Cross-Course Authentic Assessment in an AI World

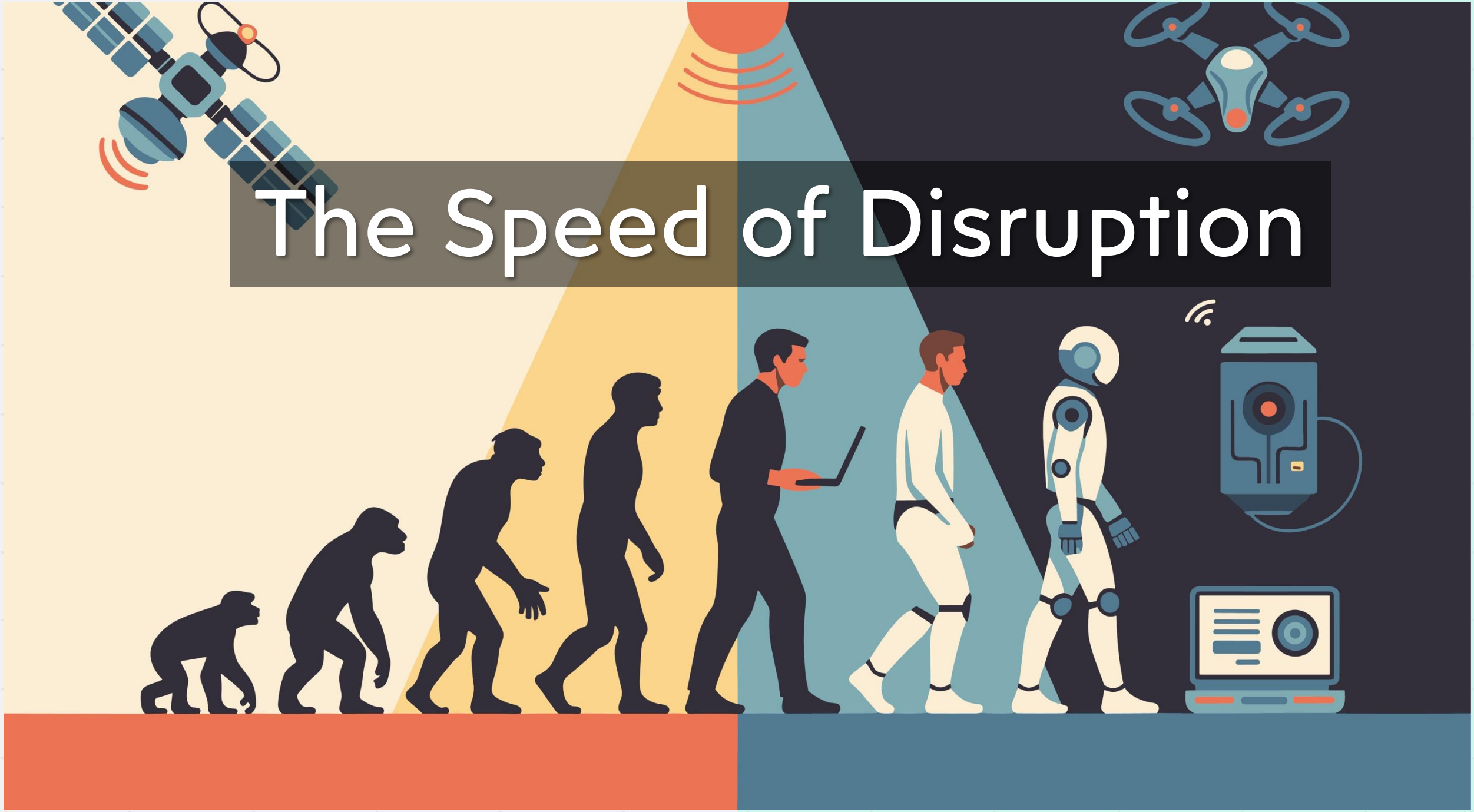
Steve Kaufman, M.Ed.
The University of Akron



What's our Focus Today?

1. The Speed of Disruption & The Anti-AI Shift
2. Student Perceptions
3. A Process for Authentic Learning
4. Examples




The Speed of Disruption



Matt Miller
@jmattmiller · **Follow**

Calculators.
Search engines.
Google Translate.
Wikipedia.
PhotoMath.
#ChatGPT.

They disrupt traditional teaching.

We adapt. Education evolves forward.

Blocking them isn't the answer.

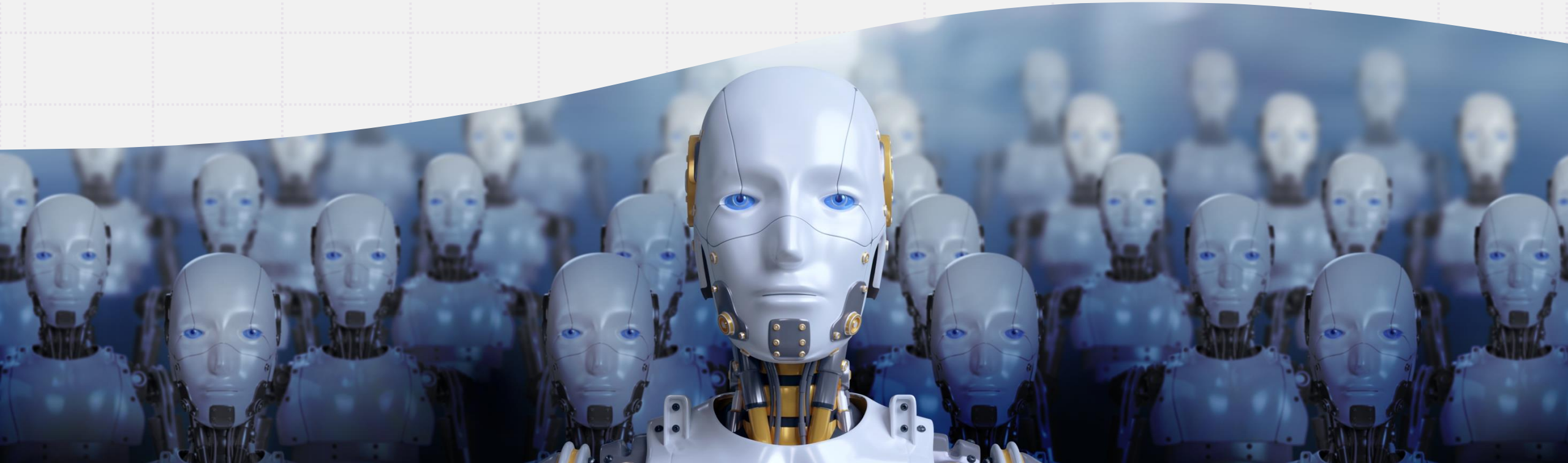
Making education more relevant is.

8:59 AM · Dec 14, 2022

377 Reply Copy link to post

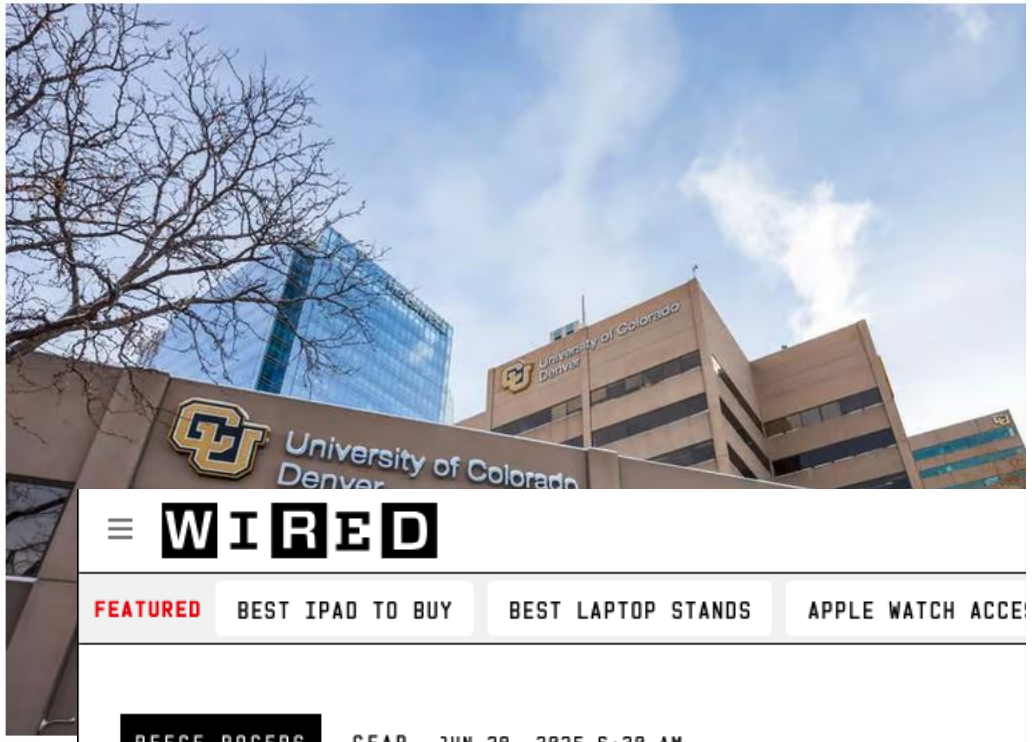
Read 21 replies

There is hope.



CU faculty, staff and students push back against university-controlled AI rollout

By Jenny Brundin · Mar. 9, 2026, 9:58 am



Faculty ac
and resear

The Harvard Gazette

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TECHNOLOGY

I'm a High Schooler. AI Is Demolishing My Education.

The end of critical thinking in the classroom

By Ashanty Rosario

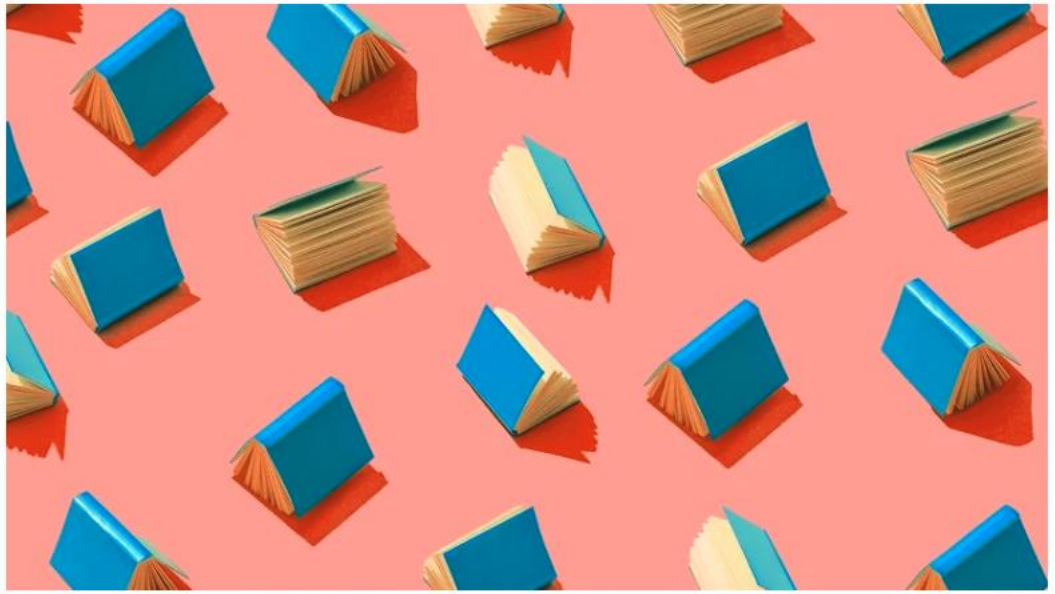


Illustration by Akshita Chandra / The Atlantic. Source: Getty.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

SHARE SAVE

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WIRED

FEATURED BEST IPAD TO BUY BEST LAPTOP STANDS APPLE WATCH ACCE

REECE ROGERS GEAR JUN 28, 2025 6:30 AM

The AI Backlash Keeps Growing Stronger

As generative artificial intelligence tools continue to prol
pushback against the technology and its negative impacts
stronger.

CHATGPT >

ChatGPT dissidents, the students who refuse to use AI: ‘I couldn’t remember the last time I had written something by myself’

Some college students are beginning to limit their use of artificial intelligence, so as not to hinder their own creativity, discipline and critical thinking



FORTUNE

Gen Z is engineering an analog future — and it's at least a $5 billion opportunity



Gen Z is fueling an analogue economy. · Fortune · Getty Images

Luba Kassova

April 1, 2026 • 4 min read

HoneybeeXYZ • 3d ago

I'm a college professor. Our newpaper just went back to a print edition after being online only for a few years. The kids insisted. They carry around physical books. There's a thriving vinyl store in the town and a "listening bar" just opened up. The indie bookstore in town just expanded, and there's a make your own perfume bar.

The newest, most popular club on campus is the "ceramics club." One student said, "You can't hold your phone while you're making a vase."

And we are not in any way a rich kid school. We cater to first gens.

8.3K Reply 6 Share ···

So... Why This Work Now?



Generative AI is making its way into our **everyday workflows** as it's now baked into everything



Faculty face **integrity and enforcement** challenges



Students encounter **inconsistent expectations**

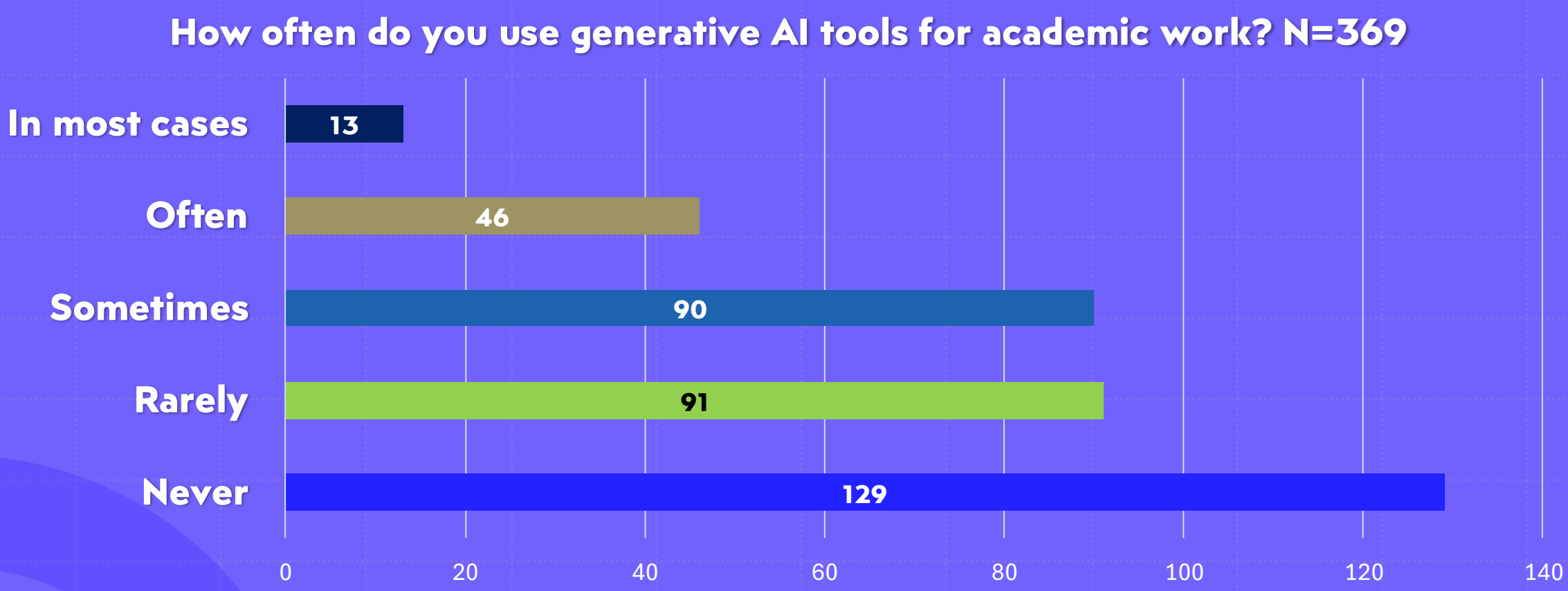


Core question: **What should assessment actually show?**

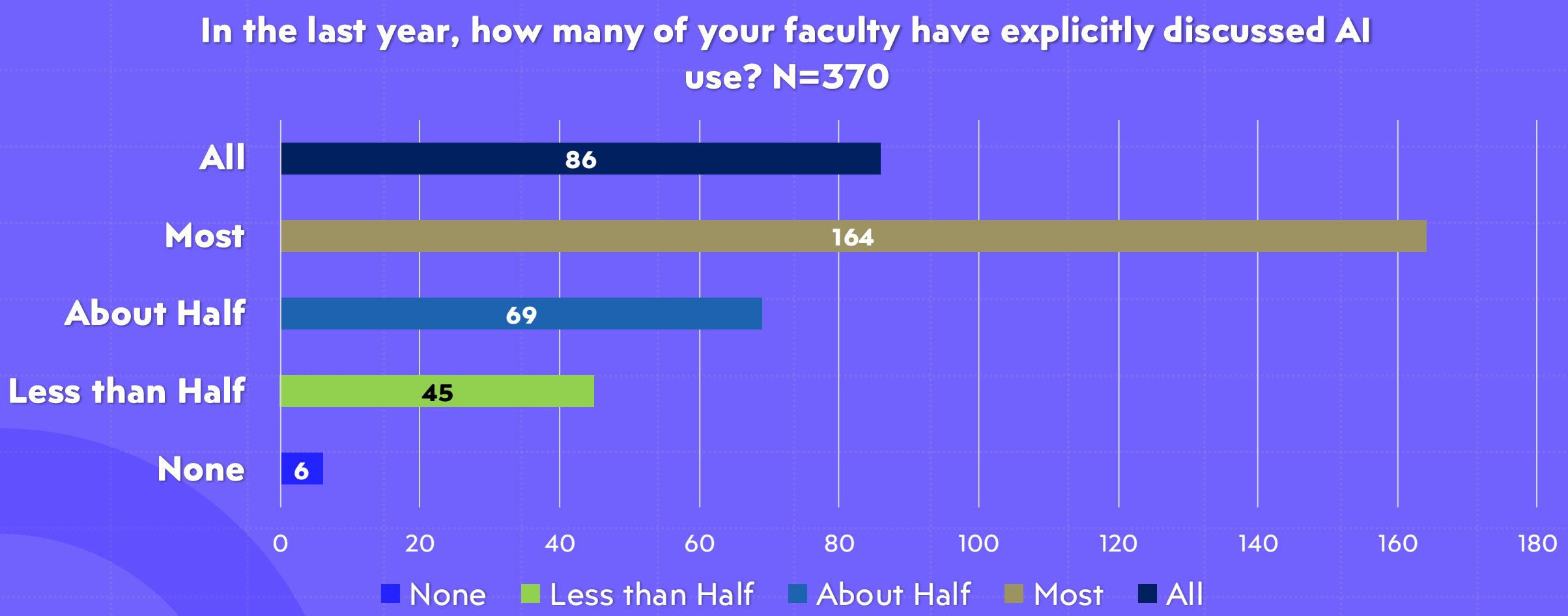

Students are keenly aware that AI's impact can degrade the value of their degree.
But more importantly... they know when they're NOT learning.


TELL US WHAT
YOU THINK

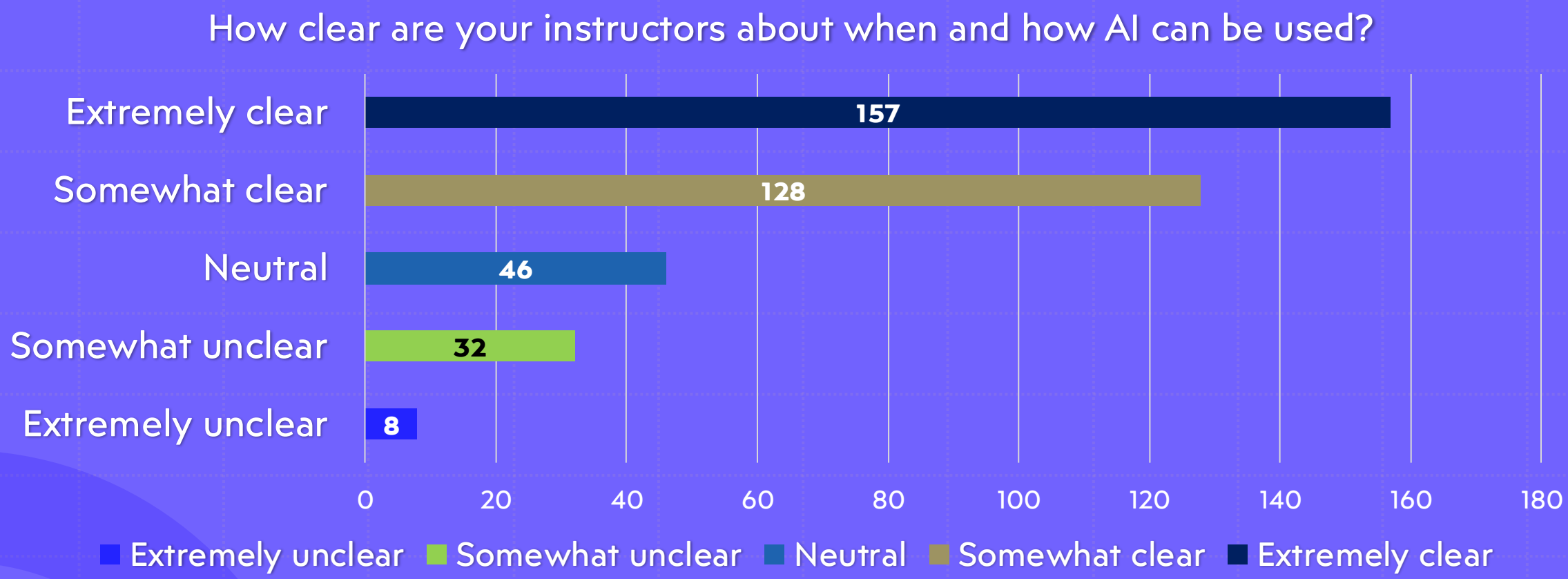
Are students using AI?



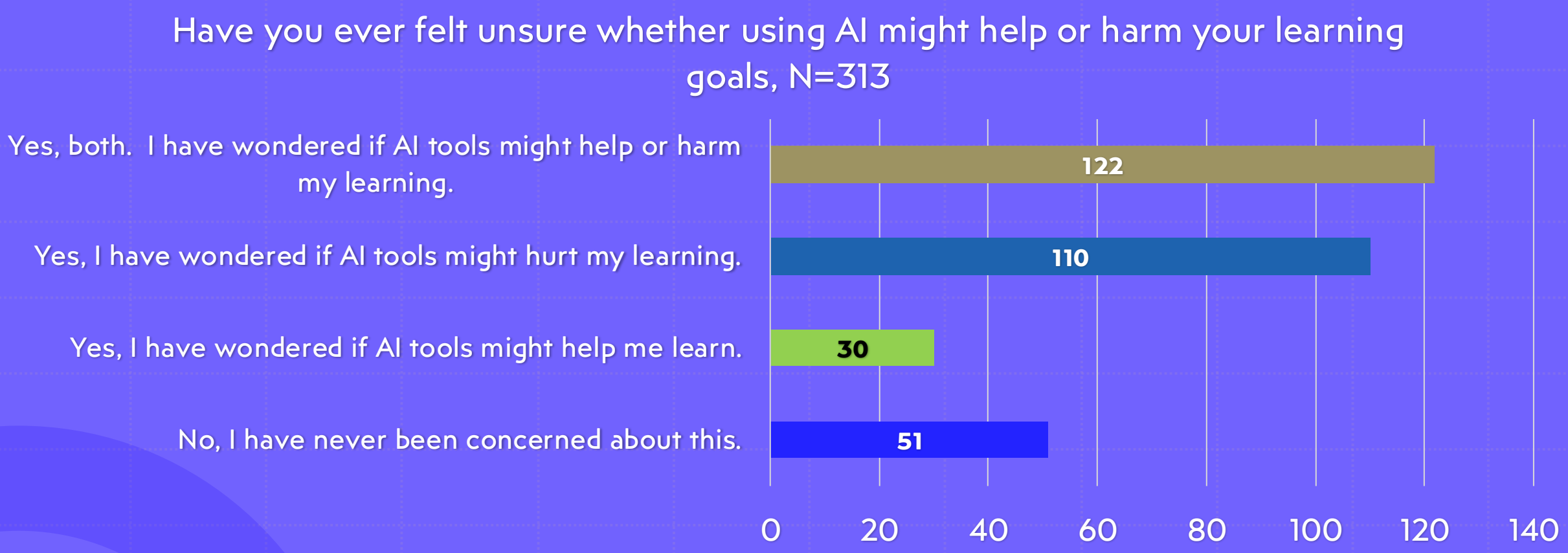
Are we talking about AI?



Are we clear?


How clear are your instructors about when and how AI can be used?
Extremely clear
157
Somewhat clear
128
Neutral
46
Somewhat unclear
32
Extremely unclear
8
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
180
Extremely unclear
Somewhat unclear
Neutral
Somewhat clear
Extremely clear

Are they worried?



In an AI-enabled world, faculty should help me learn....

1. How and when to use AI responsibly (tool vs. crutch) 116/210 = 55%

These students generally see AI as a helpful aid when guiding understanding or organizing thinking, but not as something that should "do the assignment" or replace grappling with the material.

- Learn "how to use it properly," "how to use AI as a tool rather than a crutch," and "how to use it ethically and appropriately."
- Use AI for research support, summarizing sources, generating practice questions or study guides, or structuring work, while ensuring the ideas and analysis remain their own.
- Clearer expectations on "when and when not to use AI as a tool" and "what the best practices are," including what kinds of assessment tasks should be AI-free.

2. Think for myself / preserve critical and higher-order thinking 67/210 (32%)

A very strong theme is that faculty should prioritize independent thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving, not just content delivery via AI. Many students explicitly say they want to:

- “think for myself” and “use my mind more” rather than outsourcing thinking to AI.
- develop “critical and higher-order thinking skills” and “the ability to think on your own.”
- avoid becoming “second-hand thinkers who have ChatGPT generate their essay” and instead show their own ideas and effort.

3. Option to learn without AI / desire for AI-free spaces 50/210= 24%

A substantial number of responses call for little or no AI in their learning:

- Some write simply “without AI,” “no AI,” “get rid of AI,” “ban AI,” or “AI should not be used in education, especially higher education.”
- Students ask for paper tests, “paper and pencil exams,” and “AI-free assignments” to ensure that assessments measure their own understanding and to “prevent the unauthorized use of AI.”
- Several emphasize they have chosen not to use AI and want changes that “should not make things harder for students who do not use AI.”
- This theme is often tied to strong concern that AI “is making students dumber,” “harms learning goals,” or “kills critical thinking,” as well as frustration that students who use AI may obtain similar grades with far less effort.

4. Pacing, support, and humane learning environments 30/210 = 4%

A smaller but noticeable theme is about pacing and support, especially to reduce the temptation to lean on AI:

- Requests that faculty “help me learn slowly step-by-step,” as many courses are fast-paced and students turn to AI “to catch up.”
- Suggestions for more in-class work time and opportunities to ask professors questions instead of quietly relying on AI outside class.
- Desire for open, inclusive discussions where their concerns about AI (including strong opposition) are heard and not dismissed.

Summary

Develop strong, independent, real-world skills, critical thinking, communication, and ethical judgment, while learning how (and whether) to use AI as a limited, transparent tool rather than a substitute for their own thinking, within assessment and classroom environments that respect both AI-users and non-users.

If faculty redesigned assessments for an AI-enabled world, what should they keep? What should they change?

1. Provide AI guidance (ethical use, brainstorm, cite, disclose) (70 responses, 35%)

Typical ideas:

- Allow limited AI for brainstorming or support
- Require transparency
- Set boundaries for acceptable use.

2. Increase academic integrity (36 responses, 18%)

Responses included:

- Banning AI on some/all work
- Stricter policies and consequences
- Stronger safeguards

3. Format changes (30 responses, 15.2%)

Ideas include:

- More in-class writing
- Oral defenses/presentations
- Proctored exams, drafts and process checkpoints.

4. Authentic/applied/personal assessments (22 responses, 11.1%)

Examples included:

- More real-world application
- Projects
- Scenarios
- Personalized/reflection-based work that is harder to outsource to AI

Summary

Across themes, there is a visible tension between students who want AI-constrained or prohibited to protect fairness, and students who want AI acknowledged and taught responsibly because they expect it in real work.

What makes you feel seen and included in classroom discussions about technology and the future of work?

1. Being listened to and taken seriously (45 responses, 30%)

Students emphasized feeling heard when instructors:

- acknowledge their points
- respond thoughtfully
- encourages questions
- build on what students say
- create a classroom culture where students feel comfortable speaking

2. Relevance to my goals/life (28 responses, 18.2%)

Students feel included when examples and discussion connect to:

- their career goals
- their major
- real workplace contexts
- lived experience

3. Assignment clarity (14 responses, 9.1%)

Requests include:

- Clear explanations
- Demonstrations
- Practical examples
- Opportunities to practice and get feedback before being tested

Summary

- Students wrote at unusual length and specificity: **928 comments**; **21%** were **40+ words**.
- Students want a balanced approach: **protect academic integrity** while **preparing for AI in the workplace**.
- Students want assessments that demonstrate learning through **reasoning, application, and process**, not just final answers.
- Students are concerned about **job displacement** (53 mentions), **environmental impact** (34 mentions), and **privacy/data security** (17 mentions).

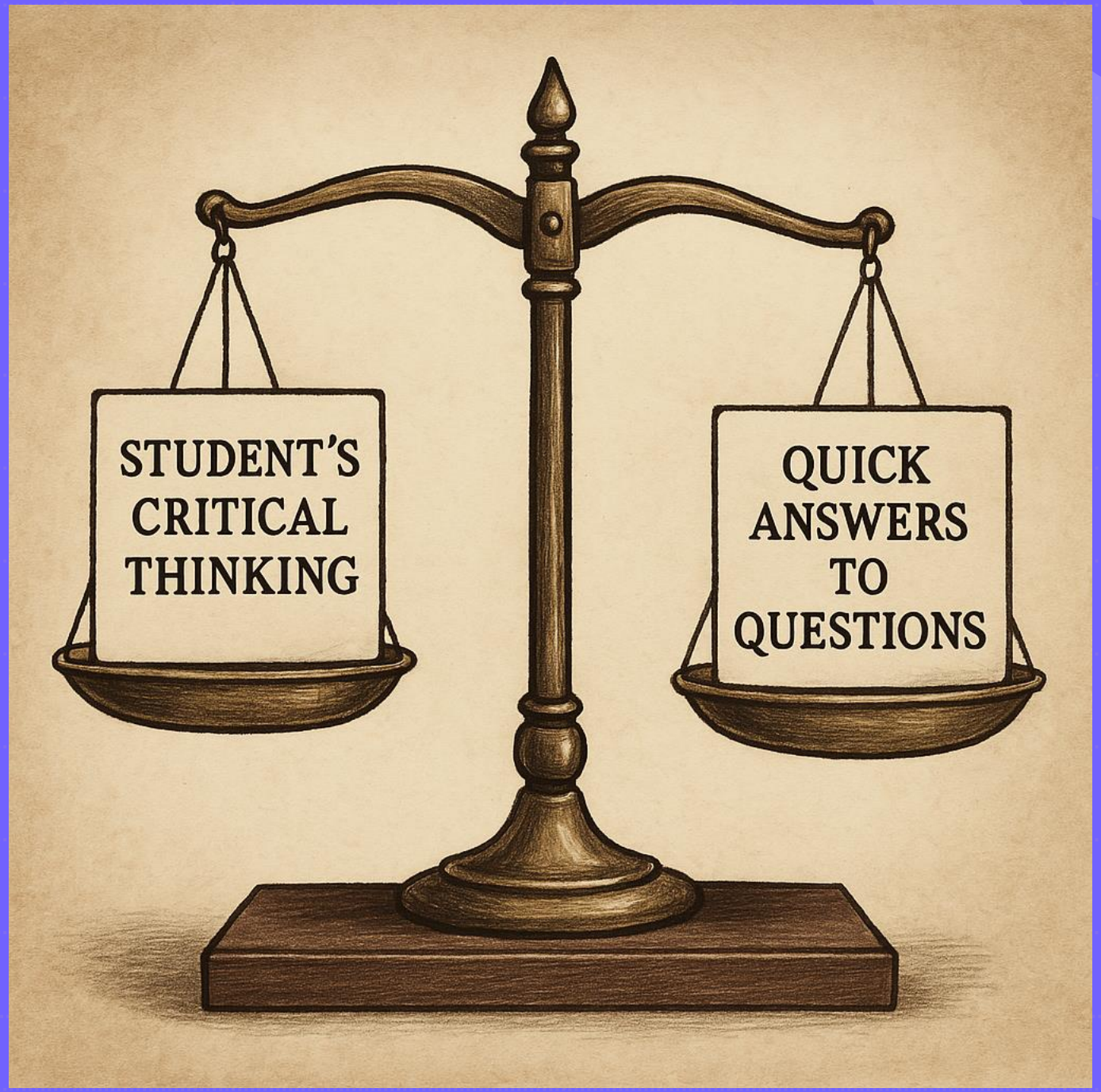
Let’s not waste time focusing on the wrong things.

Bans

Detection

Punitive Policies




STUDENT'S CRITICAL THINKING
QUICK ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

“It’s an opportunity creation technology. Doing more with the same, or much much more with just a little more. More people will be creating more with the help of AI.”

- Nathanial Whittemore, The AI Daily Brief

Set Clear Expectations

Ethical Use of AI

AI tools (such as ChatGPT) are powerful tools that can be used to aid in the learning process. Students should discuss with me the fair and ethical use of AI tools for this course. The inappropriate or unethical use of such technologies will violate the Code of Student Conduct as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, and/or gaining an unfair advantage. The Code of Student Conduct is a University rule that provides the framework for the student conduct process at the University of Akron and defines student misconduct and the process that the University will use to address student misconduct reported to the Department of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Students at the University of Akron are responsible to know and abide by the Code of Student Conduct and all University rules, regulations, and policies. My expanded AI policy is as follows:

In this course, students are only allowed to use AI tools in the ways described below.

This policy applies to the following AI tools:

- AI chatbots (such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, CoPilot)
- AI image generators (such as DALL-E, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, Adobe Firefly)
- AI audio or music generators (such as Amper, AIVA, Soundful)
- Multimodal AI tools (such as Canva Magic Design, Microsoft Designer)
- AI-powered presentation tools (such as Beautiful.ai, Gamma.app)

The policy applies under the following conditions:

- Only with proper citations and acknowledgment
- Only as marked within the syllabus assignment sections and/or flagged by the instructor

The following processes are in place:

- Students should contact the instructor if they have questions about this policy
- Students are responsible for identifying and addressing any inaccurate AI content
- Students must check for possible plagiarism in the AI output
- Students must disclose the use of AI in their work
- Students must cite all AI outputs following either APA or MLA citation guidelines

The rationale for this policy is:

- The students have shown themselves to be responsible, effective learners
- The assessments have value regardless of the use of chatbots
- Students are informed about AI risks and benefits

The rationale for restricting AI use includes:

- The course focuses on developing fundamental skills that AI tools might bypass
- The assessment design requires independent problem-solving without AI assistance

Failure to adhere to these expectations constitutes a violation of UA's academic integrity standards and may result in disciplinary action.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to adjust this policy during the course as needed to support student learning and maintain academic integrity.

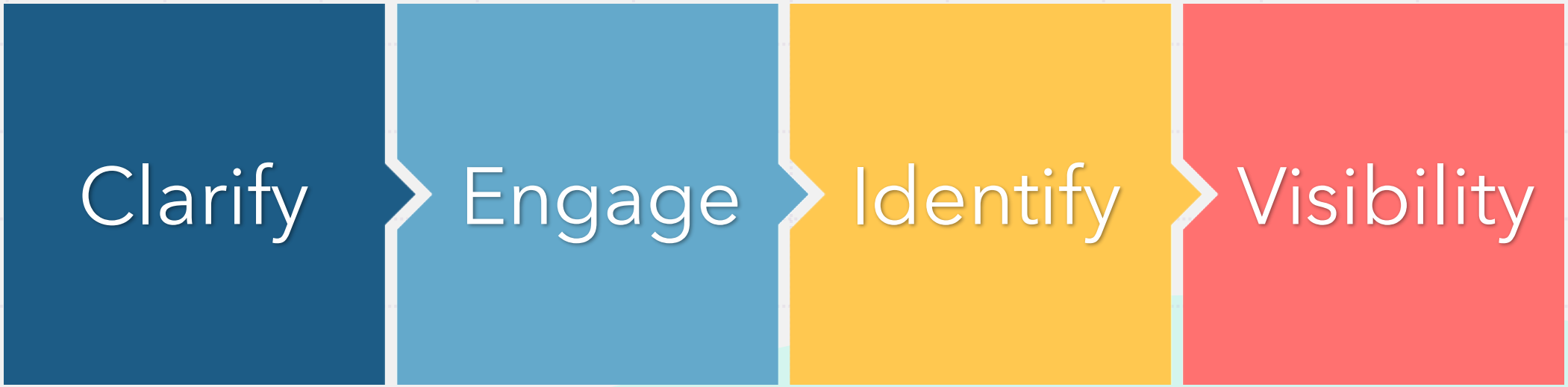

REFLECT
RETHINK
REVISE

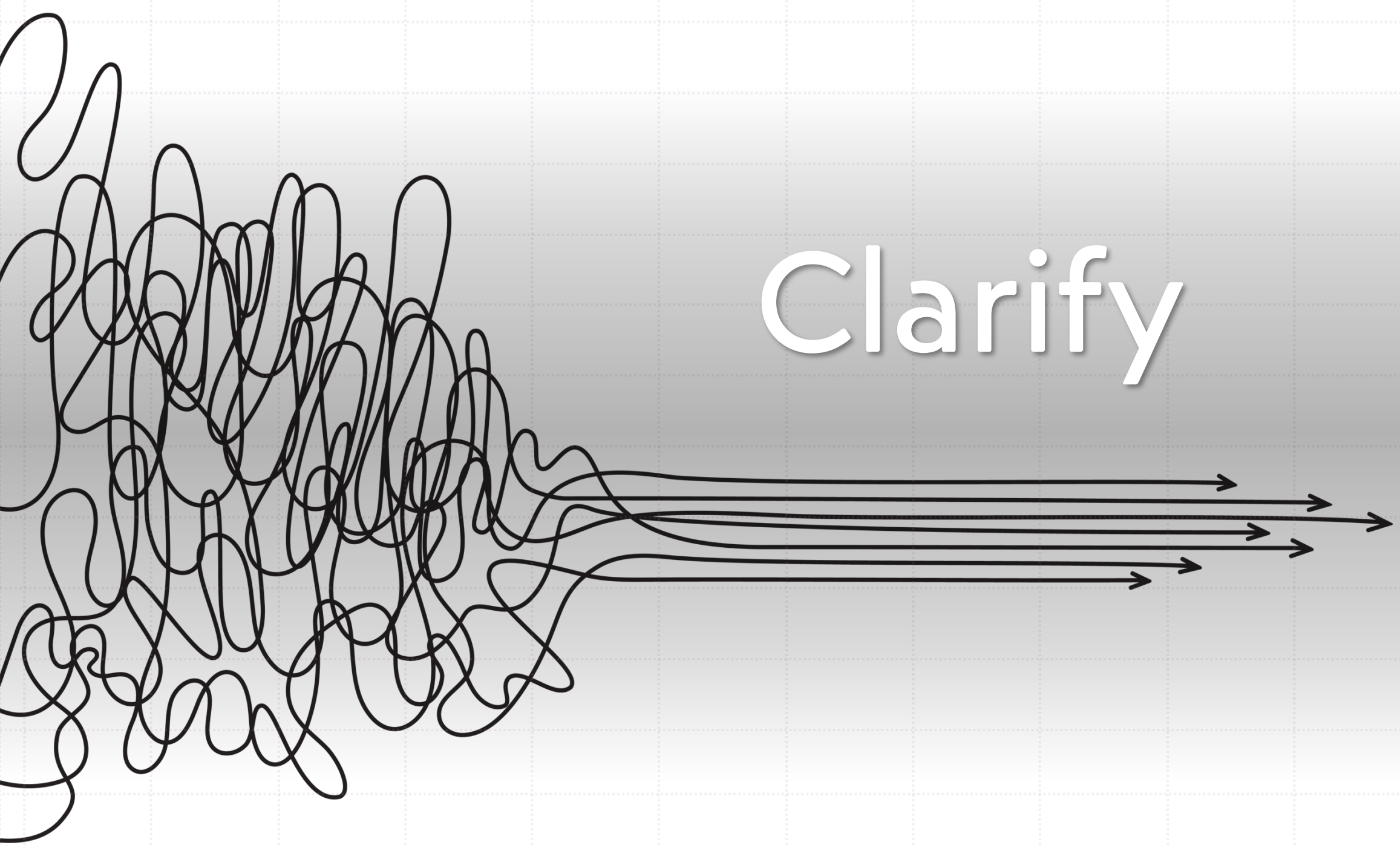
What does ”authentic assessment” mean?

Authentic assessment refers to the evaluation of student learning through tasks that reflect real-world challenges, require the application of knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts, and encourage original thought. These assessments often **emphasize process**, problem-solving, and transfer of learning beyond the classroom.

Authentic assessment is not defined by the absence of AI. It is defined by whether students are doing meaningful intellectual work that reveals learning.

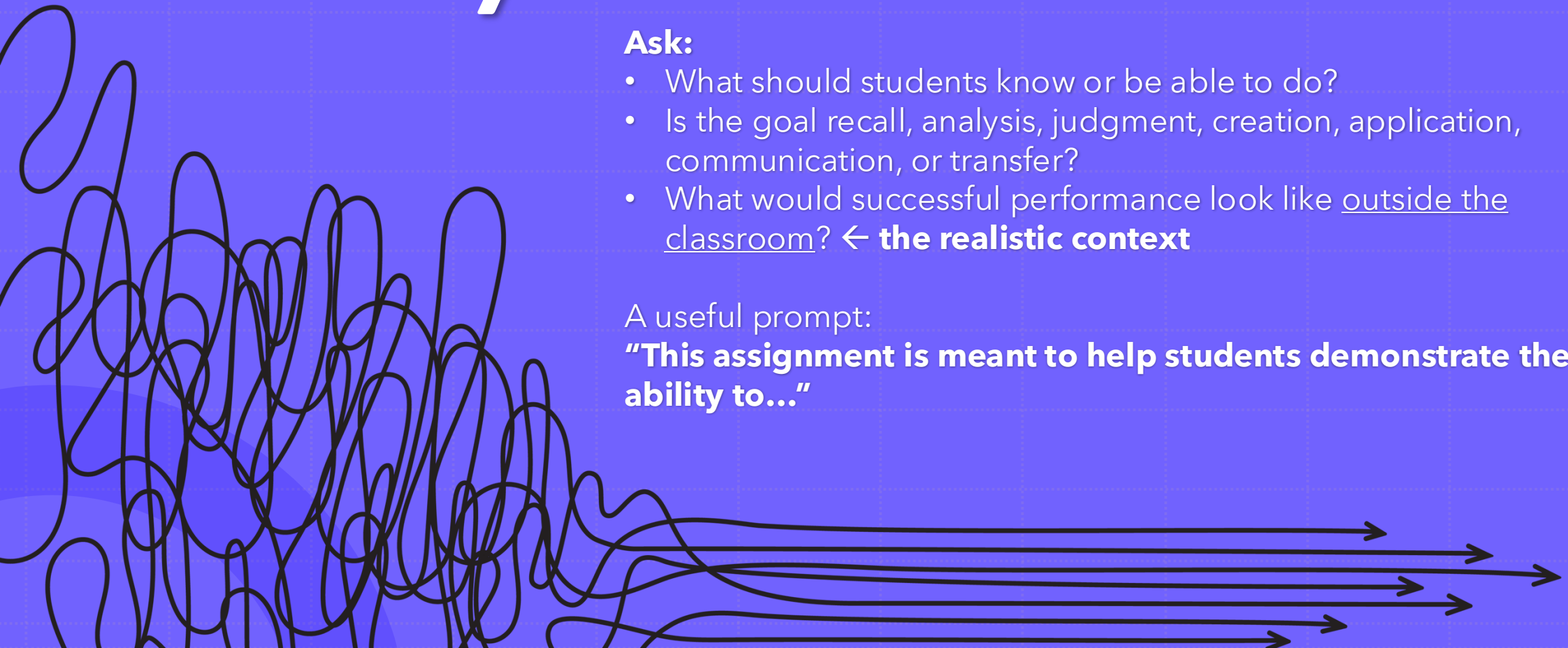
My 4 Step Process





Clarify

Clarify



Step 1: Clarify the learning objective in a realistic context
Before looking at the assignment, identify what students are actually supposed to learn.

Ask:

- What should students know or be able to do?
- Is the goal recall, analysis, judgment, creation, application, communication, or transfer?
- What would successful performance look like outside the classroom? ← **the realistic context**

A useful prompt:
“This assignment is meant to help students demonstrate their ability to…”


Engage

Engage

Step 2: Check the level of authentic engagement
Once the objective is clear, ask whether the current assignment creates real engagement with that objective. This should allow students to exercise **judgement**.

Use these questions:

- Does the task ask students to apply learning, or just repeat it?
- Does it involve a realistic audience, purpose, or context?
- Does it require judgment or decision-making?
- Does it ask students to connect ideas to a case, scenario, problem, or product?
- Could the same assignment be completed reasonably well without understanding the course? ← You know what I'm asking here.

That last question is especially useful in an AI-rich environment.

If a student could produce a decent-looking answer with minimal understanding, the task may need redesign.

Before:
Compare and contrast three theories of motivation discussed in class.

After:
A first-year student success program wants to improve participation in academic coaching. Based on three motivation theories from the course, determine which theory would provide the strongest foundation for redesigning the program. Recommend one strategy based on that theory, explain why it is the best fit for this context, and briefly explain why the other two theories are less useful here. Include a short design note describing the assumptions you made and how you reached your decision.

Why this works:
Students must do more than compare. They must **choose**, **justify**, and **defend**. That is a much clearer demonstration of authentic learning.





Identify

Identify

Step 3: Identify what makes the assignment authentic
Faculty often say an assignment is authentic because it is a project, presentation, or paper. That is not enough on its own. We need to include **process.**

An assessment is more likely to be authentic when it includes one or more of these features:

- A realistic problem, scenario, or case
- A clear purpose beyond "turn this in for points"
- A defined audience
- A need to make choices or defend decisions
- Application of knowledge to a new situation
- Integration of multiple skills
- Evidence of process, not just final product
- Reflection, revision, or self-assessment
- A product, performance, or recommendation that resembles real disciplinary work

A useful faculty prompt:
"What exactly about this assignment reflects how knowledge is used in the real world?"

Language to help faculty describe authenticity

Sometimes faculty need help naming why an assessment is authentic. You can give them sentence starters like these:

- “This assessment is authentic because students must apply course concepts to a realistic situation.”
- “Students are asked to make and justify decisions rather than simply repeat information.”
- “The task reflects work that could occur in a professional, civic, or disciplinary context.”
- “Students must show their thinking through drafts, reflection, or explanation of process.”
- “The assignment allows for original responses, not one predictable answer.”
- “The assessment emphasizes transfer of learning beyond the classroom.”




Visibility

Visibility

Step 4: Make Learning Visible
This is where the AI conversation becomes productive.
Instead of relying only on "no AI," build in opportunities for students to show how they learned, thought, and made decisions.

Possible forms of process evidence:

- proposal or plan
- annotated notes or source rationale
- draft checkpoints
- decision log ← **I've used this one with great success.**
- reflection on choices made
- revision memo
- brief defense or explanation
- peer feedback and response
- comparison of alternatives considered
- applied rationale tied to course concepts

These do not all need to be used at once. Even adding one or two can make learning more visible. The key question is:

"What evidence would help me see the student's thinking, not just the finished product?"

Before: Write a five-page paper summarizing leadership theory.

After: Analyze a real leadership challenge in a workplace, community, or organization.
Recommend an approach using two theories from the course. Include a short decision log explaining why you selected your example, how you evaluated alternatives, and how any AI tools were or were not used.

Same content area. Stronger authenticity.




Think Process over Product
DESIGN
A
B



Before:
Describe the process of photosynthesis and its major stages.

After:
A community organization wants to create an educational guide for local residents on why plant health matters in urban spaces. Develop a short explanation of photosynthesis for a non-scientific audience, then recommend **which environmental factor**—light, water, temperature, or soil quality—would be most important to monitor first in a struggling community garden. Justify your recommendation using biological principles and explain why the other factors are less immediate concerns in this case.

Why it is more authentic:
Students must **apply scientific knowledge in context**, adapt to an audience, and **make a reasoned recommendation** rather than simply describe a process.

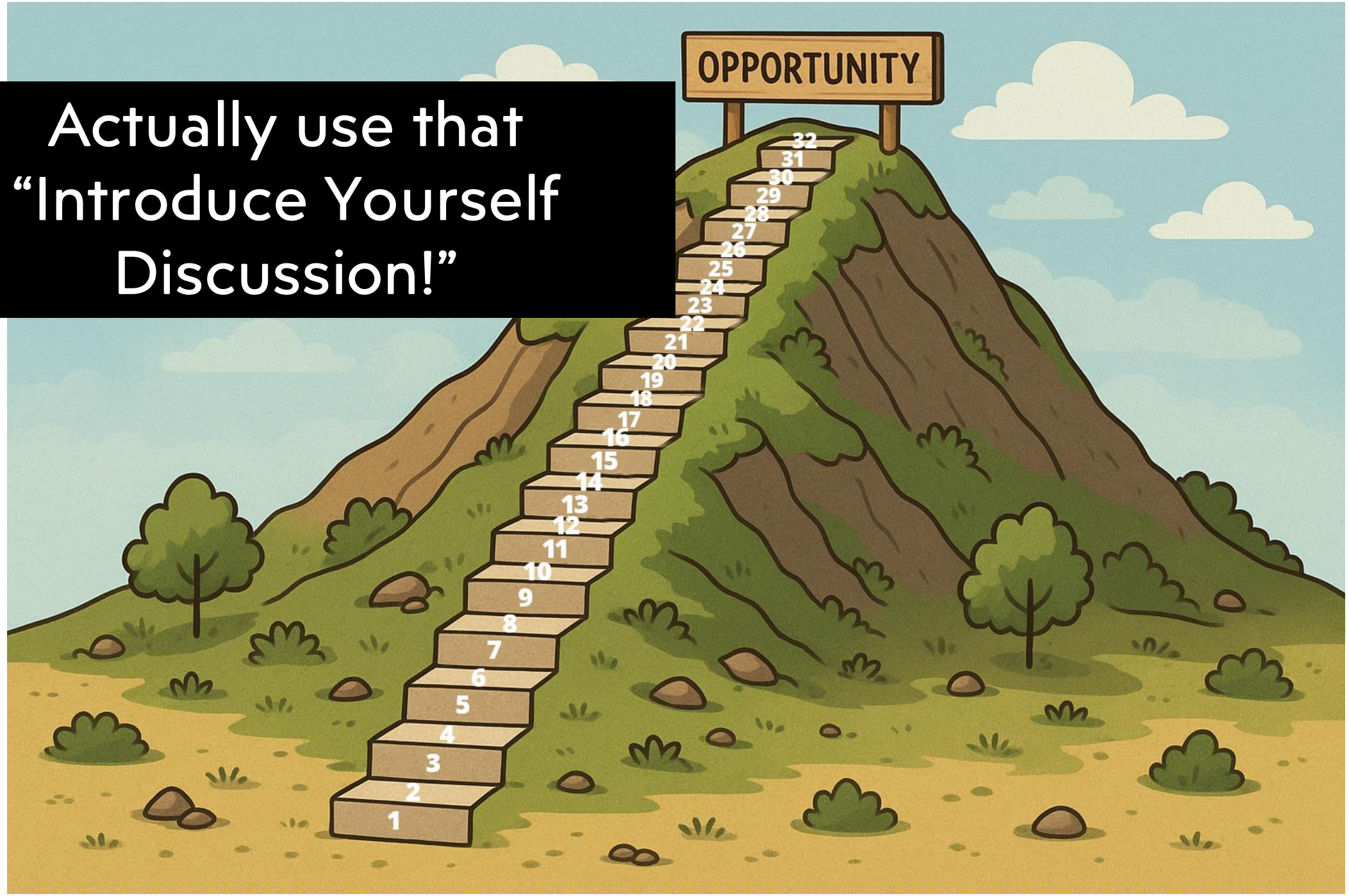
Example:
The Privilege Walk



Students answer 50 questions.

1. If you are right-handed, take one step forward.	1
2. If English is your first language, take one step forward.	1
3. If one or both of your parents have a college degree, take one step forward.	1
4. If you can find Band-Aids at mainstream stores designed to blend in with or match your skin tone, take one step forward.	1
5. If you rely, or have relied primarily on public transportation, take one step back.	-1
6. If you have attended previous schools with people, you felt were like yourself, take one step forward	1
7. If you constantly feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step back.	-1
8. If your household employs help as servants, gardeners, etc., take one step forward.	1
9. If you can move through the world without fear of assault, take one step forward.	1
10. If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.	1
11. If you often felt that your parents were too busy to spend time with you, take one step back.	-1
12. If you were ever made fun of or bullied for something you could not change or was beyond your control, take one step back.	-1
13. If your family has ever left your homeland or entered another country not of your own free will, take one step back.	-1
14. If you never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, take one step forward.	1
15. If your family owns a computer, take one step forward.	1

How do you create this as an ONLINE assignment?


Actually use that
“Introduce Yourself
Discussion!”
OPPORTUNITY
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The Privilege Walk

Grab a Flag



Instructions

1. Download the Privilege Walk Excel Sheet and answer each of the 50 questions. It will auto-calculate your score at the bottom.
2. Grab a flag from the box above and click-and-drag it to where you are on the opportunity trail. This should correspond with your score from the Excel document.
3. Take note of where you are in comparison to your peers. You should revisit this activity closer

Privilege Walk Activity

September 12 - September 18

Includes assessment.

The purpose of the virtual privilege walk is to bring awareness privilege and oppression shape lived experiences. This activity emotions, surprises, and new insights, ar meaning from the experience.

In your reflection, please address the fol

1. Personal Reaction
   - What was it like for you to partici
   - Did you experience any feelings c or awareness as the walk progres
   - Were there moments when you b background, or experiences?
2. Patterns of Privilege and Oppress
   - What stood out to you about the the group?
   - Did you notice any patterns relate ability, or other social identities?
   - How did the activity help you see operate at both individual and str
3. Connection to Social Work Value
   - How does this exercise connect t recognizing the inherent dignity a person-in-environment, and work
   - How might reflecting on privilege and oppression strengthen your ability to practice cultural humility?

Privilege Walk Activity

Privilege Walk Activity

I began answering the questions without much thought. About halfway through, it occurred to me that my answers were more complicated than I anticipated. The questions brought up things from my childhood and adulthood. I was surprised to see that my score was -3 after answering all the questions.

When I examine the distribution of the group, it appears to be evenly distributed throughout the steps, but no one crossed over to the top half of the steps. The activity is a reminder that we have all had different experiences, oppressions, and levels of privilege.

As social workers, we are working to level the playing field by working toward social justice. Social justice limits oppression and privilege, enabling us to achieve equality. I think it's also important to note that you cannot tell what a person has been through by looking at them. This is where recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every person that we engage with as social workers.

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Before:
Calculate the mean, median, and standard deviation for the data set.

After:
A school administrator wants to know whether a new tutoring program is helping students improve. Analyze the provided data and determine **which statistic or combination of statistics** gives the clearest picture of the program's impact. Explain your choice, identify any limitations in the data, and justify why another common measure might be less useful or even misleading in this case.

Why it is more authentic:
Students still use the math, but now they must **interpret results, choose appropriate tools, and exercise judgment** about what the numbers actually mean.



Authentic assessment is not about creating assignments AI cannot touch.

It's about designing learning experiences AI cannot complete for students in any meaningful way without the student still having to think, decide, apply, and explain.

Thank You!

skaufman@uakron.edu

