3 summarizes participants’ work locations based on open-ended responses entered in a designated text field. Respondents were located across 15 U.S. states. The highest concentrations were in Pennsylvania (20%), Alabama (17%), and Arizona (17%). Smaller percentages were reported from Michigan, South Carolina, and Texas, each representing 6% of the sample. The category "Other" includes states with a single respondent (3% each), including Illinois, Kansas, Nevada (Las Vegas), Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. One respondent listed their location as “United States of America (USA)” without specifying a state; this entry is also included in the "Other" category.

Table 3

Participants' Work Location by State (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Pennsylvania	7	20
Alabama	6	17
Arizona	6	17
Michigan	2	6
South Carolina	2	6
Texas	2	6
Other States	1	3
Other (No Specific State)	1	3

Table 4 presents the type of institution where participants are employed, with a slight majority (53%) working at four-year institutions and 47% at two-year colleges. The survey question did not ask respondents to specify whether their institutions were public or private.

Table 4

Type of Institution (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Four-year	19	53
Two-year	17	47

Table 5 presents the length of time participants have been employed at their current institutions, based on responses entered in an open-ended text field. Four categories emerged from the data: less than 5 years, 5–15 years, 16–25 years, and 26–40 years. The largest proportion of respondents (36%) reported working at their institution for 5–15 years, followed by 31% with less than 5 years of service. Twenty-eight percent had been employed for 16–25 years, while only 5% reported tenure between 26 and 40 years.

Table 5

Years of Employment at Institution (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
5-15	13	36
Less than 5	11	31
16-25	10	28
26-40	2	5

Table 6 illustrates how participants' institutions are using artificial intelligence (AI) to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The majority (79%) reported that their institutions lack policy-based initiatives, defined as formal, institution-wide strategies and

governance structures (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2024) for implementing AI to advance DEI. In contrast, 12% indicated the presence of programmatic efforts, distinct as localized workshops, pilot projects, or training programs focused on AI and DEI (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015). Additionally, 6% referenced AI use without a direct link to DEI, and only 3% reported technological initiatives specifically designed to support DEI through AI.

Table 6

Use of AI to Promote DEI (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
No Policy-Based Initiative	28	79
Programmatic Initiative	5	12
AI Reference Only	2	6
Technological Initiatives	1	3

In this study, "morally and productively" refers to using AI in ways that are both ethically sound, upholding fairness, transparency, inclusion, and privacy, and practically effective in improving DEI outcomes. This aligns with broader AI ethics frameworks, such as Georgieva et al. (2025), which stress principles like beneficence, justice, autonomy, and accountability in AI deployment.

Table 7 presents participants' views on actions higher education leaders should take to ensure AI tools are applied morally and productively to advance DEI on campus. Responses included professional development (44%), lack of information or clarity (20%), policy development (17%), departmental actions (8%), student awareness (8%), and no response (3%).

Table 7

Ethical Consideration of A for DEI (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Professional Development	16	44
Insufficient Information/Lacks Clarity	7	20
Policy Development	6	17
Departmental Actions	3	8
Student Awareness	3	8
No Response	1	3

Table 8 illustrates participants' views on how AI can best support DEI initiatives in higher education. While 45% were unsure of AI's role, 29% viewed AI as a resource, and 26% emphasized the need to build awareness around AI implementation to support DEI-related programs.

Table 8

AI Technology Supporting DEI in Higher Education (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Unsure	16	45
Resource	11	29
Awareness	9	26

Table 9 summarizes participants' views on the impact of AI technology on DEI policies at their institutions, analyzed using a SWOT framework. The analysis showed that nearly half of the participants (46%) were unsure about the impact of AI on DEI policies related to SWOT, while 21% did not respond. Among those who responded, the most common view was that AI presents more threats (17%), while fewer participants identified opportunities (8%), strengths (4%), or weaknesses (4%).

Table 9

SWOT Implications of AI on DEI (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Unsure	17	46
No Response	8	21
Threat	6	17
Opportunities	3	8
Strengths	1	4
Weaknesses	1	4

Table 10 presents participants' views on how AI can improve DEI within their institutions. Most participants (43%) believed AI could enrich and enhance DEI efforts. Another 30% were unsure how AI could improve DEI within their institutions, while 24% recommended implementation of DEI initiatives across departments. A small percentage (3%) suggested that formal policies should guide AI's role in advancing DEI efforts.

Table 10

AI for Advancing DEI efforts (N=36)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Enrichment/Enhancement	16	43
Unsure	11	30
Departmental Implementation	9	24
Formal Policies	1	3

Discussion

The use of AI in higher education presents both opportunities and complications. While this research has provided insights into faculty attitudes and perceptions of the value of AI to student learning and teaching effectiveness, with humanity, ethical concerns, free expression, privacy issues, and the unequal effect of the technology gap on economically disadvantaged students remain important considerations.

This research is a glimpse of what is happening in a small sampling of higher education institutions, of how AI may encourage inclusivity, equity, and diversity in higher education. Prioritizing DEI in the development and deployment of AI in education could lead us one step closer to a world in which all students have the potential to succeed, no matter their background (Wade, 2024). However, even though AI technologies are highly promising in reducing biases and improving accessibility to education, significant challenges and ethical issues must be addressed before their full potential can be realized. These challenges should prompt a collaborative effort between higher education policymakers, AI developers, and practitioners to ensure that AI is used to promote equity and justice. Achieving this goal requires open procedures on the digital divide and ongoing evaluation of AI throughout education systems, but if they succeed, institutions can use these technologies to create more equitable and accessible learning spaces.

Based on our analysis, questions 6 to 10 build a more comprehensive picture regarding the current understanding and preparation towards AI use and its impact on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in higher education. The data highlight a significant disconnect between the perceived value AI could add in supporting DEI and the actual institutional frameworks or approaches to advance that value. For example, as discussed in Question 6, many institutions appear to lack policy and/or technological interventions geared towards the application of AI in supporting DEI. However, in Question 10, 43% of respondents felt AI can greatly enrich and enhance DEI. This contrast between optimism and institutional inaction creates a paradox where there is enough optimism regarding AI's role in supporting DEI initiatives. Still, quite a few people have not taken any proactive measures to recognize or advocate for this initiative officially.

Furthermore, a common theme across many responses was uncertainty. Many participants responded, "don't know," when responding to the best way to use AI for DEI (45% in Q8), what will be its impact on DEI policies (46% in Q9), and how it will improve DEI in their institution (30% in Q10). The uncertainty is also exhibited by 44% of participants in Question 7 having a high need for professional development/school learning to support ethical and practical use of AI. These results indicate that while AI is being seen as a potentially helpful tool, institutions urgently need education, training, and awareness.

Additionally, the responses indicated an absence of institutional infrastructure to support AI-enhanced DEI initiatives. Only a few participants reported having policies or guidance in place (just 3% in Q6 and Q10). Although participants noted that policy and departmental guidance were necessary, in Question 7, some participants felt threatened by the potential risks of AI to DEI values. Still, only a few participants identified any strengths or opportunities.

Regardless of where institutions fall on the spectrum, the result is that this pattern reflects potential disconnects between acknowledgement of need and action, which suggests institutions

are just beginning the process of connecting AI with DEI objectives. Institutions must commit to professional development, develop clear policies, and create cross-departmental plans to use AI for ethical inclusion and equity to go forward effectively.

Implications

The goal of this study is to explore the views of higher education practitioners on the use of artificial intelligence technologies and their role in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within their institutions. This article sheds light on the multifaceted use of AI in DEI from the perspective of higher education faculty, staff, administrators, and others. Based on the evidence, the majority of the participants suggested that AI could be used as a resource, such as for finding answers or providing Open Educational Resources, which are teaching, learning, and research materials that are free to use, share, and modify. Many institutions and organizations are still unclear on how AI is being used to promote inclusive practices, which has bred an attitude of reluctance or misuse of technology. Organizations that lack this elementary knowledge risk missing opportunities to use AI for DEI while running into the unintended consequence of bias slipping into automated processes. After an extensive review of academic literature and case studies, Wade (2024) concluded that AI-based technologies could provide an impetus for inclusion and actions to mitigate the risk of perpetuating inequality. This study also highlighted that the majority of organizations have not yet enacted or are very far from implementing policy-based initiatives to guide the ethical and effective use of AI for DEI. The policymakers collaborating with DEI professionals, AI specialists, and important stakeholders create AI systems according to the interests and agenda of the organizations in which they work. Many of the higher education practitioners who participated in this study indicated that they hardly have the technical skills to critically analyze AI-driven tools. Therefore, transparency in AI decision-making and bias mitigation mechanisms to monitor AI use are critical for ensuring that AI fuels DEI efforts rather than fueling systemic inequities. If AI is to be fully realized in its use for DEI, organizations must prioritize sharing knowledge, policymaking, considerations of ethicality, and training.

Both the literature and the results of this study suggest that higher education personnel can collaborate creatively to implement AI-powered strategies that enhance student learning and support DEI efforts across various departments and the institution. Most participants in the study indicated that AI could enrich and enhance DEI initiatives. With increased knowledge of AI's potential benefits for DEI through professional development and training and the implementation of appropriate policies, AI can become an innovative technological tool to foster inclusivity for learners in post-secondary education (Richardson et al., 2024). Among the most significant findings within the study is the potential for AI to drive more diverse and inclusive higher education environments. Many participants said that no policy-based initiatives were using AI technology to promote DEI (i.e., policies, programs, and initiatives related to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in AI) in their institutions. However, the prospects were heartening and were countered by concerns regarding the ethical implications of the application of AI in higher education scenarios, especially about DEI. Participants stressed the importance of senior administrators actively engaging in creating structures and policies that encourage AI's ethical and equitable use. Several respondents pointed to the need for additional training and professional development in AI tools to help faculty and staff understand their opportunities and limitations, particularly regarding DEI goals. This study emphasizes the need for continuing

research and evaluation to better understand AI's long-term impact on DEI in higher education. While the application of AI to promote DEI is full of potential, it is clear that these technologies must be monitored and improved on an ongoing basis if they are going to fulfill their promises.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study open up several avenues for further investigation. Its limitations include a small sample and geographic area covered, being qualitative, and an incomplete or misrepresented capture of practitioner experiences. Understanding student experience, especially with AI-based DEI, particularly those most impacted by such initiatives, seems to be neglected. The information was self-collected, which could bias attitudes toward AI for social good. The study's results are limited in perspective retention because they do not reflect the students' experiences, especially the most marginalized ones. Further studies should target a more representative sample of practitioners from different institutions, capture students' voices from the other side of the fence and conduct mixed research to assess how the use of AI in higher education impacts DEI in the long term. Future research on the student experience of AI in higher education might tell whether such tools are heading in the direction of positive impacts that one may expect for diversity and inclusion. Future research should examine how students experience AI in the classroom and student support services, and their perceptions of AI concepts in course selection, admissions, and personalized learning. Understanding the ethical issues in AI development is vital to ensure that they support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Further comparative research into various AI technologies and their effectiveness in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion could fill some critical knowledge gaps (Follmer et al., 2024). Mechanisms can also be explored to ensure equitable access to AI technologies to leverage AI as an instrument for inclusion, not exclusion. An intersectional approach to AI-DEI is essential. As AI technologies continue to develop, so will the face of DEI programs; further research is required in their development and application toward more accessible and inclusive learning environments (Hilton et al. 2021).

Another limitation of this study involves the design of Question 9, which asked participants to reflect on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) within a single prompt. This approach presented a methodological challenge, as it required participants to address multiple complex concepts simultaneously. As a result, the question may have been cognitively demanding or ambiguous, potentially contributing to the high rate (46%) of "don't know" responses. Ideally, these constructs should have been separated into individual questions or, at the very least, divided into two prompts (e.g., strengths and opportunities; weaknesses and threats) to facilitate more focused and meaningful responses. This limitation likely affected the depth and clarity of participant input for this item and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Conclusion

As higher education practitioners, we must recognize the potential of AI to enhance DEI efforts and ensure that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, receive the support they need. AI offers numerous benefits, including providing personalized assistance to students who may require additional support.

By implementing appropriate policies, we can utilize the power of AI and DEI to create inclusive learning environments where all students, including those with learning disabilities and low socioeconomic status, can thrive. Survey feedback indicates that participants believe AI can improve DEI within their institutions, although many remain uncertain about specific strategies. To effectively utilize AI for DEI, higher education leaders should prioritize professional development and invest in further research to explore the potential applications of AI in this context. We should embrace AI as a tool to support diverse learners and develop innovative strategies that raise awareness of AI's benefits.

Post-secondary faculty and staff can be crucial in equipping students with the necessary AI tools to succeed. Rather than viewing students who need additional support as underprepared, we should recognize their unique needs and provide the assistance they require.

AI can benefit all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. By collaborating and conducting further research, we can create learning environments that empower all learners, regardless of location, financial status, gender, race, or other factors. AI is here to stay, and we must seize the opportunity to use it to support marginalized groups and ensure that no student is left behind in the forever-evolving sectors of education and technology.

Call to Action

Given the research provided in this article, it is recommended that higher education practitioners and leaders allocate resources to incorporate AI and DEI into education for transformative changes. Institutions and educators need to start a conversation about the role of AI in diversity, equity, and inclusion, evaluate policies that have been formulated and implemented, and advocate for a comprehensive AI ethics training policy. Additionally, it is suggested that faculty and staff collaboration with researchers, technologists, and DEI leaders is essential for developing strategies to promote AI's use for equity and accessibility for all students. These measures will enable AI to create supportive learning spaces in the future where technology is an instrument of equity and not a hindrance.

References

April, K. (2021). The new diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) realities and challenges. *HR: The New Agenda*, 119-132.

Bitton-Bailey, A., Ostroff, D., James, D., Kates, F., Weisberg, L., Gitzendanner, M. & Davis, J. (n.d.). Adding AI to your course: Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) research opportunities. *The UF Faculty Handbook for Adding AI to Your Course*.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Carleton, S. C. (2021, February 23). *The importance of diversity in higher education*. Northeastern University graduate programs. Retrieved from https://graduate.northeastern.edu/resources/importance-diversity-higher-education

Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. UNESCO Publishing. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366994?posInSet=22&queryId=9d8ca6cf-6a26-4f09-9b10-5e339c0e75da

Chen, L., Chen, P., & Lin, Z. (2020). Artificial intelligence in education: A review. *IEEE Access*, *8*, 75264-75278. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2020.2988510

Claville, M. (2024). DEI as a transformational catalyst for higher education and public good. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *56*(2), 39-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2024.2325838

Colleges of Distinction. (2025). *2025-2026 Equity & Inclusion Colleges of Distinction*. Retrieved from: https://collegesofdistinction.com/equity-inclusion-colleges-of-distinction/

Crompton, H., & Burke, D. (2023). Artificial intelligence in higher education: The state of the field. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 20(*1), 22. http://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00392-8

DuBose, J., & Marshall, D. (2023). AI in academic writing: Tool or invader. *Public Services Quarterly*, *19*(2), 125-130. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2023.2185338.

European Union & UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2015). *ISCED 2011 operational manual: Guidelines for classifying national education programmes and related qualifications*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en

Follmer, K. B., Sabat, I. E., Jones, K. P., & King, E. (2024). Under attack: Why and how I-O psychologists should counteract threats to DEI in education and organizations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 17*(4), 452–475. https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2024.12

García Ramos, J. & Wilson-Kennedy, Z. (2024). Promoting equity and addressing concerns in teaching and learning with artificial intelligence. *Frontiers in Education* 9. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1487882.

Georgieva, M., Webb, J., Stuart, J., Bell, J., Crawford, S., & Ritter-Guth, B. (2025, June 24). *AI Ethical Guidelines*. EDUCAUSE. Retrieved from https://library.educause.edu/resources/2025/6/ai-ethical-guidelines

Hilton, J., Syed, N., Weiss, M. J., Tereshko, L., Marya, V., Marshall, K., Gatzunis, K., Russell, C., & Driscoll, N. (2021). Initiatives to address diversity, equity, and inclusion within a higher education ABA department. *Behavior and Social Issues*, *30*(1), 58–81. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-021-00082-y

International Network for Education in Emergencies. (n.d.). *Education policy*. INEE EiE Glossary. Retrieved from https://inee.org/eie-glossary/education-policy

Johnson, D. L., & Davis, C. G. (2024). Bridging the gap for underserved populations: Personalized AI solutions for college access and learning support. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 47–62. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20511

Khatri, B. B., & Karki, P. D. (2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education: Growing academic integrity and ethical concerns. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, *20*(01), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.3126/njdrs.v20i01.64134

Lange, A. C., & Lee, J. A. (2024). Centering our humanity: Responding to anti-DEI efforts across higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 65*(1), 113–116. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2024.a919356

McDonald, N., Johri, A., Ali, A., & Hingle, A. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence in higher education: Evidence from an analysis of institutional policies and guidelines. *Computers & Society.* https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2402.01659

Nye, B. D. (2015). Intelligent tutoring systems by and for the developing world: A review of trends and approaches for educational technology in a global context. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, *25*, 177-203. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-014-0028-6

Onesi-Ozigagun, O., Ololade, Y. J., Eyo-Udo, N. L., & Ogundipe, D. O. (2024). Revolutionizing education through AI: A comprehensive review of enhancing learning experiences. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, *6*(4), 589-607. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i4.1011

Pedro, F., Subosa, M., Rivas, A., & Valverde, P. (2019). Artificial intelligence in education: Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366994?posInSet=22&queryId=9d8ca6cf-6a26-4f09-9b10-5e339c0e75da

Popenici, S. A., & Kerr, S. (2017). Exploring the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching and learning in higher education. Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning, 12 (1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-017-0062-8.

Richardson, E., Gordon, J., Conklin, S., Barreto, D., & Ginnetti, R. (2024). Artificial intelligence in higher education: Faculty perceptions of integration and other considerations. *UNC System Learning and Technology Journal, 2(*1). https://journals.charlotte.edu/ltj

Roscoe, R. D., Salehi, S., Nixon, N., Worsley, M., Piech, C., & Luckin, R. (2022). Inclusion

and equity as a paradigm shift for artificial intelligence in education. *Artificial Intelligence in STEM Education,* 359-374. CRC Press. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003181187-28

Roshanaei, M., Olivares, H., & Lopez, R. (2023). Harnessing AI to foster equity in education: Opportunities, challenges, and emerging strategies. *Journal of Intelligent Learning Systems and Applications 15(*4), 123-143. https://doi.org/10.4236/jilsa.2023.154009

Samuel, H. S., Etim, E. E., Shinggu, J. P., Nweke-Maraizu, U., & Bako, B. (2024). Diversity and inclusion in higher education. *Building Resiliency in Higher Education: Globalization, Digital Skills, and Student Wellness,* 239-248. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5483-4

Slimi, Z., & Carballido, B. V. (2023). Navigating the ethical challenges of artificial intelligence in higher education: An analysis of seven global AI ethics policies. *TEM Journal*, *12(*2), 590-602. https://doi.org/10.18421/TEM122-02

Wade, M. (2024, April). The fast track: DEI and AI for learning design. *International Forum of Teaching and Studies, 20(*2), 45-70. Retrieved from https://americanscholarspress.us/journals/IFST/pdf/IFOTS-2-2024/IFOTSv20n2-art4.pdf

Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. What is your current role? Faculty/Staff/Administration/Other (specify).
2. In what modality do you work? On Campus/Virtual/Hybrid.
3. In which country or state do you currently work?
4. Do you work at a 2-yr or 4-yr institution?
5. How many years have you been working at your institution?
6. How is your institution using AI technology to promote DEI (e.g., policies, programs, and initiatives related to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of AI)?
7. What plans of action can leaders in higher education take to guarantee that AI tools are applied morally and productively to advance DEI on campus?
8. What is the best way to use AI technology to support programs related to DEI in higher education?
9. What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats has AI technology imposed on DEI policies at your institution?
10. How can AI technology improve DEI within your institution (i.e., admissions, retention, teaching, etc.)?