Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication | A journal published by the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group

Vol. 16 #1 (2026), pp. 14-26 https://community.aejmc.org/smallprogramsinterestgroup/publications/journals

Artificial Intelligence in Media: Student Attitudes and Preparedness for Emerging Workflows

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Abstract

This exploratory study examines media students' attitudes toward AI integration in production workflows and their self-perceived readiness to work with AI in professional settings. Findings indicate that aggregate student attitudes reflect baseline skepticism; however, hands-on, practical experience is the primary factor associated with more positive attitudes. Theoretical knowledge alone did not increase professional confidence or creative optimism, whereas experiential application supported students' perception of AI as a collaborative tool. Implications suggest that media education should emphasize experiential mastery to better prepare students for AI-integrated professional environments.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; media education; student attitudes; production workflows; experiential learning

Introduction

The central purpose of media programs in higher education is to prepare students for professional work in the media sector—teaching technical skills, creative storytelling, and collaborative production—while equally fostering critical thinking, ethical reasoning, civic engagement, and the ability to evaluate media institutions and practices critically (Buckingham, 2003; Deuze, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2009; Kellner & Share, 2007; Martens & Hobbs, 2015).

This dual mission becomes especially heightened with emerging technologies: AI preparedness must extend beyond technical fluency to include sound legal and ethical judgment regarding authorship and copyright, data privacy and transparency, algorithmic bias and accountability, and the responsible use of AI in academic and professional contexts. By combining hands-on studio production with robust theory and human-centered design thinking, media programs prepare graduates to manage both creative opportunities and the societal responsibilities of the modern media industry.

This foundation is increasingly important as AI becomes more prevalent across traditional media. News organizations use AI to create story drafts, generate images, produce personalized audio feeds, and write weekly newspaper articles (Balmer, 2025; Oremus & Nover, 2026; Riedlinger et al., 2025; Romo, 2025). Publishers use AI-generated voices to narrate audiobooks in multiple languages (Knight, 2025), and broadcasters automate recording, analysis, and streaming of live sporting events (Bevir, 2026; Fisher,

2026; MacInnes, 2026). Visual effects artists use AI to enhance actors' performance, perform real-time face swaps, and digitally de-age actors (Edwards, 2024; Lambie, 2025). AI-powered text and image prompts can generate highly realistic videos with synchronized audio, physical realism, and accurate lip syncing (Elias & Subin, 2025; Roth, 2026). Beyond content creation, AI provides personalized insights "into audience demographics and engagement, enabling targeted content strategies and increasingly managing content creation process from concept to placement with minimal human intervention (Bobrowsky & Coffee, 2025; Sturges, 2025).

As AI's role in media grows, demand for AI skills is rising domestically and internationally. Reports show a steady increase in demand for AI expertise in the U.S. labor market since 2010, with notable acceleration in 2023, extending to generative AI skills across occupations including content creation (Cunningham, 2025; Mohnen & Lee, 2024; Stephany, 2026). Globally, AI-related job postings have surged and often require proficiency with multiple AI tools (Ginger, 2026; Jiaying, 2025; Ryan, 2025; Squicciarini & Nachtigall, 2021; Why AI skills, 2026). Industry leaders now consider AI proficiency essential and prioritize professionals who can integrate AI-enabled workflows (Bantourakis & Venturini, 2025; Barr, 2025; Ginger, 2026; Vanoli, 2025). Many experts predict that AI skills will soon be indispensable, underscoring higher education's role in providing relevant training (Hollenbeck, 2024; Karlovitch, 2024).

Despite recognition of AI's importance, employers report difficulty finding qualified candidates and creative professionals with the necessary expertise (Basu, 2026; Goldstein et al., 2025; Mearian, 2025). Many current media professionals acknowledge that their skills require substantial upgrading to adapt to an AI-integrated industry (West, 2024). In response, higher education media programs and professional organizations are rapidly adapting. Many offer courses that integrate generative AI tools for writing, coding, and image production (Cassidy, 2025; Helmore, 2025; Solis, 2025). Specialized workshops and certification programs provide hands-on training across the creative process and address legal, regulatory, and copyright issues associated with AI (DSIT, 2026; Theobald, 2024). These initiatives emphasize combining critical "thinking and technical proficiency so students and professionals can leverage AI responsibly in a changing industry.

Nevertheless, research shows that many students feel they lack relevant AI experience and training (McMillian & Schwaba, 2025; Muscanell & Gay, 2025). Concerns about employability arise from insufficient support and limited access to essential AI tools during study (Attewell, 2025). Most institutions lag in offering formal guidance, comprehensive policies, and dedicated training needed to prepare students for an AI-driven economy (Palmer, 2026; Robert & McCormack, 2025). As expectations for AI literacy grow, access to AI tools has implications for digital equity and workplace readiness; experts call for substantial exposure and instruction so students can use these tools effectively (Flaherty, 2025).

Although prior research addresses general student perspectives on AI, few studies examine how media students perceive their own preparedness for AI-integrated workplaces. Understanding students' perceptions is essential because they represent the future workforce. This study explores media students' perceived readiness for AI-integrated workplaces and their attitudes toward AI integration in production and content creation. By identifying gaps in education and evaluating students' confidence in using AI tools, the study offers insights for institutions on adapting curricula for an AI-driven media landscape.

Literature Review

The increasing integration of AI into the media workflows and the rise of AI training initiatives in higher education—particularly in media programs—highlight the need to examine students' perceptions of AI in the curriculum. Research indicates mixed student attitudes toward AI integration and related training. Many view AI positively, recognizing its potential to improve learning outcomes, enhance creativity, and streamline workflows (Vieriu & Petrea, 2025; see also Freeman, 2025; Razmerita et al., 2025; Ron & Chun, 2024). However, students also express concerns about ethical implications, accuracy, data privacy, and academic integrity (Slimi et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Engagement with AI also appears to vary by academic disciplines, with applied fields showing greater awareness and involvement (Qu et al., 2024).

Despite familiarity with AI tools, many students lack a comprehensive understanding of AI and feel unprepared for an AI-integrated workplaces, expressing a desire for AI training within the curriculum (Coffey, 2024; Siraj & Duke, 2025).

Conversely, some students consider AI use in higher education inappropriate (Mowreader, 2024), preferring human guidance and interaction over AI-mediated learning (Al-Huwail et al., 2025; Boillos & Idoiaga, 2025; Zapata et al., 2025). These students advocate for an interdisciplinary approach that combines human expertise and AI capabilities to achieve a more holistic education (Sabbaghan & Eaton, 2025).

This divide often reflects differing views on AI's impact on human creativity, academic integrity, and future employment. Proponents contend that AI literacy is essential for advancing human intelligence and preparing students for future skill demands and career opportunities (Milberg, 2025). Skeptics, in contrast, warn that over-reliance on technology may erode critical thinking, undermine traditional learning methods, and raise ethical concerns (Thomson, 2025).

Although prior research has explored multiple dimensions of AI integration in education, there is a notable gap concerning students' perceptions of AI's role in enhancing creativity and efficiency particularly within media workflows. Little is known about media students' perceived preparedness for AI-integrated workplaces, despite the field's unique blend of creativity and technical proficiency developed through practice. This exploratory study addresses that gap by investigating how media students view AI integration in their curriculum and how prepared they feel for an AI-integrated workplaces. The study aims to provide insights to inform curriculum development and better prepare students for a rapidly evolving job market. The study addresses two research questions:

RQ1: How do media students view AI's potential to enhance creativity and efficiency in traditional media production workflows?

RQ2: How do media students assess self-perceived career readiness for AI-integrated workplaces?

Method

Participants

A total of 34 undergraduate students from a four-year college in the United States participated. Participants were recruited through classroom announcements across media and content creation courses, representing disciplines such as media production (including film, television, journalism, and music/audio production), media business (including music business, and media and entertainment studies), theatre/drama, and creative writing.

Materials and Instrumentation

Participants completed an online survey collecting demographics and academic background (age, gender, major, class rank, self-reported AI experience on a 4-point scale (0 = none, 3 = extensive)), and a 5-item multiple-choice AI knowledge pre-assessment adapted from the Generative AI Literacy Assessment Test (GLAT) (Jin et al., 2024) to measure understanding of AI fundamentals (e.g., "Which factor most affects the quality of AI-generated images?").

Table 1

Scale	Item
Creativity	AI tools enhance my ability to generate creative ideas.
	AI image or video generators expand the range of concepts I can visualize. Using AI tools helps me overcome creative blocks.
	AI-generated content limits originality in the creative process.
	My creativity improves when I collaborate with AI tools rather than avoid them.
Workflow	AI tools make my content creation process more efficient.
	It is easy to learn how to use AI tools effectively for creative work.
	AI-generated outputs provide a strong starting point for my creative projects. Using AI saves time without reducing quality.
	AI image or video tools help me communicate complex ideas more effectively.
Preparedness	Understanding AI tools will be essential for success in my future career.
	Employers in creative industries will expect graduates to have AI-related skills. My program of study adequately prepares me to work alongside AI technologies. I am prepared to take advantage of AI-related opportunities in creative work.
	I feel uncertain about how AI will affect my future career stability. *

* The item was removed during reliability analysis. Its removal improved the Preparedness scale's Cronbach's alpha from .656 to .701.

Table 2

Frequency Distributions for Demographic and AI Background Variables ($N = 34$)

Variable	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Female	25	73.5
	Male	8	23.5
	Prefer Not to Say	1	2.9
Major	Media Production	19	55.9
	Media Business	12	35.3
	Other (Theatre/Creative Writing)	3	8.8
Class Rank	Freshman	8	23.5
	Sophomore	8	23.5
	Junior	8	23.5
	Senior	10	29.4
AI Experience (0–3 scale)	0 – None	2	5.9
	1 – Minimal	16	47.1
	2 – Moderate	10	29.4
	3 – Extensive	6	17.6

Note. Percentage may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The survey also included three perception scales—Creativity (impact on creative processes), Workflow (impact on efficiency and tasks), and Preparedness (self-perceived readiness for AI-integrated workplaces)—adapted from established measures, including the Attitudes Toward Artificial Intelligence Scale (ATAIS) (Schepman & Rodway, 2020) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). Each scale comprised five items (15 items total) and used a 5-point Likert response format (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; see Table 1).

The Creativity and Workflow scales demonstrated good internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .813 and α = .749, respectively). The initial 5-item Preparedness scale yielded a marginal internal consistency (α= .656). An item-deleted reliability analysis identified a reverse-coded item about career uncertainty ("I feel uncertain about how AI will affect my future career stability.") that reduced scale consistency; this item was removed. The final 4-item Preparedness scale achieved an acceptable internal reliability (α = .701). The final section of the survey comprised open-ended questions soliciting participants' qualitative insights on preparedness for AI-integrated workplaces and future career opportunities.

Procedure

The 7–10 minute online survey was administered via Qualtrics during the fall 2025 semester. The survey was reviewed and approved as exempt by the hosting university's Institutional Review Board (Protocol No. 1951). Before participating, respondents reviewed an informed consent document that described the study's objectives, voluntary participation, data confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Results and Findings

The study sample comprised 34 participants (M_{age} = 20.41, *SD* = 2.57). The majority were female (*n* = 25, 73.5%) and primarily majored in media production (*n* = 19, 55.9%), followed by media business (*n* = 12, 35.3%), and other creative disciplines (*n* = 3, 8.8%; see Table 2). Participants were relatively evenly distributed across academic years: 10 seniors (29.4%) and 8 participants in each of the freshmen, sophomore, and junior cohorts (23.5% each). Participants' theoretical understanding of AI averaged *M* = 4.47 (*SD* = 0.66) on a 0–5 scale (0 = none, 5 = expert), whereas practi-

cal experience was lower, averaging M = 1.59 (SD = 0.86) on a 0–3 scale (0 =none, 3 = extensive).

"To explore general patterns within the sample, descriptive statistics for the three perception scales were compared to the 5-point Likert midpoint (3 = neither agree nor disagree; see Table 3). These midpoint comparisons provide an initial benchmark to identify whether the cohort leaned toward agreement or disagreement but are interpreted cautiously. Given the small, non-representative sample (N = 34), these scores are not intended to generate levels of AI readiness or attitudes to a broader student population, nor do they imply a definitive psychological state of neutrality. They serve solely as an explanatory baseline for this group.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Midpoint Comparison for Perception Scales (Test Value = 3.0)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*t*(33)	*p*	Cohen's *d*	95% CI
Creativity	2.75	0.82	−1.80	.082	−0.31	[−.54, .03]
Workflow	2.85	0.73	−1.22	.230	−0.21	[−.41, .10]
Preparedness	3.26	0.73	2.11	.042*	0.36	[.01, .52]

Note. N = 34. CI = confidence interval for mean difference (M – 3.0).
* p < .05

Table 4

Comparing AI Perceptions by Levels of Experience

Variable	Low (n = 18)		High (n = 16)		*t*(32)	*p*	*d*	95% CI
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
Creativity	2.29	0.78	3.26	0.51	−4.25	<.001**	−1.46	[−1.44, −0.51]
Workflow	2.52	0.65	3.21	0.65	−3.09	.004**	−1.06	[−1.14, −0.24]
Preparedness	2.83	0.70	3.75	0.39	−4.66	<.001**	−1.60	[−1.32, −0.52]

Note. CI = confidence interval for mean difference (Low – High). ** p < .01

Table 5

Comparing AI Perceptions by Levels of Knowledge

Variable	Low (n = 15)		High (n = 19)		*t*(32)	*p*	*d*	95% CI
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
Creativity	2.59	0.73	2.87	0.89	−1.01	.319	−0.35	[−0.86, 0.29]
Workflow	2.69	0.68	2.97	0.76	−1.10	.281	−0.38	[−0.79, 0.24]
Preparedness	3.20	0.85	3.32	0.64	−0.45	.653	−0.16	[−0.64, 0.40]

Note. CI = confidence interval for mean difference (Low – High).

As shown in Table 3, sample means for perceptions of Creativity (M = 2.75, SD = 0.82) and Workflow (M = 2.85, SD = 0.73) trended slightly below the midpoint; neither deviated significantly from 3.0 (Creativity: t(33) = −1.80, p = .082, d = −0.31; Workflow: t(33) = −1.22, p = .230, d = −0.21). Conversely, perceptions of Preparedness leaned above the midpoint (M = 3.26, SD = 0.73), representing a statistically significant upward deviation (t(33) = 2.11, p = .042, d = 0.36). The relatively low standard deviations (SD ≤ 0.82) across scales indicate clustering of responses near the center rather than a highly polarized distribution of extreme opposing views. Within this group, participants expressed slight skepticism about AI's immediate benefit to creativity and workflow while reporting higher self-assessed workplace readiness.

The analysis of how practical experience and theoretical knowledge affect perceptions revealed that practical experience was a strong predictor across all three scales (see Tables 4 and 5). Students with higher practical experience reported significantly more positive perceptions of AI's impact on creativity and workflow and higher self-perceived preparedness, with large effect sizes (|d| > 1.0). In contrast, theoretical knowledge produced no statistically significant differences. These findings indicate that hands-on experience, rather than theoretical understanding alone, is associated with more positive attitudes toward AI in media workflows and greater sense of readiness for AI-integrated workplaces.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations by Major

Variable	Media Production (n = 19)		Media Business (n = 12)		Other (n = 3)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Creativity	2.66	0.96	2.90	0.69	2.67	0.23
Workflow	2.79	0.82	3.05	0.57	2.40	0.60
Preparedness	3.29	0.80	3.23	0.72	3.25	0.43

Table 7

One-Way ANOVA results for Perceptions by Major

Variable	*F*(2, 31)	*p*	η^2	95% CI
Creativity	0.31	.737	.019	[.000, .139]
Workflow	1.10	.347	.066	[.000, .235]
Preparedness	0.02	.976	.002	[.000, .001]

Note. η^2 benchmarks: small = .00, medium = .06, large = .14 (Cohen, 1988).

A series of one-way ANOVAs tested whether student perceptions differed by major (see Tables 6 and 7). Because group sizes were highly unequal—particularly the

Other category (n = 3)—these results are preliminary. No statistically significant differences were observed at p < .05 for any of the three scales. For Workflow impact, group means ranged from a low of M = 2.40 (SD = 0.60) for Other to a high of M = 3.05 (SD = 0.57) for Media Business, with Media Production falling in between (M = 2.79, SD = 0.82). The difference was not significant, F(2, 31) = 1.10, p = .347, but the effect size was medium, η^2 = .066, 95% CI [.000, .235]. Perceptions of Creativity did not differ by major, F(2,31) = 0.31, p = .737, η^2 = .019, 95% CI [.000, .139]. Perceptions of Preparedness also showed no difference, F(2,31) = 0.02, p = .976, η^2 = .002, 95% CI [.000, .001]. Overall, AI perceptions appear broadly shared across majors; however, the medium effect size for Workflow suggests a potential trend that may reach significance in a larger, more balanced sample.

Examining relationships between AI background and perceptions, practical experience demonstrated a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation with Creativity (r = .63, p < .01), and moderate-to-strong significant correlations with Preparedness (r = .57, p < .01) and Workflow (r = .50, p < .01) (see Table 8). In contrast, theoretical knowledge exhibited no significant relationship with any perception scale, showing virtually no correlation with Preparedness (r = .02). The three perception variables were strongly intercorrelated: Creativity and Workflow (r = .74, p < .01), Creativity and Preparedness (r = .67, p < .01), and Workflow and Preparedness (r = .57, p < .01). These results suggest that greater practical experience is associated with perceiving AI as enhancing creativity, workflow efficiency, and careeer preparedness, whereas theoretical knowledge has no meaningful association with these perceptions.

A thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified three key themes regarding students' perceptions of AI's role in enhancing creativity, workflow efficiency, and professional preparedness:

Idea Catalyst

The most prominent theme—present in the majority of transcripts (n = 24; 71%) and supported by rich descriptions—portrayed AI as a tool for overcoming creative blocks. Students reported using AI to generate foundational project elements (e.g., outlines, themes, brainstorming lists) that they subsequently

Table 8

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for AI Background and Perceptions

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*
1. Experience	—					1.59	0.86
2. Knowledge	.30	—				4.47	0.66
3. Creativity	.63**	.19	—			2.75	0.82
4. Workflow	.50**	.25	.74**	—		2.85	0.73
5. Preparedness	.57**	.02	.67**	.57**	—	3.26	0.73

**$p < .01$

refined with human judgment. Several described AI as a collaborator: a media business student called it "that one friend that you bounce ideas off of until you get a good one," and a media production student said it helped them "envision how my project was going to look." Rather than replacing creativity, AI-generated ideas often provoked fresh thinking; for example, a media production student said AI "challenged me to think outside the box," and a creative writing student noted it "got me to think differently and come up with new ideas myself."

Creative Facilitator

A second theme framed AI as a facilitator for students with clear concepts but limited technical skills (e.g., a writer needing a storyboard or a designer needing audio). Students used AI to communicate concepts more effectively: one media business student used it to "explain to the class what I was already envisioning in my head," and another generated "instrumentals for a background audio" when lacking audio engineering skills. This capability enabled more professional presentations and saved time; a media production student used AI for "product mockups for design work" to execute and communicate creative concepts more effectively.

Professional Literacy

The third theme concerned perceived necessity: students felt pressure to achieve AI proficiency to remain competitive in the job market. One media business student compared this proficiency to language fluency: "I imagine AI like a language. You are expected to be fluent and acutely aware of all its details." Others echoed this view; a theatre/drama student noted that "employers will want graduates to have experience with AI... They want AI material in your portfolio."

In summary, three primary perspectives emerged: (1) AI as a creative catalyst that helps overcome creative blocks by generating foundational elements; (2) AI as a practical facilitator that reduces reliance on specialized technical skills and improves communication; and (3) AI as a professional literacy students feel compelled to meet to satisfy employer expectations.

Discussion

This study investigated student perceptions of AI regarding its impact on creativity, workflow, and professional preparedness. Although aggregate data indicated neutrality or slight skepticism, deeper analysis showed practical experience to be the primary driver of positive attitudes toward AI and perceived preparedness for AIintegrated professional environments.

Practice vs. Theory

A central finding is a strong positive relationship between students' practical experience and their attitudes toward AI. Students who actively used AI reported substantially higher scores on measures of Creativity, Workflow, and Preparedness ($d > 1.0$); frequency of use correlated strongly with perceived Creativity ($r = .63$). In contrast, theoretical knowledge had no significant influence on these perceptions. This pattern aligns with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which identifies trialability (hands-on experimentation) as a critical driver of technology adoption. Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use are formed through direct interaction rather than passive, conceptual understanding (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). This experiential shift mirrors earlier integration of computer-aided design (CAD) in architecture and engineering education and digital audio workstations (DAWs) in music education. In those contexts, project-based and authentic learning environments helped students develop technical and creative confidence and a strong sense of professional readiness while complementing, not replacing, traditional classroom instruction (Berselli et al., 2020; Pendergast, 2022; Sola-Guirado et al., 2022). For educators, this implies that simply teaching about AI is insufficient to build student confidence; hands-on integration is essential for students to perceive AI as a valuable resource in their creative process.

AI as an Augmentation Tool

Qualitative themes clarify why experienced users view AI favorably: by using it to bypass creative blocks or automate technical tasks, students bridge the gap between imagination and execution. This dynamic helps explain the high intercorrelation between Creativity and Workflow (r = .74). In technology-acceptance literature, such optimization represents the realization of perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989) and performance expectancy (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Consistent with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), when a tool reduces the technical effort required to achieve a goal, user acceptance increases (Venkatesh et al., 2003, 2012). By removing bottlenecks, AI functions as a collaborator that directly enhances perceived creative efficiency. A comparable phenomenon occurred during the mass adoption of non-linear digital video editing and automated graphic design tools in the early 2000s. Initial concerns that these technologies would diminish craftmanship and creative authenticity gradually gave way to recognition that they reconfigured creative labor, automating technical processes while increasing the importance of conceptual and editorial decision-making (Darley, 2000; Deuze, 2007; Murch, 2001; Manovich, 2001).

The Pressure of Professional Literacy

Students liken AI proficiency to a basic literacy required for the job market, suggesting that students feel a professional obligation to master it. The correlation between experience and preparedness (r = .57) suggests that practical application directly enhances workplace readiness. This professional pressure reflects social influence and subjective norms—the societal and industry expectations that shape technology adoption in extended TAM and UTAUT models (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003). This shift toward mandatory AI proficiency parallels the adoption of Adobe Creative Suite, when industry-standard software became an expected qualification for creative professionals (Keith & Collins, 2023). These findings indicate that industry expectations compel student engagement with AI and that practical engagement reduces skepticism.

In conclusion, student attitudes toward AI are shaped more by practical use than by theoretical understanding. Grounded in adoption research—from Rogers' (2003) trialability to the performance expectations of TAM and UTAUT (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003)—these results reaffirm that technology acceptance is inherently experiential. To better prepare students for an AI-integrated media landscape, educational frameworks should prioritize hands-on, experiential mastery over conceptual instruction.

Limitations

While this study identifies clear trends, several limitations warrant caution. First, the study sample was small ($N = 34$), limiting generalizability across student populations and disciplines. The sample was also predominantly female (73.5%), which may skew findings toward that subgroup; future research should use larger, multi-institutional samples to verify these trends. Second, data relied on self-report measures subject to social desirability bias; students may overstate preparedness or experience to align with perceived industry expectations. A mixed-methods approach (in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation) would strengthen validity by triangulating self-reported data. Third, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time; given the rapid advancements in AI, attitudes and the value of practical experience may shift quickly. Longitudinal research following students into employment is needed to determine whether employers continue to value human skills versus cost-effective AI solutions. Although qualitative responses suggest students

expect their skills to remain valued, only long-term tracing can confirm this.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

Given that practical experience is the primary driver of perceptions of professional preparedness, curricula should prioritize hands-on, integrated AI instruction rather than treating AI proficiency, ethics, or history as isolated topics. Media programs should integrate AI tools into studio and lab coursework, enabling students to apply AI to repetitive or time-con-

suming tasks and to reserve cognitive bandwidth for higher-level creative work. For example, programs can scaffold assignments in which students use AI for rough drafts or mockups, then complete independent revision and ethical reflection.

Successful integration requires advance planning to mitigate hidden burdens, such as learning new software, verifying AI outputs, and interpreting institutional use policies. To prevent these burdens from undermining creative judgment, programs should establish clear, stage-specific boundaries that allow AI to assist while ensuring that primary ideation remains student-led. Instructors might require students to document and reflect on their AI interactions, assess early-stage ideation independently of AI outputs, and restrict AI to tasks that support learning objectives rather than substitute for critical thinking. This process-centered approach preserves students' original reasoning and keeps human-driven innovation central while leveraging AI to improve workflow and professional preparedness.

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