Sanja Avramovic, Health Administration and Policy, College of Public Health

Title: Structuring AI Use to Strengthen Critical Thinking and Academic Integrity

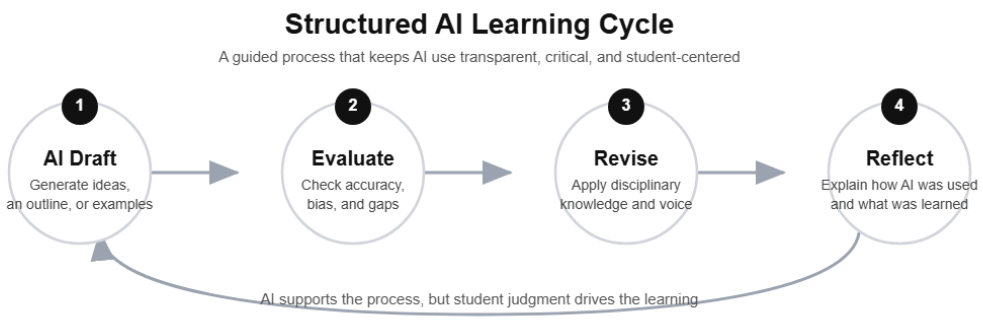
The increasing use of generative AI in higher education presents a dual challenge: while AI tools can support learning, unstructured use may weaken critical thinking and raise concerns about academic integrity. Faculty need practical strategies to integrate AI in ways that preserve meaningful student engagement.

Teaching Strategy

Drawing on insights from my work in the Journal of Health Administration Education AI integration study, I implement a structured AI integration approach that positions AI as a scaffold for learning rather than a substitute for student thinking. This approach emphasizes guided use, transparency, and critical evaluation.

How to Implement

Implementation begins by clearly defining expectations for AI use within the course, including what types of use are appropriate (e.g., idea generation or outline) and what requires independent student work. Building on a structured approach, assignments should be intentionally designed to incorporate AI as part of the learning process rather than as a shortcut to completion. For example, students can be asked to generate an initial AI-assisted draft, followed by a critical evaluation of the output that examines accuracy, bias, and completeness. They then revise the work using their own disciplinary knowledge and reasoning, ensuring that the final product reflects original thinking. To reinforce transparency and accountability, students should document how AI was used, including prompts and key outputs, and submit a brief reflection describing how their thinking evolved through the process. Incorporating applied or case-based elements further ensures that students must interpret and contextualize information beyond what AI can provide. This structured, iterative design aligns AI use with higher-order learning goals and maintains academic integrity while leveraging the benefits of emerging technologies.



Why It Works

As discussed in the JHAE study, structured AI integration encourages students to engage in higher-order thinking rather than passive reliance on technology. By making AI use visible and subject to critique, students develop both disciplinary knowledge and digital literacy skills. The goal is not to restrict AI, but to design for it. When AI use is structured, transparent, and critically examined, it becomes a tool that deepens rather than diminishes student learning.