Student’s Name

Professor’s Name

Course Name/Code

Date

Exploratory Writing Example

As AI writing tools have become common on college campuses, a new question has emerged alongside the familiar debate over plagiarism: should students be required to disclose when they used AI to help complete an assignment, even if the final work is substantially their own? The question does not have a clean answer, and reasonable people land in very different places depending on what they value most about the assignment itself.

Some instructors and academic integrity offices argue that mandatory disclosure protects the meaning of a grade. If a professor assigns an essay to assess a student's own reasoning, and a student uses AI to outline, draft, or revise significant portions of that essay without saying so, the resulting grade no longer reflects what it was meant to measure. Disclosure, under this view, is not about punishing AI use outright, it is about transparency, the same logic that already governs citing a source or crediting a collaborator.

Other educators push back, arguing that mandatory disclosure singles out one tool among many that students already use without comment. Spell checkers, grammar software, and tutoring center staff all shape a final paper, and none of those require formal disclosure. From this angle, the real issue is not which tool a student used, but whether the final work demonstrates the skills the course is meant to teach. A student who can explain and defend every idea in their essay has met that bar regardless of what software touched the draft, and a disclosure rule risks treating AI as inherently suspect when other forms of assistance are not held to the same standard.

A third perspective focuses less on fairness and more on practicality. Disclosure requirements only work if they can be enforced, and AI detection tools have a well-documented track record of false positives, sometimes flagging original student writing as AI-generated. If a policy exists but instructors cannot reliably verify compliance, it may create more anxiety and mistrust than it prevents. Under this view, the more useful path may be redesigning assignments so AI assistance, disclosed or not, has less ability to substitute for the skill being assessed, through in-class drafting, oral defenses of written work, or assignments built around a student's own experience.

There is also a student-side argument worth considering. Many students report uncertainty about where the line sits, not because they are trying to hide anything, but because guidance from individual professors varies widely, sometimes within the same department. A consistent disclosure requirement, in this view, would not be a punishment but a clarification, giving students a known, low-stakes way to be upfront about their process rather than guessing at unwritten rules.

What makes this question genuinely unsettled is that each position responds to a real concern, academic integrity, fairness across tools, enforceability, and student clarity, and none of those concerns cancels out the others. A policy that satisfies the integrity argument may create the enforcement problems the practicality argument warns against. A policy designed for clarity may still feel, to some students, like it singles out one tool unfairly compared to others already in common use.

As AI tools keep changing faster than academic policy can keep pace, this is likely to remain an open question for several more years, with different colleges, and even different departments within the same college, landing on different answers depending on which concern they weigh most heavily.

This essay does not argue for one policy over another. Exploratory writing like this lays out each reasonable position fairly, shows why the disagreement exists, and lets the reader see the full shape of the issue without being pushed toward a particular conclusion, which is exactly what separates this type from a persuasive essay on the same topic.