

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2024



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Headline

Welcome, dear readers, to the technologically infused realm where the once-ominous deadline now cowers in fear! If you've ever found yourself staring at a blank page the night before a major assignment is due, fear not! Today, we embark on an enlightening journey through the wild world of using AI for college assignments. Forget about the old excuses like “the dog ate my homework” or “my printer malfunctioned”—we're entering an era where “my AI assistant crafted a masterpiece” is the new norm. So, grab your caffeine-infused beverages and prepare to laugh, learn, and possibly question the future of academia as we dive headfirst into the land of robotic scholars and digital geniuses!

For those who regularly read my column, you might be thinking that this introduction doesn't sound much like Dr. Inbody. Where are the cute stories about his kids or his over-the-top Mother-in-Law? Where are the not-so-subtle loving jabs at his wife or disdain for governmental over-reach? Where are the grammar and punctuation errors?

None of those things are there because I didn't write that paragraph. ChatGPT wrote it. What is ChatGPT? This is the service available on the web that allows anyone to access Artificial Intelligence (AI). You type in what you want and seconds later you get an original work. It's not copied and pasted from some other writer. It's a new composition created by a very sophisticated computer.

In the case of the paragraph above, I typed in, “Write a funny introduction to a newspaper column on using AI on college assignments.” And, about three seconds later I had this paragraph.

My new son-in-law Chandler uses AI in his studies and work on a routine basis. When we were joking around about that it was time to write his vows for the wedding, he asked ChatGPT to do it. About four seconds later he read them to us, I have to say they were not bad at all. Of course they were a bit vague with non-specific statements like, “We have been through a lot together, but we learned a lot about each other along the way.” But, they were pretty convincing. Of course, he didn't wind up using it and wrote his own. The result—not a dry eye in the house with the videographer calling them “the best vows of the year so far.”

AI can be used for so many wonderful things. It can help find patterns in data where people can fail to see them. It can create complicated algorithms for computer programs. AI is used in healthcare to help with diagnosis and even reading scans to look for abnormalities. It helps protect your credit card from fraud, looking for bad guys accessing your account.

If you use Siri, Amazon Alexa, Google Home or any of the digital assistants, you are using AI. When Netflix suggests a show for you to watch based on a show you said you enjoyed, it was an AI model that was making the suggestion. Everything from self-driving cars to smart home devices and customer service chatbots are all some form of AI.

Students are using AI to help create writing prompts and outlines to get them started on papers. Chandler's instructors in his computer classes encourage the students to use AI to create complicated algorithms that would have taken hours to make. It can be an incredible tool to help learning.

And it can help a college student cheat.

College students have been cheating since the dawn of higher education—having your girlfriend write your paper for you, copying someone's answers, crib notes, etc. There was cheating long before there was technology infused with education. I wouldn't be surprised if Plato cheated while studying under Socrates. According to *Psychology Today*, somewhere between 50-70 % of college students report cheating during their studies. Then along comes AI.

Need an original 10-page annotated paper on the causes of the civil war? You can have it in seven seconds. Need to solve a complicated math equation? It will take you longer to type the equation in that it will for AI to solve it.

In the past, when students used copy and paste to plagiarize, we had software that could detect that and expose the cheating. While the software is adapting, it doesn't work with AI-written papers at 100% yet. So, in a meta-solution befitting the movie *Inception*, AI is being used to... detect AI.

Of course, you didn't need AI to detect that the first paragraph of this column wasn't written by me. You had read my original writing before, saw that it looked different, and now that you know what AI can do, you got suspicious. That's what our instructors are doing—asking for drafts of student work, watching them create those drafts in class, looking for writing that a novice 19-year-old might produce, asking for examples from the students' life to reinforce opinion, etc.

I recently saw a paper that a student turned in as their own work that said, "As an AI interface I do not have an opinion on this topic, however, here is the prevailing opinion." Yeah, they didn't bother to read the paper that AI wrote and edit out that it was written by AI. Sometimes laziness is our chief tool to detect cheating.

I remember the debate when I was in school about the use of calculators in higher level math classes. While it was possible to compute a logarithm by hand, it was time consuming and prone to error. So, after doing a few by hand, the instructor then allowed us the use of scientific calculators. Later, I remember some English teachers wanted to turn off spellcheck on word processing software because it will keep people from learning to spell every word correctly. Now students have programs like Grammarly that helps with grammar and punctuation, and programs that automatically apply the APA style guide or whatever style guide favored by the instructor.

These tools exist and there is no putting the genie back in the bottle. You have a scientific calculator in your pocket or purse right now that can also spell words, check grammar and a thousand other things to help you when you need it. Holding back the future never really works for long. One must adapt to it, shape it, and let us hope, use it for good.

As educators at NCCC we have to take more steps now to guard against the misuse of AI to avoid learning. But we must also harness this powerful new tool to improve education and teach students how to best use it to improve their own lives and society as a whole.

And there you have it, dear readers! As we bid adieu to this whirlwind tour of AI in academia, let's take a moment to reflect on the absurdity and brilliance of it all. From virtual tutors with infinite patience to the inevitable chaos of autocorrect gone rogue, one thing is abundantly clear; the future of learning is as unpredictable as a freshman's first attempt at laundry day. So, whether you're riding the wave of technological innovation or clinging desperately to your trusty No. 2 pencil, remember this; in the grand symphony of higher education, AI may be the newest instrument in the orchestra, but it's our uniquely human quirks and foibles that make the melody truly unforgettable. Now, go forth, my fellow scholars, armed with knowledge, laughter, and perhaps a healthy dose of skepticism—for in the ever-evolving landscape of academia, one thing is certain; the only constant is the endless pursuit of wisdom... and maybe a few well-timed internet memes.

Yeah, I didn't write that paragraph either.

If you have any questions about this column or NCCC that you don't want to ask a chatbot, please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu