Unleashing AI: How students are embracing the technology to better their lives and help others

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In "AI Unleashed", a TIDES class taught in fall 2024, students learned about generative AI, debated the effect AI would have on the job market, and created their own AI tools, in groups and individually. (Photo from Shutterstock)

When generative AI entered the public consciousness in 2022, it became immediately apparent that the technology would have an impact on students at universities around the world. Since then, faculty across Tulane schools and centers, including the Center for Community-Engaged Artificial Intelligence (CEAI) and the Connolly Alexander Institute for Data Science (CAIDS), have taught numerous

[classes](#) on AI and how it has the potential to revolutionize many fields.

One such faculty member is Julia Lang, who taught the class "AI Unleashed" in fall 2024 as part of the Tulane Interdisciplinary Experience Seminar (TIDES) program that students participate in during their first year.

Lang, professor of practice and associate director of Career Education and Life Design at the Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking, started experimenting with generative AI tool Chat GPT and found that it could supplement students' imaginations about what their futures could hold.

According to the World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs Report 2025](#), 39% of key skills in the job market are expected to change by 2030 because of AI. "I feel like it's part of my duty to teach students how to ethically and responsibly harness this really powerful technology that's at their fingertips," said Lang, who said students shared that they often were actively discouraged from using AI in their high schools, if it was discussed at all.

In the "AI Unleashed" class, students learned about generative AI, debated the effect AI would have on the job market, and created their own AI tools, in groups and individually. The tools ranged from a career planning tool for Tulane students to translation tools for doctors' offices.

"Some interest areas emerged that, even though I'd had the student the whole semester, I didn't know about," said Lang, "like my student who created the photography assistant."

That student was Xander D'Arcy, a first-year student studying engineering physics. He built a custom GPT to critique photography and offer advice to amateur photographers on improving their skills.

"I was interested in photography as a hobby, but I'm not good at taking pictures, so I figured, I'll make this, see if it works," said D'Arcy. "And it worked pretty well."

He tested his tool by inputting photos of varying quality to see the GPT's advice. D'Arcy said the tool was initially offering responses that went too in-depth for beginners. He continued adjusting the tool until its responses were better suited to

amateurs.

Valerie Erazo Rodriguez, also a first-year student, created an AI translator for health care settings.

Her inspiration came from watching her parents, whose first language is Spanish, struggle at doctors' offices in the U.S. While she was able to learn English quickly as a child, her parents had more trouble than she did. "I used my own experience as someone who has translated for them my whole life here, and going with them to the doctor," Erazo Rodriguez said.

Like D'Arcy, she needed to adjust the tool through testing when the outputs were too technical or brusque for her purposes. For instance, she made sure to specify that the tool would use a calm, patient tone to allay any fear or anxiety that could come with a doctor's visit.

"I made sure that it was a tool that could be used for any language, because I was kind of biased using only Spanish, but that's because of my own experience," Erazo Rodriguez said, "but I know that there are so many other cultures and other kinds of people who live here."

While D'Arcy and Erazo Rodriguez see ways they can keep improving their tools, they have a deeper understanding and appreciation of AI and want to continue working with it. They have even started to incorporate it into their own lives. Students mentioned workout plans, time management and studying as ways they use AI in their daily lives after taking the class.

This ability and desire to use AI and use it responsibly is exactly what Lang was looking for when she set out to teach this class. "In my vision of the future of education, every student would graduate with some basic AI literacy," she said.

Lang will be teaching a new course, called Taylor Your Life With AI, in the fall 2025 semester. The course will blend life design principles with AI literacy to empower students to explore, design and navigate their professional and personal pathways in an AI-driven world.