



# GUIDANCE FOR AI IN MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

## Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT offer new opportunities to enhance communications and marketing work and productivity. However, these tools also introduce challenges related to ethics, accuracy, and quality. This document outlines recommended best practices for thoughtfully integrating AI into university communications and marketing workflows.

AI tools like ChatGPT can be powerful creative partners in the communications and marketing process – but they should never replace human insight, ethical judgment, or editorial oversight. At Virginia Tech, we encourage using AI to **support** your work: helping you brainstorm story angles, generate first drafts, refine language, and summarize complex research. **But the core ideas, strategic direction, and final decisions must always come from you.**

Think of AI as a collaborator that helps you move faster – not a substitute for your expertise, creativity, or our university’s voice.

## Guiding Principles for Communications and Marketing

- Lead communicators in each college or unit remain responsible for all content.
- Communicators and their ideas are at the core of all our communications – Individuals are directly responsible for the accuracy, ethical integrity, and brand compliance of all content they create and publish, regardless of the tools used. Lead communicators provide oversight and ensure alignment with university standards.
- AI-assisted material must be carefully reviewed, approved, edited, and overseen by a human author/editor.
- Uphold accuracy, ethics, and brand alignment in all content.
- AI does not think. People do.

## Responsible and Ethical AI Principles

- Uphold University Mission and Principles of Community

- AI applications should advance Virginia Tech's land-grant mission and strengthen inclusive community
- Foster Innovation, Discovery, and Exploration
- AI approaches should enable creative exploration while maintaining academic rigor.
- Expand Human Capabilities and Affirm Beneficence
- AI should augment human potential rather than replace human judgment and creativity.
- Promote Responsible and Ethical Use
- AI applications should align with disciplinary ethical standards and institutional integrity.
- Prioritize Fairness and Transparency
- AI systems should be implemented in ways that promote understanding and avoid perpetuating bias.
- Preserve Human Judgment and Accountability
- AI should support, not supplant, human decision-making in consequential contexts.
- Secure and Protect Data and Privacy
- AI implementation should maintain appropriate safeguards for institutional and personal data.

## **Best Practices**

### **Understand AI capabilities and limitations**

- Recognize that AI has limitations in logic, factual accuracy, and judgment. (As one expert said: “Use it for reasoning, not for facts.”)
- Do not treat AI as a replacement for human review and oversight.

### **Establish human review processes**

- Require final human review before publishing any AI-assisted content.
- Have editors thoroughly fact-check and adjust tone/voice where needed.

### **Prioritize accuracy over productivity**

- Avoid over-reliance on AI to boost productivity at the expense of quality.
- Ensure AI is enhancing human capabilities, rather than serving as the sole creator of content.

### **Maintain brand alignment**

- Adhere to Virginia Tech Brand Guidelines and Licensing Guidelines.
- Ensure AI-assisted materials align with brand voice before publishing.
- Do not create new AI visuals with university trademarks. Trademarks are available for your information in the Licensing Guidelines.
- Do not assume AI-generated text is brand compliant. Contact vtbrand@vt.edu with any questions.

### **Protect confidential and/or embargoed material**

- Be aware that many generative AI tools (especially free versions) will upload and utilize any information you provide, creating the potential of disclosing confidential information or research results that are still under embargo.

### **Consider ethics and legal compliance**

- Review content for ethical concerns like bias (e.g. related to demographics, cultural perspectives, or viewpoints) or plagiarism.
- proprietary information related to research and any other university activities.
- Consider these best practices alongside relevant university policies and applicable state or federal directives regarding technology use and data handling.
- Establish more formal guidelines or policies as needed.

### **Foster open discussion and feedback**

- Encourage constructive feedback from all levels on AI usage.
- Share guidelines and ideas with all communicators.
- Continuously improve guidelines based on user experiences.

### **Be adaptable**

- AI is a quickly evolving technology with many opportunities and hurdles constantly presenting themselves. As such, these best practices as well as the use of AI in Communications and Marketing work will evolve with the technology.
- An AI Communications and Marketing working group will be established to continuously review new advancements and how they should or should not be adapted within the university communications and marketing community.

### **Determine Disclosure Needs**

- Evaluate whether transparency about the use of AI assistance is appropriate or required for specific content type, platform and audience. Consult university or departmental guidelines, if available, regarding the disclosure of AI use in official communications.