

Clarifying AI and Plagiarism Exercise: Taking a Cue from SJSU

San José State University (SJSU) is located in the heart of Silicon Valley, where much generative AI has been developed. In its [Vision Statement](#), the university acknowledges the significance of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and robotics. After all, SJSU faculty and student research contributes to the development of these emerging technologies. The university states it is committed to ethical principles as it is exploring how to teach with AI.

Given the immense popularity of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT among students, the university recently updated its [Academic Integrity policy](#) for avoiding plagiarism. It defines plagiarism as follows:

[T]he act of *representing the work of another as one's own* without giving appropriate credit, *regardless of how that work was obtained*, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements.

The italicized sections in the policy emphasize two important points:

- Doing academic work requires that the work you turn in is your own. A paper that is written by AI is not considered your own original work.
- It doesn't matter which AI program/software you use. Using any of these to write your papers is considered a form of plagiarism.¹

Across the country, colleges and universities like SJSU are grappling with AI and plagiarism. The questions below are designed to stimulate debate with your peers and help you understand the implications of this important issue.

1. Based on the definitions provided by San Jose State, why is using generative AI on a writing assignment considered plagiarism?
2. As you read the SJSU rules carefully, does it appear that AI generated work is permissible if you admit having used, say, ChatGPT and provide a citation in MLA or APA format?
3. Considering that in the workplace you may very well be asked to use AI to help you write, is SJSU's strict policy realistic? How can you use AI ethically?
4. Conduct a search of your university's web pages. Look for AI policies. Check with your instructor which rules your university has imposed regarding the use of gen AI. You may find answers in the syllabus. How do your organization's policies compare to SJSU's?
5. If your university allows AI use in some form, why should you document the use of AI chatbots even for editing your text? After all, spelling and grammar checking with Grammarly, which is also AI-based, does not need to be cited.
6. Why is it important to personalize business correspondence generated by AI?
7. What are some ways to personalize AI-created text?

Further critical-thinking questions to entertain with students could include the following:

1. What is the purpose of a college education?
2. How does the use of uncited sources, including AI, affect assessment, i.e., grading?
3. What does *voice* mean in the context of writing and why is it important?

Note: The rules of AI use in academic writing are evolving fast, resulting in sometimes contradictory statements. Departing from the university's sweeping prohibition of AI in the writing of papers, the [School of Information at SJSU seems to allow AI](#) if it is cited and documented in APA format. Know your institution's AI policies. A course syllabus may be a starting point.

¹ San Jose State University (n.d.). *Artificial intelligence (AI) & Plagiarism*.
<https://library.sjsu.edu>