



# DLSI NEWSLETTER



Supporting teaching and learning at La Salle

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## ANOTHER LEAP IN AI

Only two months after its release, ChatGPT-3 hit 100 million registered users, making it [the fastest adopted product in history](#). If you haven't given it a try yet, please do. Have a go at some "party tricks", such as asking it to write a short script for a sitcom about an academic department where the faculty take on the personalities of Simpsons. Then, spend some quality time with it. Pick a topic you know something about or ask it to help you with a task you have ahead of you. Think about and be creative with your questions. Ask for an explanation. Change the parameters, pushing and prodding to get a sense of capabilities and limitations. For more ideas visit [my developing collection of resources](#).

Language learning models (LLMs) like ChatGPT-3 are text predictors. While you will frequently be impressed (they can be very good), you will also note the numerous errors they make and the limitations they have. Even so, I continue to find helpful uses. To date, I have used ChatGPT to successfully to refine my explanation of topics for class, get ideas for in-class activities, summarize a long text, create discussion prompts, create titles for text, solve IT issues, poke holes in well intentioned plans,

and get dinner suggestions based on a few ingredients in my refrigerator. Yes, that last one is party trick-ish, but the more I use ChatGPT, the more I can see how the technology can improve my efficiency, inspire creativity, and simply solve daily problems. I felt that I was getting a handle on it.

Then, **everything changed**...or, to be more precise, will be changing very soon. Near the end of January we learned that Microsoft invested nearly **10 billion dollars** in OpenAI, the company that produced ChatGPT. By early February, it had a working product that combines ChatGPT with its Bing search engine. That product was released to a limited number of people (with many more being added regularly), who are now testing and sharing its capabilities. While the frequent mistakes are still present, the ability to combine searching the internet with a LLM (ChatGPT) takes this technology to a completely new level. Now, rather than just predicting text, one can direct ChatGPT to find specific existing information on the internet, learn from that information, then apply that new information. [The results \(again, even in this initial trial product\) are stunning](#).

By now, you've probably heard the

[well-documented](#) story of Sydney, Bing's alter ego. The alarm bells went off, and while "Sydney" is easily explained in terms the functionality of LLMs, Microsoft decided to alter the parameters of their product so that it would respond in more predictable ways. Even so, those who have access to this new combination of a LLM and internet search are showing us that we are about to make another leap in the implementation and use of AI ([See this](#), and [this](#)).

We already make use of, or interact with, numerous AI tools in our daily lives, but these recent developments will directly impact us and our students in new and challenging ways. [The rush for early adoption is on](#), as it has become clear that the technology will [soon be ubiquitous](#), and many fear being left behind. **It behooves us to pay attention** now, work with the technology as it becomes available, and consider the practical and ethical ramifications of these tools.

I am encouraging us to engage in **three conversations**. First, a conversation about AI, recognizing its existence and rapid infusion into our lives. We all need to learn about its practical capabilities and flaws. Then, understand how to

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properly and ethically make use of the technology. This includes raising questions about the nature of truth and accuracy of information in general, considering the ideas of process vs. product, and exploring the concepts of originality, creativity, and authorship in light of these new technologies.

Second, we should engage in comprehensive conversations about academic integrity. Regardless of ChatGPT, people who want to behave unethically will do so. Despite what you may have heard, there are currently no tools to accurately detect AI created text (and there are workarounds posted to social media already). With minimal effort, it is already easy to fool surveillance software with this technology. Rather than relying on surveillance, we should be working with our students to learn why people sometimes resort to academic integrity violations, and how we might help them avoid the temptation, while simultaneously ensuring that our policies are rooted in best practice.

Finally, we should engage in conversations about evidence-based, high-impact teaching and learning that takes advantage of the tools we and our students have at our disposal, while dramatically reducing the temptation to use them nefariously. As these new technologies become more widely available, **most of us will have to alter our approaches to instruction, homework, and assessment.** Can these tools be a catalyst for thinking differently, and

perhaps more effectively about teaching and learning? What is it that we can control that will improve learning while reducing the temptation to bypass the process?

AI technology will increasingly be integrated into everything we do, and it will continue to improve. What is not clear are the guardrails that will be in place to protect us from mis-information or corrupt application. Given the rapid proliferation and adoption of these technologies, it is important that we explore these new challenges, raising questions and analyzing the benefits and costs.

**Everyone will be impacted.** Given the rapid pace of deployment, we each should be working to understand the impact of these tools now. Consider starting with the [continuously evolving collections of resources that I am curating here](#). Let's ensure that we are working collaboratively, across disciplines and institutional divisions to bring our collective expertise together as we examine the opportunities and challenges of AI and LLMs.

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### ENGAGING PRACTICES ON CAMPUS

**Rosie Barbera, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work**

When I first started teaching as a part-time instructor, Rick Wojnicki, OSFS, a Campus Minister at La Salle, told me about a workshop that helped him as he began as an adjunct. I attended the same workshop and it was very helpful.

One of the key take aways was the idea of **formative evaluation** in class. The facilitators shared several tools and exercises with us about how to solicit student feedback and input to improve the class. Over the years I have adapted those tools as needed. I will share some of the ideas here:

At the start of the semester, I **check in** with my students. What do they expect to learn in the class? What do they expect from me as the professor? And what do they expect from themselves? I follow their responses with my expectations for the semester. This becomes our class roadmap of sorts, and we can revisit it if we need to.

At the midpoint in the semester, or earlier if needed, we do an exercise called **"Plus/Delta."** Plus includes the things students think are going well in the class and delta, the Greek letter for change, are the things we can improve upon. This provides me with rich information so that I can make improvements in the class to enhance learning.

At the same time, I ask them to evaluate their own participation in the class and to offer suggestions about how they will improve for the second half of the semester. These activities provide students with voice, enhance communication, and provide me with the opportunity to adjust a course to better meet our needs. I hope these ideas are helpful to you as well.



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Create transparent assignments where the purpose, task, and criteria for success is clear to students. Being clear about what you are asking them to do, and why, allows for more focus on content. [Kasey Christopher writes about it here.](#)



## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A few weeks ago, while discussing moral development with my students as part of my educational psychology course, I presented groups with scenarios that reflected moral dilemmas. They were to discuss a short vignette in groups, and using guiding questions, assess moral thought with respect to Kohlberg's theory. One scenario involved a student, struggling to keep up with the work, and trying to decide if they should cheat on an exam. It surprised me to learn that the majority of students in the group said they would cheat...without hesitation. With further probing, I learned that, at least in the minds of this small group, their reasoning was that the value of a grade, certificate, or diploma exceeds the value of learning the material. When we expanded the conversation to the larger class, many heads nodded in agreement.

I'm not sure what to chalk this up to...these particular students, the impact the pandemic had on their educational experience, our education system in general, our capitalist society? Admittedly, I was a bit taken aback. Yes, moral *reasoning* is often different from one's behavior (and I will also point out that after keeping a close eye out and then scoring their mid-term exams, it was obvious that no one actually cheated)...but maybe it is just human nature to seek the path of least resistance. After all, learning is hard.

Perhaps understandably, one common, early reaction to the proliferation of ChatGPT is concern about plagiarism. It is true that AI adds to the already long list of cheating options, but we are fooling ourselves if we think there is a technological, surveillance solution to this new option. Those who want to cheat, feel forced to do so, or think they have a moral justification will find a way. Further, this technology is improving so much, so rapidly, if we are focused on simply monitoring for plagiarism, we are going to

miss some substantial issues.

While we are working to understand how these new technologies will make us rethink the nature of knowledge, creativity, and originality, we should restructure our courses and teaching in a way that promotes academic integrity. [As Flores highlights](#), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), frequent opportunities for collaboration, discussions about academic integrity, peer review and feedback, and being models of our own expectation all have the ability to set the tone. This should happen now, and we must build these conversations into our work with students. If we are only operating with the tools of surveillance and punitive policies, we will be falling short and failing our students, missing the more significant issues that AI and LLMs present.

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## WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Perhaps you can recall from your days as a student... or maybe this thought came to mind in a recent meeting...or possibly you've had one of your students say it out loud: **"Why are we doing this?"**

For learning to be meaningful and lasting it must be **relevant**. When we know why we are doing something, how it is connected to what we already know, and how it will be connected to something we need to know (or something we are building toward), we become more interested, motivated, and willing to attend to the matter at hand.

Explicitly specifying relevance (or even having students specify relevance) can also serve as a cue that allows one to retrieve knowledge from long term memory. This aids in the reconstruction of that knowledge, and primes learners for encoding new knowledge.

**Consider explicitly telling students why the topic at hand is relevant for today's learning** by connecting it to past and future learning. Try this the beginning of class, or any time you transition to a new topic.

The DLSI Newsletter is written, edited, and curated by

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