

Sanford Career Services Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance

Artificial Intelligence Tools

Artificial Intelligence is any technology that attempts to solve problems and complete tasks that would usually require human intelligence. For decades there have been increasing advances in AI software and hardware. The most visible Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool at the moment is ChatGPT, a writing assistant that has been a topic of interest across academia and beyond over the past few months. ChatGPT can generate plausible written responses to a wide variety of user prompts and questions. Its power comes from a machine learning model that generates content in response to prompts based on a large amount of data it has been trained on and a natural language model that makes the responses seem like human language.

For more on Sanford and Duke guidance on AI, visit <https://sanford.duke.edu/story/student-voices-artificial-intelligence-ethics-and-policy-conference-duke/> and <https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/ai-and-teaching-at-duke/>

Creating Application Materials

AI language models may be able to support students' work but should not be viewed as a substitute for doing the work. Students' authentic professional and academic journey encompassing their achievements, metrics, and accomplishments, is something that only they truly know. AI-generated content runs the risk of being impersonal, generic, and oftentimes inaccurate, potentially neglecting the unique qualities that make a student an attractive candidate to potential employers. While automated cover letters, resumes, and other application materials may save time, they may not successfully differentiate a student from other candidates or help students make a positive impression, and are less likely to be tailored effectively or comprehensively to a particular job description.

If students choose to leverage AI tools for their job materials, they are encouraged to keep the following best practices in mind:

- **Be specific and provide detailed prompts.** The input a student provides influences the detail and quality of the output they receive. The more detailed a student prompt is, the more customized the generated response will be. Therefore, it is important to provide all necessary context — the who, what, and why — in a student's prompt. It may also be helpful to provide an example of the type of desired output.
- **Provide relevant information to help ensure personalization.** When using an AI language model, it is strongly recommended that students provide it with all the necessary resources for it to generate a response tailored specifically to them. This may involve providing a job description and resume, as well as highlighting the relevant experience students want the platform to prioritize.
- **Personalize the materials generated.** Even after providing additional, relevant information, the responses generated by AI models are often very generic and may not be well-tailored to student specific experiences or the job to which they are applying. Therefore, it is important to view the content generated by these tools as a starting point from which students can develop personalized materials with student-specific experiences that demonstrate transferable skills for the targeted position.
- **Review and edit the output to ensure it is accurate and professional.** The use of AI technology is meant to assist job seekers, not to fabricate career histories that cannot be supported with truthful examples. Therefore, it is imperative that students review the output provided by ChatGPT to ensure it has not embellished their materials with inaccurate information.

- **Proofread, double-check for errors, and properly format materials.** Though artificial intelligence can be sophisticated, it does not replace human precision. Proofread thoroughly to catch spelling errors, typos, and inaccurate information. In addition, all materials produced using AI will need to be converted into Sanford School templates and formats.
- **Ask for human feedback before submitting.** It is advisable to get a second set of eyes to review a resume before it is submitted in order to identify potential problems and/or inaccuracies. Students are encouraged to send their materials to their career advisor for review and feedback. It is helpful to mention to the advisor if AI was utilized in the preparation of their materials.

Using AI for Public Policy Areas/Sectors/Concentrations and Public Policy Organizations Research

AI technology can be used for conducting, researching, and gathering information to enhance students' understanding of a specific public policy career or to prepare them for an interview. However, it is important to recognize that AI technologies have limitations at many levels. While they can provide useful content, they often offer generic or basic information and will sometimes generate inaccurate responses. Additionally, the platforms may have limited knowledge of the world and current events. For this reason, it is critical to verify the information it generates.

Ways to Use AI in Career Preparation:

- General career advice in public policy area
- Public policy areas/sectors/concentrations of interest
- Public policy organizations research based on sectors
- Public policy organizations research based on geographical areas

Sample Questions:

- *What are some of the differences in the day-to-day experiences of human rights policy makers in an NGO and a government agency?*
- *What are day-to-day tasks of a staff member in a state budget office?*
- *What are some of the federal agencies that have offices in New York City?*
- *What are some multi-national public policy organizations that are hiring interns?*

Ways to Use AI in Career Document Preparation:

- Resume preparation
- Cover letter preparation
- Interview preparation
- Outreach on LinkedIn

Sample Questions:

- *What technical skills are important in the Urban Planning/Housing/Transportation public policy area? What soft skills are necessary?*
- *Given my experiences as a data entry intern, which skills do I need to highlight if I am looking to pivot into a role as Community Safety Manager with the City of Durham?*
- *How do I close a cover letter for a public policy data analyst position?*
- *What skills and traits does a policy analyst need to be successful in the international development space?*
- *Ask me three questions to focus on culture fit.*
- *I am seeking to connect with this person on LinkedIn. Based on their top three accomplishments, give me three actionable ideas on how to convince them accept a connection request from me.*

AI in the career services field is a very rapidly developing topic, and Sanford Career Services Team will strive to stay abreast of ongoing developments in this area.

Updated August 2024