

The big college major rethink

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Students — and their parents — are searching for future-proof college majors for an [AI](#)-powered world.

Why it matters: AI is changing the skills employers expect from entry-level workers, while [colleges are rethinking](#) how to prepare students for the transition.

The big picture: Rumors of the death of jobs might be [greatly exaggerated](#), but college students and graduates are still worried about what comes next.

- College instructors and administrators need to spend more time thinking about what students are going to do

with their degrees and how what they've learned applies to their career, Casey Evans, interim dean at American University's Kogod School of Business, tells Axios.

- Parents expect it too. "How are you connected to employers? What's the rate of internships?" Evans says families regularly ask.

By the numbers: Nearly seven in 10 (69%) college students worry AI will make it harder to find a job, per a recent survey of 2,000 U.S. higher education students by Superhuman (formerly Grammarly).

- Fewer than half (45%) say they feel optimistic about the job market after graduation,
- One in five (22%) students say they've changed their major or concentration because of concerns about the job market.

Zoom out: Today's college majors aren't necessarily built for the future labor market.

- Transferable skills like critical thinking, AI literacy, leadership and collaboration will be the skills employers are looking for, according to Leah Belsky, VP of education for OpenAI.

At American University, for instance, students learn how to

use AI critically — including how to identify errors, consider ethical questions and decide when the technology adds value, Evans tells Axios.

- The curriculum pairs AI skills with communication, teamwork, presentation and critical-thinking requirements — skills Evans says employers continue to seek.

Case in point: Burton Baecker, a rising sophomore at the University of California, Davis started as an accounting major, but soon realized AI could do much of his classwork.

- He added finance onto his major to broaden his job prospects and financial literacy.
- "There's no point in going into that field anymore if AI can do it all for you," he said.

The other side: Sammy White, a rising junior at New York University, is a dramatic writing major who's constantly thinking about how AI's impact on the arts — even if he avoids using AI for creative tasks.

- "I'm not too like worried about it just completely taking over," he said, but noted that AI's growth is "a looming thing."
- White sees AI affecting many majors and future careers, so he decided to pursue something he loves.

- "If it's just this big thing that's going to impact everything, and if the job market is already gonna be kind of a little rough or whatever, I might as well just try to pursue what I really love doing," he said.

Reality check: Accounting firms are still heavily recruiting students, with demand currently outpacing supply, Evans tells Axios.

- But employers "are expecting more from students coming out of college than they have ever before — in accounting and elsewhere."

What to watch: As AI tools take on more tasks, it's becoming harder to predict which jobs will change most.

- New graduates are now expected to manage projects and AI agents, conduct deeper research, present their findings and substantively discuss and defend their work, Evans says.

The bottom line: AI may make some tasks easier, but employers are raising the bar for what entry-level workers can do.

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