

ChatGPT Is Making Universities Rethink Plagiarism Students and professors can't decide whether the AI chatbot is a research tool—or a cheating engine. In other educational settings, teachers see it as a way to show students the shortcomings of AI. Some instructors are already modifying how they teach by giving students assignments bots couldn't complete, like those that require personal details or anecdotes. After listening to his peers rave about the generative AI tool ChatGPT, Cobbs decided to toy around with the chatbot while writing an essay on the history of capitalism. In late December of his sophomore year, Rutgers University student Kai Cobbs came to a conclusion he never thought possible: Artificial intelligence might just be dumber than humans. Best known for its ability to generate long-form written content in response to user input prompts, Cobbs expected the tool to produce a nuanced and thoughtful response to his specific research directions. "Students who commit plagiarism often borrow material from a 'somewhere'—a website, for example, that doesn't have clear authorial attribution. I suspect the definition of plagiarism will expand to include things that produce." Eventually, Daily believes, a student who uses text from ChatGPT will be seen as no different than one who copies and pastes chunks of text from Wikipedia without attribution. "Calling the use of ChatGPT to pull reliable sources from the internet 'cheating' is absurd. It's like saying using the internet to conduct research is unethical," Gelman says. "The quality of writing was appalling. The phrasing was awkward and it lacked complexity," Cobbs says. There are those, like Cobbs, who can't imagine putting their name on anything bot-generated, but there are others who see it as just another tool, like spellcheck or even a calculator. "To me, ChatGPT is the research equivalent of [typing assistant] Grammarly. I use it out of practicality and that's really all." For Brown University sophomore Jacob Gelman, ChatGPT exists merely as a convenient research assistant and nothing more. Instead, his screen produced a generic, poorly written paper he'd never dare to claim as his own. In addition to increasingly complex questions about whether ChatGPT is a research tool or a plagiarism engine, there's also the possibility that it can be used for learning. There's also the matter of detecting AI use in students' work, which is a burgeoning cottage industry all its own. Ultimately, Daily says, schools may need rules that reflect a range of variables. STUDENTS' VIEWS ON ChatGPT are another issue entirely. "If [plagiarism] is stealing from a person," she says, "then I don't know that we have a person who is being stolen from." "But I think it's an evolving thing. And what it can do and what we will then need in order to keep an eye on will also be kind of a moving target."