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AI in Higher Education: Implications for scholarly publishing

Even as we grapple with the positive and negative implications of artificial intelligence (AI), it has become increasingly embedded in our personal lives and work, including higher education. A recent snapshot of AI's impact in this area is the Digital Education Council's (DEC's) *AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026*. Founded in early 2024 to study how AI and digital transformation impact higher education, learning, and workforce skills, DEC is made up of member institutions throughout the world in academia and vocational learning. It currently has more than 200 members in over 42 countries.

DEC's 2026 survey collected over 45,000 responses from more than 27,000 students and 18,000 faculty members at 118 institutions across 35 countries and four regions: Asia-Pacific (APAC), Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), Latin America (LATAM), and North America (United States and Canada). DEC describes the study as a comprehensive examination of AI adoption, literacy, teaching and assessment practices, institutional policies, and concerns related to learning, academic integrity, and equity [1].

The Council's executive summary identifies key survey findings, excerpted and summarized below [1], that address how students and faculty currently interact with AI in educational settings and how their views differ across regions. These findings offer insight into the next generation of researchers and authors.

How do students use and perceive AI?

In the survey responses, students feel differently about AI for learning than about what preparation is needed for an AI-enabled workplace. From a positive standpoint, 61% of students spend less time on repetitive tasks with AI and 31% say they attempt more difficult work with it, but the perceived value drops when considering AI integration with coursework and AI preparation for their career.

In terms of classes, 85% percent of students reported that little or no AI was integrated into their courses. For those using AI in courses, only 5% said it "transformed" learning, while 28% said it improved their understanding and learning outcomes. Also, while 42% percent described the integration as somewhat helpful, 24% said it didn't offer obvious learn-

ing value. Students in North America saw the least benefit, with 42% saying AI added no value to coursework.

There was also significant concern about how student peers use AI. Sixty percent of students overall reported concern that classmates might misuse AI to gain an unfair advantage. The figure increased to 73% for students in North America, where 43% of students said they would support an institution-wide ban on AI.

Also, only 29% of students overall thought their instructors were prepared to guide their AI use, which dropped to 17% for North American students. Perhaps related to this was the fact that only 28% of students said most or many of their evaluations reflected the work, skills, and judgment they might need in an AI-enabled workplace. In addition, 37% of students seriously question whether their program is relevant to AI and the future, with only 30% agreeing it was, which dropped to 19% in North America.

A large percentage of students, 41%, showed concern that AI would reduce job opportunities in their field by the time they graduate, including in the STEM disciplines traditionally perceived as steady employment fields. Among STEM students, concern was highest in APAC (52%), followed by North America (49%) and EMEA (41%).

Are faculties ready to incorporate AI?

Even though students question the benefit of AI integration and instructor assessments and preparedness, 64% of the surveyed faculty reported participating in AI literacy training. AI literacy is critical because it helps users spot misinformation and bias, promotes accountability, and better prepares users for AI application at work. The survey found that both students and faculty still remain at beginner-to-intermediate levels of AI literacy and that AI literacy profiles for both groups were consistent across regions.

Faculty intentions for using AI differed by region. Most faculty in APAC, EMEA, and LATAM expect to use AI in teaching. Once again, North America showed a different pattern, with 67% indicating no plans to use AI in teaching, the lowest AI adoption intent in the surveyed regions.

The DEC survey noted significant regional differences in faculty attitudes toward AI and teaching. In APAC, 57% of fac-

ulty are excited about AI and believe it could bring more effective learning, compared to significant skepticism in North America at 26%. Not only are North American faculty unenthused about AI, 55% of them find it a serious risk to human intellectual development, compared with 29% in APAC. The more cautious outlook in North America may be the reason for the region's low intention to use AI in teaching, according to DEC.

Despite student concerns about AI-relevant programs, 43% of faculty overall were not concerned that what they teach would be outdated before student graduation. In North America, 58% expressed this view, including 34% who were not worried at all. APAC faculty reported greater pressure to address AI, with 43% afraid of outdated curricula.

AI and the future workforce

For those working in science and engineering education, including the pulp and paper and related industries, the DEC *AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026* survey provides a glimpse of how students and faculty in higher education are experiencing the evolving and disruptive force of AI in its early phases. These results show differing perspectives among students, faculty, and regions that suggest future changes.

Also, in terms of scientific publishing, this survey doc-

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uments the environment where the next generation of international researchers, authors, reviewers, and editors from around the world is being trained. It also raises concern about appropriate AI use, disclosure, research, and writing in scholarly publishing. As such, *TAPPI Journal* will be adopting a new policy regarding AI. As with future results of the DEC survey, the policy may evolve over time.

Please note that all survey findings in this column result from the Digital Education Council's *AI in Higher Education Survey 2026*.

REFERENCE

1. Digital Education Council, *AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026*, Executive Summary, Digital Education Council, Singapore, 2026.

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