

An Alternative Approach to AI

We are writing to invite college leaders to participate in reframing the conversation around generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), with less emphasis on the question “how we can use it?” and more emphasis on the questions

- 1) “What is our responsibility to educate the college community and the greater community about AI’s well-documented ethical and human rights violations?” and
- 2) “How can our engagement with AI contribute to pushing its development in a more humane direction?”

A common assertion about AI is that its integration into our life and work – in its current form – is inevitable, an assumption that scholars Jayson Lamchek and Van-Hau Trieu highlighted early in 2026 as a problem in the public sector.¹ This assumption leads to the frequently asserted imperative that we had best figure out how to use the current GenAI tools if we don’t want to be left behind.² This narrative of false inevitability is not only inaccurate,³ but it is also being driven by CEOs, such as Sam Altman and Elon Musk, who are desperate to bring their own versions of GenAI to fruition, so they can profit from them financially. Often, when someone tries to convince us that the future is settled, it’s because the future is deeply unsettled.

There are many different ways AI can be developed that don’t involve the overuse of large language models (LLM) from every computer. Sara Hooker has demonstrated that the quantity of compute being used by GenAI tools such as Copilot, ChatGPT, and Gemini is unnecessary:⁴ the same technical capacities can be achieved without the reliance on scaling that forms the foundation of GenAI in its current forms.

We are living in a historical moment when AI infrastructure can still be developed ethically; we do not have to go down the path of exploitative AI in order for the broader human community to reap AI’s benefits, and our financial participation is an essential ingredient for the success of American AI companies.⁵ If citizens and public sector institutions withdraw their financial support from American AI now and support more ethical alternatives, we have a reasonable likelihood of pushing the development of these technologies in a more humane direction. More ethical LLM models – that centre privacy and use the excess heat from data centres to warm homes – are already available.⁶ More ethical approaches to AI that use specialized tools with smaller ecological footprints (rather than LLMs) are also already available.⁷

At Camosun, by the norms we create for employees and students, by the conversations we have with PACs and stakeholders, we have a precious opportunity to be a community leader in helping people to 1) understand the urgency of the many types of harm caused by exploitative GenAI development/use, and 2) support the flourishing of more ethical alternatives.

It’s clear that the GenAI technologies currently under development have enormous potential to do good in many diverse spheres. It’s equally clear that, currently, their development is being guided by some of the most ruthless and self-serving oligarchs of

our time, many of whom have no qualms about profiting from egregious abuses of both ethical and legal norms. We do not refer here to imagined potentials for the future (although we believe these should also be taken seriously), but rather to very real inhumane practices in both the training and use of GenAI, such as using child sexual abuse material to train the LLMs,⁸ exploiting workers in economically disadvantaged countries to screen data,⁹ and designing browser/software interfaces that automatically opt users into using LLMs for all tasks,¹⁰ despite knowing that LLMs “consume an unfathomable amount of data, land, energy, labor, and water.”¹¹ We cannot effectively summarize all these violations in one letter,¹² so we focus our examples on three well-documented areas most directly under the college’s responsibility: the integrity of information systems, the social implications of mis/disinformation for community members, and our reliance on Microsoft.

Integrity of Information Systems

Current GenAI models violate academic integrity principles, disregard copyright law, and poison our information infrastructure: GenAI models were trained on intellectual theft,¹³ deepfakes are contributing to both mis- and disinformation, Google Scholar is indexing and providing AI summaries for articles that don't actually exist,¹⁴ and hallucinated citations are becoming chronic in scientific journals.¹⁵ Many academic publishers, in fact, have put out statements and guidelines limiting GenAI use in academic research, writing, and publishing, asserting explicitly that GenAI use in the peer review process constitutes a privacy violation and that GenAI cannot be held accountable for its outputs.¹⁶ Safeguarding information integrity is one of the primary roles of all post-secondary educators and institutions. Quick adoption of current GenAI models undermines our capacity to fulfill our fiduciary duty, as individuals and as an institution.

Mis/disinformation

Mis/disinformation is both an academic problem and a social problem. LLMs have been trained on all the racist and misogynist biases common online¹⁷ and their outputs are frequently riddled with hallucinations. Consider as one concrete possibility the ways that GenAI may exacerbate the current surge in residential school denialism.¹⁸ Just last fall, a far-right MLA attempted to gather UVic students in front of the flag honouring residential school survivors outside McPherson library, to cast doubt on the facts about residential school abuses that have been well documented and publicly recognized in the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Canadian House of Commons, and the Canadian Museum of Human Rights.¹⁹ GenAI in its current form amplifies such lies and has real-world implications for the safety and well-being of residential school survivors, as well as for Indigenous students, faculty, and community members. Quick adoption of current GenAI models exacerbates and emboldens the worst elements in our social fabric, amplifying misogynist and racist rhetoric that creates psychological, emotional, and even physical suffering for vulnerable groups.

Microsoft & Copilot

The third set of well-documented problems that falls directly within the scope of Camosun’s responsibilities is that we are reliant on Microsoft systems, and the company

has proven itself untrustworthy in terms of data privacy considerations, in terms of service reliability, and in terms of facilitating ICE operations against American citizens. The Microsoft services agreement actually includes a clause granting the company “a worldwide, royalty-free intellectual property license to use Your Content” and the assertions that the company has been scraping user data have credible elements.²⁰ Microsoft cut off email services to the International Criminal Court’s top prosecutor after Trump sanctioned him,²¹ and Microsoft cloud and AI services are being used by ICE against American citizens.²² In European countries, the idea of cutting ties with US digital services is gaining traction out of necessity as they prove themselves untrustworthy,²³ and studies of public-sector use of Copilot in both Australia²⁴ and Finland have cautioned against its wholehearted implementation, particularly in light of privacy concerns arising from “the growing body of literature on the opacity of AI systems.”²⁵ Quick adoption of Copilot and reliance on Microsoft 365 makes college data vulnerable to both privacy violations and intellectual theft.²⁶

We see a real opportunity for Camosun to be at the forefront of adopting real, impactful alternative approaches to AI in the post-secondary sector. By working, at every level of the college, to centre thoughtful, ethical, and humane engagement with GenAI, including shifting away from Microsoft and Copilot, we can move away from accidental complicity in academic integrity violations, the spread of mis/disinformation, and potential privacy breaches. As we find our path forward together through the ever-changing GenAI landscape, we hope that the college will model the same compassion, critical thinking, and responsible global citizenship that we try to instill in our students every day.

¹ Lamchek, Jayson, and Van-Hau Trieu. “Risk Regulation of Generative AI: A Case Study of Microsoft Copilot in the Australian Government.” *Technology and Regulation*, vol. 2026, Jan. 2026, pp. 18-37,

<https://doaj.org/article/d4dde1f3111a4322a8ad1969e1cac14a>. We hope that our mix of references from academic and popular press sources offer a useful beginning for people who are open to thinking through alternative approaches to GenAI alongside us, and we hope that institutional leaders interested in carrying the conversation forward will also further their knowledge with additional research of their own.

² Marta Choroszewicz argues that “public sector practitioners are often positioned as MCZ [a moral crumple zone], shielding generative AI work support tools from broader scrutiny and criticism.” See Choroszewicz, Marta. “Positioning Public Sector Practitioners as ‘Moral Crumple Zones’: Mechanisms in the Early Use of Generative AI Work Support Tools.” *Government Information Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2026, article 102128, <https://www.sciencedirect.com.libsecure.camosun.ca/science/article/pii/S0740624X26000250>

³ This video is a TED talk from April 2026 about predictions as a means of gathering power, given by Carissa Véliz, associate professor at the Institute for Ethics in AI at the University of Oxford: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS4wHmKtH-Q>

⁴ Hooker, Sara, On the Slow Death of Scaling (December 6, 2025). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=5877662> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5877662>

⁵ In this clip Scott Galloway, marketing prof at the New York University Stern School of Business, gives a simple description of how much power consumers have, using ChatGPT as an example:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/25701299336179661>

⁶ Swiss company infomaniak's LLM is built around safeguarding privacy and heats homes in Geneva:

<https://www.infomaniak.com/en/euria>

⁷ AI researchers, journalists, and critical scholars have built, documented, and imagined ethical AI tools that "center community, celebrate human agency, honor local context and history, and rejuvenate the planet":

<https://airesistlist.org/#futures>

⁸ Hao, Karen. *Empire of AI*. Penguin Random House, 2025; esp. chapters 5 and 8; index term "child sex abuse material"

⁹ Hao, Karen. *Empire of AI*. Penguin Random House, 2025; index terms "data annotation" and "labour exploitation"

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/may/19/google-glasses-search-ai>

¹¹ <https://airesistlist.org/#futures>; see also Hao, Karen. *Empire of AI*. Penguin Random House, 2025; index terms "energy usage," "water resources," and "environmental impact"

¹² The accompanying resource list offers some starting points for anyone wanting a more comprehensive understanding of 1) exactly what ethical, legal, and academic norms are being violated, and 2) what shape a coherent, unified response to these violations might take

¹³ Hao, Karen. *Empire of AI*. Penguin Random House, 2025; esp. chapters 4 and 13; index term "copyright infringement"

¹⁴ Klee, Miles. "AI Is Inventing Academic Papers that Don't Exist – and They're Being Cited in Real Journals." *Rolling Stone*, 17 December 2025: <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/ai-chatbot-journal-research-fake-citations-1235485484/>

¹⁵ Naddaf & Quill. "Hallucinated Citations Are Polluting the Scientific Literature. What Can Be Done?" *Nature*, 1 April 2026, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-00969-z>; see also Lamchek and Trieu; Kadian, Arjun, Mohammad I. Merhi, Manjul Gupta, Arman Ghafoori, and Denis Dennehy. "I Can't Take This Anymore! Understanding the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Tolerance of Generative AI Hallucinations." *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, vol. 72, 2025, pp. 3864-76, <https://ieeexplore-ieee-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=11151229>

¹⁶ See, for instance, statements and guidelines from IEEE,

<https://pspb.ieee.org/images/files/PSPB/opsmanual.pdf>; *Nature*, an academic journal,

<https://group.springernature.com/gp/group/ai/ai-guidance-for-our-researchers-and-communities>; Oxford University Press, <https://academic.oup.com/pages/for-authors/books/author-use-of-artificial-intelligence>; and University of Toronto Press, https://utppublishing.com/about/editorial-policies#_ai

¹⁷ See, for instance, Lamchek and Trieu; Warr, Melissa and Marie K. Heath. "Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum in Generative AI: A Reflective Technology Audit for Teacher Educators." *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 76, no. 3, 2025, pp. 245-61, <https://journals-sagepub-com.libsecure.camosun.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/00224871251325073>

¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/ubc-residential-school-denialism-protest-9.7057120>

¹⁹ <https://martlet.ca/indigenous-speakers-and-hundreds-of-gatherers-oppose-unsanctioned-onebc-event-on-uvic-campus/>

²⁰ <https://www.eweek.com/news/microsoft-ai-data-scraping-privacy-concerns/>

²¹ <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/business/2026/02/03/france-ditches-zoom-and-teams-for-homegrown-system-amid-european-digital-sovereignty-push/>

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/17/ice-microsoft-technology-immigration-crackdown>

²³ <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/business/2026/02/03/france-ditches-zoom-and-teams-for-homegrown-system-amid-european-digital-sovereignty-push/>

²⁴ Lamchek and Trieu

²⁵ Choroszewicz

²⁶ <https://theconversation.com/microsofts-ai-deal-promises-canada-digital-sovereignty-but-is-that-a-pledge-it-can-keep-272890>; see also <https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/news/state-of-internet/e-mail-pass-us-before-returning/> and <https://www.cyberincontext.ca/p/microsoft-admits-us-law-supersedes>