

Law schools, firms increase training, classes in generative AI

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With the rise of Chat GPT and Meta AI, legal professionals are quickly being pushed to find ways to adapt to advances in artificial intelligence without compromising their ethics.

In response, colleges and law firms across the nation—including several in Indiana—are offering training focused on the issues

According to the 2024 AI and Legal Education Survey, collected by the American Bar Association, 55% of the 29 responding law schools currently offer classes on artificial intelligence as part of their curriculum.

The classes include AI in law practice, big tech as it relates to the First Amendment, and legal problem solving, which uses AI to solve legal issues.

In addition, 83% of responding law schools said they currently offer extracurricular opportunities for students to learn how to use AI, not solely learn about the technology itself.

Law firms across the country are following suit. In addition to training within firms, outside agencies including the Indiana State Bar Association are offering courses on generative AI education to attorneys.

Bloomberg Law's 2023 State of Practice: Tech and Compensation survey found 53% of law firm attorneys and 61% of in-house attorneys surveyed said their businesses have had internal talks about how to better understand generative AI.

As society adjusts to developments in the world of AI, these law firms and higher education institutes are developing their own paths to ensure their associates, attorneys and students are prepared to face a new age of protecting privacy, improving accuracy and establishing boundaries between man and technology.

Challenges facing the legal profession

Significant challenges leaders in law schools across the country are facing are regulating the use of artificial intelligence in admissions and in the classroom.

According to the AI and Legal Education Survey, 62% of respondents said they were undecided about whether to permit applicants to use generative AI when submitting law school applications.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents said they've updated their academic integrity policies in response to the growth of generative AI, the survey reported.

Martin Pritikin, dean of Purdue Global Law School, said the school doesn't need to use AI in its admissions process but is working on how to effectively monitor AI in its courses.

Some classes at the school require the use of AI but others don't, and it's up to faculty to decide to what extent AI can be used in the latter.

In law firms, many lawyers are worried about the risks involved with using generative AI because they don't yet know the extent to which it can be ethically utilized, according to Cari Sheehan, a conflicts and ethics attorney for Scopelitis, Garvin, Light, Hanson & Feary, P.C.

According to Bloomberg Law's 2023 State of Practice, 42% of respondents are extremely concerned about generative AI's effect on data and privacy.

However, Sheehan believes lawyers can effectively use generative AI while still having healthy hesitations about it.

AI education in law schools

Last semester, Purdue Global Law introduced a new course on artificial intelligence law, guiding students through both the basics of AI and the ethics surrounding it.

Led by Shaun Jamison, professor and associate dean of academics at the law school, students taking the class learn how to approach the emerging technology in ways that align with the legal profession.

When it comes to introducing AI in the classroom, Pritikin believes students should be expected to disclose how much of the assignment is AI and which platform they used to achieve it.

Ultimately, he knows AI isn't going away, and wants law students to be prepared to handle it.

"The new norm is going to be how well you can edit what AI is cranking out," he said.



Martin Pritikin



Cari Sheehan

The course encourages students to think not only about how to prepare to work with AI as professionals but also as humans interacting with each other.

An AI course at Indiana University McKinney School of Law will start this fall.

Christiana Ochoa, dean of the IU Maurer School of Law, said many of the school's faculty and librarians have begun bringing AI into pre-existing courses. The school recently hired a visiting faculty member to teach classes on AI for legal practice.

The University of Notre Dame Law School did not immediately respond to requests to discuss their AI education plans.

Jamison, the Purdue Global professor, said an overwhelming concern with the technology is how it will affect the interactions we have with each other.

"Some of the concerns with any kind of technology is, will it make us so dependent, that we're not really bringing our best effort to helping people?" Jamison said.

For him, the growing use of AI is reminiscent of the early years of the internet and Google.

As with any new technology, many wondered if the new technology would eliminate human creativity, innovation and our willingness to think deeply about legal issues, Jamison said.

But to him, the challenge isn't if we maintain our humanity, but how we do it.

"It's a choice, we just have to continue to push ourselves to be the supervisor of the technology and make it better and help it make us better," Jamison said.

AI education in law firms

As AI expands, law firms across the country are taking initiative to learn more about the technology and how it can be used to make their jobs efficient and ethically sound.

Sheehan leads several seminars teaching law professionals about AI and how it can be helpful to their practices.

Last November, she led a seminar with the Indiana State Bar Association about the evolution of Chat GPT.

Sheehan said that while many lawyers are hesitant to use generative AI because of its newness, it's important to understand how the technology works first and foremost, which helps ease the minds of those using it.

Ultimately, lawyers should make sure the way they use it is aligned with their ethics as law professionals.



Shaun Jamison

“I hope if they’re hesitant about it, that they see it does have some good features, but kind of scares them enough to know that you still have to know that the Rules of Professional Conduct do apply to what you’re doing in AI,” she said. “And to really just watch that Rule 1.6 confidentiality. That is the biggest concern with it.”



Shelley Jackson

Shelley Jackson, a partner at Krieg DeVault LLP, said the firm’s employees have generative AI training throughout the year.

This training is not only important for attorneys to understand AI as it relates to legal and ethical concerns but also to serve clients who use the latest technology and rely on lawyers to understand it.

“Our clients are using these technologies. We need to know what that means for them,” she said. “It’s our job to make sure we kind of understand how this, this new thing, which, again, it’s not new at all, but it feels like it’s new, and it’s exploding.”•