



# Boulder Faculty Assembly

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

## **Synthesis of OpenAI Contract Comments**

The following analysis was produced by synthesizing the open-ended survey comments of the April 2026 BFA OpenAI agreement. AI was not used to produce this analysis, which includes benefits, risks, and recommended actions.

The BFA wishes to thank everyone who participated in this survey. Regardless of the administration's actions, the survey expressed a significant portion of the faculty's collective thoughts about the OpenAI agreement. We plan to distribute another survey in the coming months to ascertain any changes.

### Benefits

Students will need to employ AI effectively as they enter many professions, and because this agreement will likely increase student AI adoption, this agreement (by tacitly endorsing AI usage) increases the potential for effective usage by students. However, given that most faculty have not received advanced training on integration of AI into courses, effective use by students will remain highly uneven and even somewhat hypothetical.

The agreement could increase security of CU data, if OpenAI was the only option allowed. However, because less secure versions of AI tools are available, the security benefits remain limited.

The most significant benefits are most likely to occur in more advanced courses involving research.

By exposing students to more in-depth AI usage, the agreement has the potential to increase awareness of AI tool's risks and flaws.

### Risks

The agreement does not satisfactorily achieve its primary purpose of promoting equitable access; OpenAI offers a frontier version that is more sophisticated than the one offered in the agreement. Consequently, inequity remains.

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The agreement constitutes a *de facto* endorsement of AI usage that individual faculty are unable to surmount with syllabus statements and course policies because it portrays AI usage as condoned and even promoted by the university's administration. The net effects will be to undermine literacy, critical thinking, ethical behavior, and a robust work ethic by students who use it to circumvent the rigors of learning.

CU has assumed increased legal risk by indemnifying OpenAI. Lawsuits against the company are proliferating as the product appears to encourage maladaptive and even sociopathic behavior.

The tool promotes dishonesty by asking students if they want to cover up AI usage.

The tool treats copyrighted material as common knowledge and therefore does not respect the ethical standards practiced across higher education.

Even with the upgraded privacy provisions in the contract addendum, concerns about surveillance remain.

By broadening and deepening usage, the agreement adds to the mental health risks facing students.

OpenAI and Sam Altman do not reflect the values of our institution, and any ethical use of AI is not possible, partly because all AI vendors employed exploited labor to refine their AI models.

The agreement has eroded faculty trust in the administration because faculty were told that a "cutting edge technology" was being provided; the edu version is not OpenAI's cutting edge technology.<sup>1</sup> Faculty were also told that the product protected student privacy; the protection was not well defined in the original contract. Faculty were also told that the university is assuming a negligible risk in indemnifying OpenAI; based on the proliferation of lawsuits against OpenAI, the likelihood of such a lawsuit might be remote, but the potential cost to the university and to its students is enormous.

Consequently, the general impression has evolved that the university administrators who shepherded this contract through with no input from CU Boulder faculty acted recklessly

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colorado.edu/ai/chatgpt-cu-boulder>



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and allocated significant financial resources without prudence. This negligence has led some faculty to assert that the administration succumbed to predatory sales tactics.

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## Recommended actions

The following recommendations were generated in an attempt to find solutions to the risks stated above while also recognizing that the university needs to take action in regard to AI usage by students, faculty, and staff.

Reinstall the faculty's faith in university administration by choosing not to renew the contract.

Use money allocated for the contract renewal...

- To train faculty on effective and more ethical and socially responsible use of already available AI options
- To pay for frontier versions of most effective forms of AI for specific courses following faculty requests for AI tools
- To investigate alternative approaches to AI deployment across the CU system

In conjunction with other universities, develop a higher-ed version of an AI agent that preserves intellectual property rights, reinforces honesty, minimizes environmental impacts, and acts as a learning aide rather than learning replacement.

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