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“Real Recognize Real: Navigating AI, Imposter Syndrome, and Student Competency at HBCUs”

Too many Historically Black College and University (HBCU) students enter college with reading and writing challenges from systemic inequities. AI can provide short-term confidence through introducing code switching into more competent academic speech, provided the students apply their own thought process and voice to establish authenticity. If misused, AI dependence can affirm internalized doubts about the validity of their voice and intellectual capability. ~~This~~ Such overuse of AI can lead to disastrous results as they matriculate and enter the job market with underdeveloped skills in communication and critical thinking.

The positions of Associate Professor of Humanities and Director of the Writing Center at Virginia State University enables me to witness both the risks and benefits of AI in the HBCU academic setting. This chapter explores concern over HBCU students relying too much on AI-generated writing, especially when it magnifies the impact of Imposter Syndrome via underdeveloped critical thinking and literacy skills.

This chapter explores concerns over HBCU students relying too much on AI-generated writing, especially when it magnifies the impact of Imposter Syndrome via underdeveloped critical thinking and literacy skills. This essay’s research will draw insight from pedagogical theory, student testimonials, and the data on how students are faring as departments struggle to standardize AI plagiarism mandates. Ultimately, this chapter will offer strategies for productive

and ethical classroom integration of AI to ensure student confidence and proficiency rather than masking deficiencies and exacerbating anxieties.

Systemic Inequities in Education: Greg's Story

Since the Spring of 2024, students in this predicament are not hard to find. In fact, many, like the student Greg mentioned below, struggle to free themselves from a self-perpetuating loop of dependence on AI that results in a lack skill development that fosters the self-doubt that encourage an even greater dependence on AI. Barely getting by academically is nothing new to Greg, even before the fog of the pandemic. Since kindergarten, he has struggled under the neglect of a school system. His K-12 matriculation has been hobbled by public schools in low-income areas that receive fewer resources due to lower property taxes. This results in students like Greg having to make do in schools with less to secure books, enrichment programs, tech, and of course, quality teachers.

The high teacher turnover and shortages disrupt continuity in instruction, something that is critical for Greg's literacy development. The resulting curriculum gaps help steer Greg into "remedial" tracks that focus on rote memorization over advanced literacy skills and critical thinking.

Greg is labeled an "underachiever" for barely surviving classes that teach solely to prepare for culturally biased testing systems favoring a middle or upper-class (often white) cultural context. Greg senses the disconnect. His frustration is easily labeled a disciplinary issue. He finds himself in and out of detention with other Black students (boys in particular) like him who can't fully articulate why school is so "dumb" and "all this whiteness" going on around them. White teachers. As strange as such a comment may sound, it is well documented that when

classroom instruction and texts fail to reflect a student's identity and history, engagement drops. In short, when a student is taught by instructors who refuse to allow the student to see themselves being reflected in the curriculum, the student's interest in literacy declines:

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT), defined by Gay ([2010](#), p. 31) as 'using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them', has been particularly associated with increased engagement and interest in school and increased educational achievement of minoritized students (Aronson & Laughter, [2016](#)).¹

Since Greg's exposure to such teachers is far and few in between, he works half-heartedly through the low expectations of teachers, administrators and possibly exhausted family. Eventually, he internalizes such sentiments. He subconsciously becomes aware of widening gaps in his skill development.

Greg is not an athlete, so he does not have grades being practically to him or promised scholarships offering a college experience full of privileges, should he continue his winning ways athletically. Greg has no such advantage, or crutch. In this all-too-familiar trajectory, only scholastic achievement matters.

Greg's history, math, literature, science classes deliberately speak of only White people, mostly men, moving the needle in everything noteworthy. He has been shown in no uncertain terms that everything else involving intelligence is the business of White people. Only they are to

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7496989/>

question issues in classroom discussions, to be fully invested in the academic experience. Slowly but surely, Greg follows in the footsteps of what historian Carter G. Woodson portends (1990/1933):

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. (p. xiii)

Fortunately, an opportunity for uplift presents itself through an HBCU (Historically Black College and University) called Virginia State University. Greg discovers that the university is aware of his deficiencies in reading and writing, among other areas, circumstances many African American students like him languish under. The university, in the spirit of founder Alfred W. Harris, offer its resources and talent to help Greg “drink from the fountain of knowledge”² and become his best self for a better future.

One would hope Greg’s story ends favorably, that he resists the temptations and pitfalls of college life to become a successful graduate. Some of those temptations and pitfalls are becoming more shrouded in nuance and complexity, since the correlating rules of engagement are being established in real time. One such example is how college students like Greg are to navigate the use and abuse of AI while still developing an authentic voice and competency in their chosen fields.

² <https://www.vsu.edu/advancement/vp-letter.php>

How Imposter Syndrome Presents in the HBCU Context

Too many HBCU students like Greg enter college with reading and writing challenges from backgrounds rife with systemic inequities. The reason for such a sizable population is understandable. Though no recent peer-reviewed study offers an exact number for HBCU freshman, national data indicate that around 19% of first-year college students enroll in remedial reading or writing (NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, 2018). Numerous analysts contend that the incidence of academic underpreparation is elevated in HBCUs, as these institutions predominantly cater to students from inadequately funded high schools (UNC/UNCF, Understanding HBCU Retention & Completion, 2014).

At the heart of such deficiencies are underfunded and underserved schools located in and serving low-income communities. These schools survive on the low taxes those communities yield. This results in less resources for enrichment programs, technology and high-quality teachers. It must be noted that an African American student from a middle to upper-class area can also suffer from systemic racism's culturally biased standardized testing and pedagogy lacking in the cultural relevance. Although both can suffer, the more severely underserved students like Greg may be far more removed from the agency and language needed for advocacy. In this instance, Greg's parents struggle to stay afloat amidst financial strain. There is no space and time for a paid tutor. Even if there was, there is a mental barrier that Greg has never been able to address. It is the one formed throughout his K-12 matriculation, where there are deliberately no marked examples of black excellence for him to model in history, literature, math, or science classes.

By the time students like Greg reach middle school, opening a book about yet another notable White pioneer and authority becomes tantamount to forcing a puppy's nose in its ill-placed urine for punishment during housetraining. Reading, in and of itself becomes *white*. This leads to a greater chance of students like him internalizing a frustration that lashes out in a bubbling, almost palpable devaluing of reading and writing proficiency.

Though interested in meeting girls, parties, and full-on the HBCU experience, Greg begins classes at VSU with an “arms folded” mindset. Due to his pronounced lack of foundational skills, he is immediately overwhelmed with terms, discussions and expectations he remembers vaguely from high school but was never held accountable to meet. In addition to his subpar high school reading-level comprehension, his ability to articulate himself becomes more of an issue. Still coming out of the pandemic social morass, his writing mirrors his texting and the kind of rap music he gravitates to far too often, a subgenre of rap hamstrung with mumbling, slang, profanity, filler phrases, hedges and discourse markers. Greg's incessant cursing, “you know what I'm sayin's,” “this, that, and the thirds” are now being challenged in classroom discussions, study groups, office hours with professors and meetings with his advisor. At every turn, he is required to have better clarity in his thinking, speaking and writing. His patience wears thin when it is time to write papers for class.

There are no remedial classes for English at Virginia State University, which means Greg enters Composition I and II courses expected to excel along with high school valedictorians and anyone else in such classes. This makes the new task of writing college papers terrifying. The subpar middle school-level book reports that barely got him out of high school will not suffice. Greg has some ideas, but they don't sound even remotely as developed or worthy of mention as

what the professor and classmates offer as offhand comments. It was one thing to get out of high school. Most of his friends accomplished that, but college, a four-year college at that... one where he is surrounded by other Black students clearly managing its academic demands... This makes the dilemma beyond a notion of blackness being the antithesis of all things scholarly, this is more defined; this it's about his personal deficiencies, in particular. *I just don't belong in no college.* Greg develops an acute insidious form of the Imposter Syndrome.

According to researchers at UT Austin, the Imposter Syndrome is when one is “feeling like a fraud due to an inability to internalize success.” Unless addressed, the syndrome is certain to menace Greg at every turn, as it “has been linked to psychological distress among ethnic minority students, research shows. In the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, UT Austin researchers found that these “feelings of fraudulence may fuel the negative relationship between perceived discrimination and depression and anxiety among ethnic minority college students, especially African Americans.” (University of Texas at Austin, 2017)

Greg panics over his upcoming paper, until his dorm mate introduces him to ChatGPT: “On God, bruh, this ChatGPT’ll write the whole thing for you.” And so, Greg uses it to do just that.

Greg: Write me a paper about civil war. Make it three hole pages

ChatGPT: Got it. I'll draft you a paper on the Civil War that would come out to about three full pages when double-spaced in 12-pt Times New Roman (standard academic formatting). Here's the essay...

ChatGPT produces a paper in a voice that wields a logical sharpness nowhere close to what he imagines his critical voice to be capable of achieving. This AI voice must be the standard – one that he has never been in the position of believing that he could reach. No, this kind of writing is not from anyone he knows or relates to. This is the voice that greets him as Siri on his phone. This is Prudence, who guides his father to desired destinations on the GPS. This is Lexa on his mother's stereo speaker, who now is so intrusive that she interrupts conversations with an assumed song selection. That voice, dry and corporate, feeling like a tongue depressor on the tongue pushed too far back into the tonsils. Its blind, chipper tone mocks the way he talks, the way he thinks, his very existence and everything he has been through. But, still: *This who they want.*

Cave and Dihal further explain (2020):

Given that society has, for centuries, promoted the association of intelligence with White Europeans, it is to be expected that when this culture is asked to imagine an intelligent machine it imagines a White machine,” said Dr Kanta Dihal, who leads CFI's ‘Decolonising AI’ initiative. “People trust AI to make decisions. Cultural depictions foster the idea that AI is less fallible than humans. In cases where these systems are racialised as White that could have dangerous consequences for humans that are not,” she said.

Greg hurries to class with a paper he can barely understand but is impressed with. At least, at seems, life is on his side; He now has a White voice to represent him, to do most of the heavy lifting through college, one that never sleeps, will side with him if peppered with enough

questions to fathom what he wants to hear, and appears to never be willing to challenge him to expand his own thinking, according to the simple prompts Greg uses.

The Function of Code-Switching and Authentic Voice

An important strategy or tactic, Greg misses out on is the skill of code switching. Guynn explains that code switching is when one must change their “appearance, speech and behavior to fit in and put others at ease.” Though a universal phenomenon to a degree, it is of the utmost consequence for people of color and, therefore, becomes as “routine or familiar as breathing” for those seeking to be successful in professional, White majority-social spaces. (2024) Greg does not get to practice such linguistic adaptations, because ChatGPT does it for him. He does not become fluent speaking in the “White lady” or “on the job” voice his mother greets him with when he calls her on her office phone at the Post Office. It never becomes a living, breathing part of Greg’s lexicon. Consequently, such “standard English” remains a commodity, a service, of which he is forever summoning AI not only intellect proxy, but as a professional translator.

A VSU student’s response from a Fall survey I conducted among 240 undergraduates is telling. It gives deeper insight into the level of deficiency some students starting basic Composition courses struggle under and therefore, are prone to overreliance on AI:

“I give my writing skills a 4 (out of 10). Because I am sometime able to put thoughts together properly on paper. Writing is still the hardest subject for me. With AI I would give it a 8. AI help me to have better grammer and college level words in my writing.” (student survey, 2025)

Meanwhile, Greg's "it's like, really major, you feel me?" never becomes "this is high priority" when needed. He does not bother learning to paraphrase what ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSet and other Large Language Models (LLM) produce, because his Imposter Syndrome convinces him that he is not a collaborator but, at best, a messenger of the articulate, critical thought of others.

Overworked professors see Greg's irritation when asked to contribute to class discussions. Pursuing the reason can seem too problematic to investigate. He could simply be introverted, which gets more gravitas post-pandemic. He could be suffering from some unmentioned trauma, which opens a conundrum of concerns of how best to proceed regarding mental health issues. He could just be another woefully unprepared student, of which such professors are pressured to "meet them wherever they are" in order to lower the DFW rates of such classes. Greg's refusing to bring drafts of his papers to share during peer review sessions becomes easier to ignore than address. They let opportunities to call Greg to the carpet for being unable to define an alarming amount of words used in his papers come and go.

Under these conditions, Greg passes the class. He continues to use AI in subsequent courses as mandates on what to allow and not allow with AI make standards murky. The university had purchased Grammarly for students to use, but isn't that AI as well? Turnitin.com detects previously written papers, but not specifically AI-written content. Some AI detection sites have mistakenly flagged original writing as AI. There are platforms like Quillbot, that "humanize" or paraphrase AI verbiage, but rarely to a degree where all of the words from AI have been changed. Whatever the remaining percentage of words in passages opens the door to never-ending debates on whether the whole passage constitutes as plagiarism. Consequently,

Greg moves on to the next class amidst the confusion; playing detective to find out what level of his paper is plagiarized becomes exhausting, as stated by Sano-Franchini, McIntyre, and Fernandes (2024):

Writing studies teachers continue to have many other more important concerns and outcomes in our efforts toward effective writing instruction (Banks; Hart-Davidson; MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force), and overemphasis on plagiarism often has negative effects on our efforts to create a learning environment grounded in trust, openness, and understanding, as opposed to punitive approaches designed to control student behavior.

Although going in and out of academic probation, he holds even tighter to ChatGPT, as it has gotten him through thus far. He is unaware of the grave consequences looming in the horizon.

The level of scholarship and discussion naturally elevates as Greg moves into higher level courses. The professors are more demanding. Some go so far as to ask who his Composition instructors were to have allowed him to have reached their classroom. In class, he begins to feel as if he is suffocating. He can't type in questions to ChatGPT fast enough for discussion. Piggybacking in agreement with the previous classmate's comment is becoming tiresome to his own ears. Oral reports are an indictment, especially when he has to address the questions and answers that most would expect in academic and professional settings.

Greg somehow makes it out of his sophomore year with C's, although his lack of comprehension and inability to articulate what he is supposed to grasp now makes him too uncomfortable to even attend class on a consistent basis. He enters classes where professors are

now recovering from the dreaded AI scourge by having students start writing drafts for papers in class. Greg scribbles down disjointed thoughts with one hand and his cell phone in the tight, sweaty grip of the other. He sucks his teeth and curses under his breath; he cannot summon that hegemonic White voice in time to protect him, to speak and think for him.

Eventually, Greg reaches out to his family for encouragement. Outside of basketball star Allen Iverson, they know nothing of so-called AI and can only emphasize the sacrifices being made for him to attend college. In fact, it would be nice if he could send some money their way to pay a bill or two. Greg, sitting on his dorm bed, falls back onto his flat mattress, almost knocking over his dinner, a bowl of Ramen noodles and says “they think I got money like that?” On the phone, they tell him his little brother is getting into more trouble and that it is up to Greg to show him the way to being successful. Greg hangs up. His chest tightens. Such situations are quite common, especially in a time where President Trump threatens to cut Pell Grants, federal financial aid that 70% of students at VSU need to continue their studies. Bernard, Jones, & Volpe further elaborates and the effects of such stressors (2020):

To be sure, negative race-related interactions are also significant sources of stress among students attending HBCUs (Greer, 2008; Greer & Brown, 2011). However, Black students attending HBCUs may also negotiate more stressors stemming from within-group interactions (e.g., social and relational functioning), familial concerns (e.g., guilt and pressure to meet high academic expectations), and limited financial resources resulting in fewer academic/professional opportunities (Palmer et al., 2010; Watkins et al., 2007) compared with their PWI peers. Among students attending HBCUs, the accumulation of such stressors can negatively

affect psychological well-being (K. M. Smith et al., 2014) and contribute to impostor cognitions (Austin et al., 2009).

Thoroughly irritated, Greg stumbles through the material for class and grasps what his deficient reading level will comprehend. As soon as he comes close to catching up, conversations seem to move faster. New concepts cloud his mind, especially since they were built off of simpler concepts that already confused him. His knowledge gaps contract, widen, and contract. He feels, even more so than before, that he does not belong in academic settings, let alone discussions. The tutors he has braced himself to meet grimace at how much he does not understand. Going to the writing center to get a leg up on his papers feels like a confirmation of his being useless. *Maybe I got some damn learning disability or somethin'.* He has no such disability, but he does have more trouble “faking it” with every semester, after all, his reading and writing deficiencies have never been fully addressed. In fact, they’ve only been masked and exacerbated, thanks to AI ghostwriter.

Real World Consequences

“I feel like I’m hiding behind it, because sometimes it helps me with essays. But not my real knowledge” (student survey response, 2025).

Imagining Greg graduating and going into the job market is disturbing. He would walk into an environment where fully competent graduates have been waiting for years for a job in their field. Weissman (2024) highlights that, “more than half of recent four-year college graduates, 52 percent, are underemployed a year after they graduate, according to a new

report from Strada Institute for the Future of Work and the Burning Glass Institute. A decade after graduation, 45 percent of them still don't hold a job that requires a four-year degree.”

Greg would falter in networking events, spitting out the standard elevator pitches only to fall flat when interested parties press further with follow up questions. He would stammer in interviews when asked questions that force him to grapple with complexity, ambiguity and improvisation in a way that can't be explained away as nervousness. He would sound robotic when asked about situational examples or a time when he overcame a challenge. His inability to expound upon his senior project or thesis would make interviewers check their watches.

Even the most thoughtful interviewers could not get around his vacant stare and the strange twitch in his arm to grab for his phone. He cannot analyze. He cannot pivot. He cannot elaborate. He “buffers”, as his classmates would say. That old sponsoring Imposter Syndrome thought returns: *I don't fuckin' belong here! Never did. Never will.* Greg's compromised critical thinking acumen, communicative challenges and limited abilities in code switching, make his chances of interviewing for the ideal employment in an anti DEI-world, let alone impressing anyone to the point of securing a job, even more dismal. This Imposter Syndrome, in this instance, would be fortified by what UC Berkeley College of Letters & Science notes in a YouTube Short, calls an overall “confidence crisis”, where students have:

...Outsourced so much of their thinking that they lose the confidence in themselves to make decisions about anything. Not just an essay and then eventually their how to do things on the job, but personal decisions, how to respond to a text. Every industry is going to undergo a massive transformation as

a result of this general-purpose technology, especially an industry like education that is foundational to society (YouTube Shorts, 0:48).

Professors and administrators are meeting more students like Greg within the past year. These are students at a crossroads, due to falling victim to, as Sano-Franchini (2025) states in her CCCC Chair's address, "the politics of writing, its affordances in the context of neoliberal capitalism, the bot-ification of reading, writing, and thinking"

This is not an issue HBCUs are contending with, as Harper (2025) states:

As a May *New York* magazine essay put it, "students at large state schools, the Ivies, liberal-arts schools in New England, universities abroad, professional schools, and community colleges are relying on AI to ease their way through every facet of their education... This rampant, unauthorized AI use degrades the educational experience of individual students who overly rely on the technology. When students ask ChatGPT to write papers, complete problem sets, or formulate discussion queries, they rob themselves of the opportunity to learn how to think, study, and answer complex questions."

Overreliance on AI is now an issue affecting all levels of higher learning institutions, one that is now presenting a certain kind of not only academic, but psychological toll with HBCU students who enter college lacking key foundational skills.

Institutional Support and Classroom Strategies

Thankfully, there are ways in which educators can steer this wayward ship into more promising waters. The first objective to facilitate this is support, as in fully developed resources

such as the bridge programs that prepare incoming freshmen for college level courses through summer camps, AI informed tutoring, writing centers, mentors. What is meant by being AI informed is in understanding that the student must not be allowed any shortcuts, as demonstrated in our writing center where students approach tutors as “live AI”. This is where students come to appointments, sit down at a table with a tutor and simply turn their laptop screen toward the tutors with the expectation to “just fix whatever.” This was an issue in the past, but has become more of a problem in the last two years. Tutors, mentors and other education professional must respectfully but firmly adhere to the resolve that students have got to become accustomed to the natural work of developing their own thesis, transitional phrases, and syntax.

Another notion that must be addressed is the idea that said student is “just not a writer.” This, I believe, is where students either do not know or appreciate the growth mindset. Far too many suffer from the fixed mindset, that if anything does not come to them as easily as everything they see others do in edited, filtered content on social media, then their identity is invested in never being able to work at it enough to improve. The growth mindset regarding a student’s efforts to improve needs to be encouraged throughout academia, although it is understood that this must eventually result into the student demonstrating proven competence as they matriculate toward more challenging courses. Instead of seeing AI as end of all writing and human learning, educators must see it, as what Teaching with AI describes as a “competent partner”. (Bowen & Watson, 2024, p. 5).

“I don’t use it to generate thoughts, I use it to polish mine” (student survey response, 2025).

When I work with students coming into the writing center for their appointments, I do so with the expectation that they have already resorted to AI. When it is confirmed that this is the case, I not only have them paraphrase, I work diligently on getting them to articulate it out loud to foster confidence.

Mindful encouragement is needed for students like Greg, where the response to an incorrect use of a word is redirected with “ok, I think I know where you’re going with this... what do you mean exactly with the word “substantiate”?” A full-on immersion in process is required as opposed to an end-result, right/wrong value judgment. Such an approach would seem easiest from educators that are of color, especially those with relatable backgrounds. Instead of roiling at the AAVE (African American Vernacular English) of such students, these educators can indeed “meet them where they are” in their own way, as I do by helping them develop their ability to code switch:

“So,” I begin, “according to this article, double consciousness is “being forced to view oneself not only through one’s own lenses but also through the racially prejudiced lenses of whites thus resulting in a conflicting and fragmented identity.””³

Greg winces and mouths the word *fragmented*.

I stroke my chin thoughtfully. “Let’s look up what fragmented means, that word sounds goofy as hell.”

Greg laughs. I wait, until he gets the picture to look the word up *himself*. Greg sighs and does so. “It mean, uhh split up, broken up.”

“You ever feel like that, like you are who you are but you gotta constantly worry about how White people may see you?”

³ <https://medium.com/an-idea/unpacking-w-e-b-du-bois-conception-of-double-consciousness-7f4f1f51a7ea>

Greg chuckles bitterly. “Yeah, man... them, police, these professors, all that, for real.”

“Yeah, that’s all the double consciousness is about, how stressful it is that you gotta second guess how you move because of that.”

Greg eyes me curiously. I motion toward his laptop, providing more of a safe space for him to develop his own voice. “See, now you can understand that mess you just copied and pasted from ChatGPT... So yeah, how’d that part go again?”

Greg sighs. “A fragmented state of self-perception in which an individual negotiates between conflicting social identities, yet with a sense of uncertainty or distrust about the authenticity of either perspective.”

“Do you understand what it’s saying now?”

Greg sits up. “It’s like going back and forth between being me and being what I think they want me to be and it’s making me all crazy ‘cause both ways of being beefin’ wit’ each other.”

“There you go, right there! That’s it right there!”

Greg scratches his hair through his stocking cap and leans toward his laptop. “Oh! That’s all she want me to write about?”

The sophomore nods, points to me, and then to his laptop. “See, the way you broke all that down, that’s how these teachers ‘round here need to be, no cap.”

I give Greg a fist bump. “I feel you. Real recognize real.”

This liberatory education-minded approach helps students like Greg move beyond merely parroting or absorbing content. They evolve, into questioning, reframing, and transforming the content into their own.

For students unaware of how to make AI model their own speech, using this approach to paraphrasing, which I call the Echo-to-Ownership Method, enables students like Greg to expand their vocabulary and reading comprehension. This provides them greater capability to code switch, which then gives them the confidence and tools they need to better mitigate Imposter Syndrome.

At some point, students like Greg have to be introduced to using AI more effectively on the front end through prompt engineering. Studies have shown that AI increases the productivity of users giving it more concise, directed prompts as opposed to those who do not. UC Berkeley's College of Letters & Science gives further context in a YouTube Shorts video entitled, "AI use requires these skills" (UC Berkeley College of Letters & Science, 2025, 0:10):

Economist conducted a 5-month field experiment with entrepreneurs in Kenya giving the entrepreneurs access to an AI Mentor powered by gp4 an AI model that powers ChatGPT and what the economist found is that when high performing entrepreneurs are giving access to AI systems their performance improved by 20% but for the low performing entrepreneurs their performance actually declined by 10% and that's because the higher performing entrepreneurs had better judgment and critical thinking and problem solving skills so they knew the best questions to ask of the AI system.

Thanks to this study, I have a renewed respect for the Socratic method and now use it in everything from facilitating classroom discussion to helping students develop thesis statements for their papers. I also encourage the use of AI's ability to create a wide array of ideas of which students can combine, alter or reframe topics that are of interest in writing

papers. This approach makes good use of the Creative Quantity discussed in *Teaching with AI* according to Christensen (n.d.):

One can prompt the AI to generate a multitude of ideas in no time. This can enhance human creativity because it can be difficult for most people to generate many new ideas. “The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas” [D.K. Simonton] ... Creativity relies on the quantity of different and divergent ideas” (p.63). The point is that the generated ideas can contribute to human creativity. (para. 3)

I develop prompt engineering skills in my students with an exercise called “Picture That.” The exercise begins when I present an image of someone that is not famous and easily Googable on the classroom smart board and tell the students to get onto ChatGPT and devise a prompt that generates an image as close to the one I have presented. After the first attempt, their push back against its initial offering blossoms into an exploration in human curation and editing of AI-generated content. It forces them to not see AI as the final answer, but as a tool for greater expression. The exercise also prompts them to stretch themselves to grasp more concise language, of which benefits them on and offline. I have them, on occasions, pair up and work as teams in order to work on their intercommunicative skills as well. With the proper guidance, they can indeed face their deficiencies, which is the only means to attain true empowerment over blind survival.

“You can’t learn if you don’t struggle first” (student survey response, 2025).

Culturally relevant events on campus also serve safe spaces for affirmation and validation. Such events include poetry slams, fiction writing contests, and the Writing Center's Lyric Lounge, where students get together with professors and discuss the lyrics of some of the most important albums of their generation. The writing center also has an engaging YouTube channel that addresses concerns such as how to craft a proper thesis and outline.⁴ In order to bring AI even more into the fold as a competent collaborator, the Writing Center has created a newly-installed bot named Octavia Botler that serves as its virtual assistant.⁵ Octavia, named after celebrated author and "Mother of Afrofuturism" Octavia Butler, assists with questions involving grammar, the revision process, formats (MLA, APA, and Chicago Style) and all other things pertaining to the Writing Center.

A future addition in Writing Center programming to foster the identity and belonging needed to address the imposter syndrome will be called "Writing to Exhale." These events will be set up for students to take part in narrative therapy writing workshops allowing them to process their educational or related trauma and reclaim their voice through storytelling. As with all tools and inventions, there will always be the temptation for misuse, even among those that claim to be fully aware of the risks. Since the parameters of plagiarism continue to shift, writing pledges and honor codes lean toward concern more so than punitive punishment is key. To that end, I am considering implementing what Associate Professor of English at Georgia State University Michelle Kassorla calls Transparency Statements in the Grammarly Goldcast webinar *Inverted Bloom's Taxonomy* (8:53):

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/@VSUACEWritingCenter>

⁵ <https://ChatGPT.com/g/g-68a282411d1081918722386cdc1a7612-vsu-writing-center-assistant-octavia-botler>

Students have to give me a transparency statement. They have to use it ethically. They have to tell me what they use, why they used it, how they used it, every single time, okay, so that they're constantly conscious of what they're doing with AI.

The agency one finds in their own authentic voice is as important as ethics. I give writing assignments such as the one I use in my Creative Nonfiction class, entitled “What I Offer to the World that AI Could Never Replace.” Such assignments encourage students to adopt mindsets that value how authenticity and the hard work in cultivating their voice fuels their overall development.

“AI can assist in learning but should not create the final product” (student survey response, 2025).

For students to find value in their authentic voice and respect their roles as change agents in society, the Writing Center also partners with departments that host on campus author book talks. Such forums expose them to black professionals who use literacy and their authentic voices to be impactful. The most recent featured two groundbreaking voices in Black literature, Jamila Minnicks, author of 2021 winner of the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction *Moonrise Over New Jessup* and LaDarrion Williams, author of New York Times and USA Today bestseller *Blood at the Root*.

“My writing got me to my HBCU. People here understand me in a way I never had before. I will graduate and AI will be the sole reason for it” (student survey response, 2025).

AI is influencing our research, writing, and communication methodologies. It raises questions about uniqueness, creativity, and the fundamental purpose of education. Greg and other HBCU students are experiencing the repercussions of this worldwide transition as they progress in their studies. They are already destined to confront obstacles in overcoming systemic bias. If we as educators fail to address the impact of AI appropriately, they will have to contend with exacerbated cognitive distortions or psychological abnormalities, such as Imposter Syndrome.

The phrase “fake it ‘til you make it” has always held a lot of importance in the black community. It embodies a survival strategy used to navigate in a society that has and now is more aggressive in denying Black people access to the same resources, credibility afforded others. This manifests in many ways, including the destruction of one's finances to purchase fancy clothing, automobiles, and other accessories to project an image of success akin to people in aspirational positions. The hope is that appearing to be one hopes will eventually manifest. The success stories of those “finessing” their way into such attainment inspire those who are lacking to attempt the same.

Unfortunately, the Greg's generation has grown up in a world full of unprecedented smoke and mirrors. Social media likes, follows, and views are mistaken for influence, self-worth, or friendship. Infamy and spectacle eclipses talent and skill. Digital applause and genuine connection become indistinguishable. Cat-fishing, photo filters become the norm. Reality TV blurs the line between scripted spectacle and authentic representation. Entertainment masquerades as credible news and journalism. Growing up in such chaos

complicates the assessment of the value of authenticity when many react favorably to inauthenticity.

“Fake it to make it” takes on a different tone, where making it is exemplified by those who appear to reap the benefits of success by merely faking it and having no interest mastery of their crafts. This can persuade deficient students like Greg to risk long-term stability and credibility with the short fix of faking intellect and competency from overreliance on AI. This disillusionment takes on new dimensions when the self-doubt behind Imposter Syndrome, the cultural identity issues of code switching, and the hidden costs of such tech dependence come into play.

As demonstrated, bridging programs, institutional and structural support, pedagogical transitions towards a growth mindset and confidence enhancement, the utilization of AI as a collaborative tool rather than a dependency, with community and identity development, can direct AI's impact in education towards a more favorable trajectory. Direct and sweeping implementation is imperative. The intellectual voice, agency, and objectives of a pivotal portion of a generation of prospective black college graduates and professionals are at risk.

Their contributions, leadership, and perspectives are already essential in response to a society increasingly opposed to diversity.

I found this chapter to be very interesting. The personal example of Greg and the systemic inequity that he faced was eye opening. I think that some potential solutions for kids like Greg to help combat the inequality they face may help add to the story. Overall all of the points were clear and easy to understand and follow.

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