



In Their Own Words: How Students Use AI to Make Learning More Accessible

Introduction

Welcome to the accessibility and AI series brought to you by Every Learner Everywhere and the Northwest Higher Education Accessibility Technology Group. It's a pleasure to have you with us today. My name is Norma Hollebeke, and I'm the associate director for innovation and programs with Every Learner Everywhere.

Every Learner is committed to creating inclusive and accessible materials. Our slides are designed with high-contrast visuals, large text, and descriptive alt text for images. You can scan the QR code to view the slides on your phone if you prefer. If you need the slides in an alternative format or additional accommodations, please let us know. We value your feedback to make our content accessible for everyone.

Before I introduce our moderator and panelists, I'd like to take just a couple of minutes out to tell you a little bit about Every Learner Everywhere and the mission of our network. Every Learner Everywhere is a collaboration of higher education organizations with the expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments.

Every Learner Everywhere is sponsored by the Gates Foundation. And here at Every Learner, our collaborative work to advance access to higher education centers on the transformation of post-secondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve outcomes with digital learning. Our mission is to partner with institutions to harness digital learning technology, driving innovation in higher education to improve outcomes for every learner.

The Northeast Higher Technology Accessibility Technology Group is two joint projects of Orbis Cascade Alliance and the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium-- that's a mouthful-- to ensure the digital learning resources are equitably accessible to all users.

And now to our panel moderator, Zachary Grant, who is a reference and instruction librarian at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington. Zachary started his accessibility journey in Earnest in 2018. He is

interested in learning more about artificial intelligence and what it can realistically be used for to improve all aspects of accessibility. Zach, I'm going to turn it over to you to introduce the student panels.



Panel Discussion

Well, anyway, thank you very much. I'm glad everyone's here. And I would like the panelists to introduce themselves. So Brynn, if you would like to start us off, please introduce yourself to us.

Yes, hello. My name is Brynn Patterson. I am a junior history and English double major, and I go to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Fantastic. Meghan, how about you? Would you like to introduce yourself to us?

Hi, everyone. My name is Meghan. I'm a freshman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm double majoring in data science and psychology, and my accessibility journey began when I had to teach a visually impaired high school students and middle school students how to program. And ever since then, I've been looking at diverse and unique ways to utilize AI to enhance and create positive learning outcomes.

Fantastic. And our third panelist, who has amazingly and fantastically been able to just join us, I'm going to give Fairouz a moment to get settled. Fairouz, when you're ready, would you please introduce yourself to everyone?

Hello, I'm Fairouz, and I go to Brandeis University. Nice to meet you guys.

Fantastic. All right. So we're going to get started off. We're going to start off with the same question. I'll read it off to you and then I'll just pick somebody. You can answer it, and then I'll pass it off to the next person. And after that, we'll have other questions that we can discuss as a group.

So the first question I'd like you all to consider is, what is one accessibility challenge that AI has completely transformed for you. And Meghan, we'll start with you.

Yeah, like I was talking about earlier, I think a really pivotal moment for me was when I was teaching blind and visually impaired little school-- high school students have a code in a language called quorum. Quorum is really cool because it was designed and modularly built to be taught to blind students. So I had to learn Quorum, learn how to build lesson plans. But the challenges didn't stop there.

I had to learn unique ways in order for the students to pick up intuitively on how to program. I think one really large challenge was getting them to understand the obstacle course, like the physical obstacle course, the robots had to maneuver around.



So one way I went around that was having them feel like tactile perception around the obstacle course and have them discuss amongst themselves what they thought it would be like, what would be the best course of action to have the robot be able to maneuver across that. So there was a lot of unique challenges with that.

And from there, I think not only just being able to teach really cool things like STEM and otherwise to people that otherwise wouldn't have never believed they could learn it, I think that was a big thing for me. But from there, I realized just artificial intelligence has just given me the confidence and also just the capacity to learn things I never thought I could learn before, teach things I never thought I could teach before.

So I think that was definitely the largest realization for me when it came to just the expansion of learning with AI.

Wow. Thank you very much. Brynn, how about you? What is one accessibility challenge that AI has completely transformed for you?

Yeah, I think one accessibility challenge that AI has completely transformed, I'm going to say captioning and also visual descriptions. I know a lot of times sometimes disabled learners struggle with auditory processing, and sometimes visually impaired learners struggle with obviously like reading visual descriptions and everything.

And I think captioning, usually like human captioners, like it's a long process and arduous process, can be difficult. But I think [AUDIO OUT] to revolutionize that aspect and make it so that it's even more accessible and that you don't always need a caption, or you can have [AUDIO OUT] AI, or then also with visual descriptions, you can also have AI do that as well, and then really just kind of evens out the field so that it's more accessible for everybody who needs it.

Wow. Neat. I've heard that sometimes AI captioning isn't always that great, but I hope it continues to improve and I'm glad you were able to use it. Fairouz, how about you? What is one accessibility challenge that AI has completely transformed for you?

I would just say just to understand things better. I know like reading a lot of information in a short amount of time, especially for classes is really daunting, especially for individuals who have ADHD like me. I've recently utilized the AI tool called ChatPDF, and that's really helped me just absorb information, like short amount of time and also do it in a way where I can find information very quickly and read information in like 100 pages of a document and source like my information and use it to brainstorm like new ideas and things.

Cool. Fairouz, would you like to start us off with the next question. Or do you want me to go to somebody else first?

OK. Yeah, sure.

All right. Fantastic. What do you wish your instructors knew about the benefits of AI for accessibility?

I would say, based off of my previous answer, I would say that I wish instructors would know that AI isn't just a way of students for-- isn't just a way for students to be comfortable in having things be much more easier for them. I think that instructors should know that, hey, AI really does leverage a tool.

It is like AI is able to be used as a tool to leverage more ideas and brainstorm more ideas more effectively, whether it's like students that don't have resources and don't have the time to figure out how to understand things much easier.

AI is able to just help students just understand things in a much more easier way. And I guess, instructors just don't understand that students, honestly, especially students with ADHD or any neurodivergence like anything, they struggle understanding concepts. And AI isn't just used to make things easier, but it's used to actually learn things. I think that's what it is.

AI isn't just used to just understand things like at an easier pace, but it's actually used to understand things at the same level as their peers who don't understand-- no, who understand better, if that makes sense. I don't know if that answers the question, but yeah.

No, what I'm hearing you say is that I think a lot of instructors and faculty, when they hear AI, think, oh students are going to cheat. Students are going to use it and not learn. And what I'm hearing you say is you're using AI as a way of increasing your learning and making it so that you can understand the concepts and summarize those concepts better.

So that's really good. I like it. You're not using it to cheat. You're using it to learn. Brynn, how about you? What do you wish instructors knew about the benefits of AI?

Yes, I think mostly it could be summed up by just knowing that AI isn't all bad. I think sometimes when we think about AI, we can think about it in a very black and white sense that either it's all bad or it's all good. And I think that AI, especially if you use it in very creative ways, can be a really good tool to use to work collaboratively with learners who are diverse and making sure that they have the tools that they need to-- make sure that they have the tools that they need to succeed.

And there are so many ways. I know a lot of times, and I think sometimes we also think of AI as just being very cut and dry too, but there are so many different ways that it can be used and utilized as well. So in essence, I just say knowing that you can definitely get creative with how you use AI to help your learners and then also knowing that it's not just a big bad monster, if that makes sense to you.

Sure. Meghan, how about you? What do you wish instructors knew?



Yeah, I'm actually going to go off of what someone said in the chat. Sue Ferris, they said that they utilize artificial intelligence to understand medical and blood tests that they receive. And I think I really resonate with that.

I think information, so much information has been deemed inaccessible for a very long time. So many different esoteric and nuanced fields that are difficult to understand, that would take years of university or other things in order to truly be able to understand them.

And even things that we handle in our daily life can be difficult to understand. And a lot of times certain groups or people who are marginalized or just, for example, have inequitable access to education or resources just simply don't have access to that information and have it for a very long time. I think artificial intelligence is a chance for us to be able to make information, just in general, more equitable.

And I'm very, very excited about that. Within my own field of data science, I have leveraged artificial intelligence heavily within my own research, which is research, in academia in general, is an extremely elitist in systemically elitist field. And I've utilized artificial intelligence to be able to get my foot in the door. And as a woman in STEM, a young person in STEM, it's really, really changed a lot for me in a lot of really positive ways. I think, granted, there are a lot of-- especially understanding how these models work, I think there's a lot of very valid and understandable apprehension. But I think that apprehension leads a lot of people, particularly instructors that don't really understand that we're at the back end of utilizing AI, the students got to it first.

It can seem very intimidating. So that apprehension kind of prevents them from seeing all of the equitable accessibility that can be achieved using AI. And before I hand it off to another panelist, I think ultimately, again, within my own field of study data science, right now I'm transitioning into electronics programming, which is something I never thought I would be able to do. Like, I taught kids how to program robotics, but I've never really built one.

So I'm teaching myself with AI how to build circuit boards and how to build really 3D print and build cool projects. So yeah, I totally believe that this, with the expansion of artificial intelligence, comes the expansion of general intelligence for everybody.

Nice. Cool. Well, I see that we're getting some questions from the chat. We will get to those at the end. Brynn, are you ready for the next question? All right. So do you feel like you have a good understanding of what AI usage is allowed or not allowed at your institution, and what would help clarify acceptable uses of AI if it isn't clear?

I'd say yes, I think I have a pretty good understanding, especially at my institution. In the handbook, they're very clear about AI-- well, they're very clear about plagiarism, but also-- and all like my classes beginners, all of our teachers were like, hey, if you use an essay that is completely ChatGPT, that is immediately a zero. So I think that they're pretty clear.



But I do-- now that thinking more about the question, I think that it's pretty easy to understand the difference between if I completely turn in something that was like AI-generated like that, it's generally considered plagiarism at my university.

As far as understanding it better, I think there is room for more clarity on how if somebody needs AI to assist them with an essay or an assignment, how that can be used and what the line is as well. So I think that it has been clear so far, but there also is room for improvement on being even more concise and succinct about what is and isn't allowed.

Nice. Fairouz, how about you? Do you feel like you have a good understanding of what AI usage is allowed or not allowed? Oh, you're still muted. You did what I did at the beginning of the--

Oh, sorry.

No worries.

I would say so. I would say like in the beginning of my classes that started in Brandeis University, I took a class with my professor. She's a wonderful professor, by the way, in critical race theory. And we just had to absorb so much information, so much really detailed information like law-level course information. And we're just new to college. Some of us are like freshmen. We don't know how to absorb this information and understand it.

So she let us on easy way of understanding things. And she just said, use AI. So I think that instructors are very helpful when they say you can use AI and things like that, because it's honestly, it makes our lives much more easier. It's like some classes in college are graduate level.

So I would say that AI, I think, instructors should-- if they say like using AI is OK, then I would say it's OK too. And I think they should endorse the idea of using AI in their classrooms too.

Nice. Meghan, how about you? Do you feel like you have a good understanding?

Yeah, I actually was having a really cool conversation about this with what of my old mentors who works at-- he's a machine learning and data science professor at Duke actually. We were having a conversation because he's actually writing a book about this on how to understand these models and use them in the classroom.

Right now a lot of instructors and teachers feel very stuck and in a hole. All these students are running around them utilizing AI in ways they don't truly understand. So I think this requires a systemic shift when it comes to just education, in general, because there's no going backwards. There's no getting rid of AI in the classroom. There's only going forwards.



So I think it's finding creating assignments that cannot be done completely with artificial intelligence. And for this instructor in particular, it's been testing concepts in class. No technology out at all, testing in class. That's how you know, do we have a conceptual understanding.

Studying all those other things, artificial intelligence is completely on the table to utilize. But when it comes to an actual conceptual understanding, which is what a lot of people are worried about, our students just doing their assignments with AI and they don't know what they're actually doing. They're not absorbing any actual information.

So I think it comes down to just changing how we teach, changing how we learn. And again, like, I'm very- - I have a pretty positive stance on utilizing AI in the classroom and, again, for enhancing positive learning outcomes.

I think right now, a lot of professors, in my experience, have an AI policy within their syllabus, so I would start there. If you're a student, look at your syllabus, see if there's any sort of artificial intelligence use policy. Again, right now, not very standardized. So teachers are at their own bases to figure out how that looks in their classroom.

For example, in my data science, my programming class, AI is-- you're allowed to use it to generate basic code, help debug things like that, but you can't have it write the code for you. So it's extremely important to check your syllabus so you don't get in trouble for plagiarism, which is a big no, no in college. You can get in really big trouble for that.

And I would also, if you don't see a policy, I would have a discussion with your professor. I think they would love to talk to you about it. Since this is something they're dealing with, it's very relevant to them and their careers, how AI is going to change that. So I would have a discussion with your professor. And ultimately it's going to look different in every classroom right now. A lot of colleges are working on creating sort of a standardized policy, since it's kind of Wild West right now when it comes to using AI in the classroom. But I think that's the best place to start.

Nice. Cool. Well, Meghan, I'm going to stick with you for just a second. Which AI tools or services do you find the most useful?

Yeah, so I feel like I started with ChatGPT like everyone else did when the first model was dropped around my-- a couple of years ago now, which is kind of crazy. But I started experimenting with that. Now I don't really love ChatGPT.

I also have-- I'm not a big fan. It's a lot of someone in the chat actually mentioned this, a lot of hallucinations. Essentially, ChatGPT a really large language model or LLM. It crawls the internet. It finds information for you that obviously the internet is not always correct.



And the math we currently have, each response that ChatGPT makes to your query, there's always a chance that it's going to be wrong. There's always a chance that there's going to be bias in your response. It's not like Google when you look up something and you can find a resource that's incredibly reliable and has pretty much like a 100% chance of being correct. There's always a level of bias or hallucination like that could result in hallucinations to your prompt.

So you have to be careful about it. You have to be-- I would definitely-- this is a recommendation to anybody using a large language model. And there are other ones other than ChatGPT out there to just be what-- we worry about the responses you get.

But ultimately now I actually use a lot of different artificial intelligence platforms. I've been using a platform called SciSpace a lot to analyze research papers. So you can download a research paper, upload it into SciSpace, chat about the research paper in there on the platform, get specific information, has really sped up my literature review like crazy. It's been definitely an amazing tool to use. It's also free. Love that. And I've also been using Claude. Claude is another large language model that I think is a lot better. The way it's engineered, I think it's just-- there's not as much-- you don't have to mix-- there's an art to prompting AI. Sometimes you'll ask for something and it gives you not what you want at all. I feel like Claude is a lot easier to interact with. So I would say Claude and SciSpace as a research student right now are definitely top ones that I use.

Nice. Thank you. Brynn or Fairouz, do you want to chime in with AI tools or services that you find most useful?

Yes, I'm going to say what Meghan said. I'd say it definitely started off with ChatGPT and noticed a lot of the issues that she kind of noted with it as well. But I'd say my top three that I definitely use in almost every day, if not every day, Grammarly, for sure. I'm an English and history double major, so if I'm not reading, I'm writing. So I use that a lot for my essays and everything.

Then there's Otter.ai, which is a good note-taking app, and then also Genio Notes. I use that to help record my lectures and then it automatically will transcribe them with the click of a button. And so that's very helpful for me for taking notes so that I can be in the moment in class but I know that I have those notes to look back at after. Yeah.

Nice. Fairouz?

I would say I have three of my most used AI tools that I use. Grammarly, for one, just like with writing grammar. I know with ADHD, like I struggle with mistakes all the time like grammar, last-minute mistakes all the time. I would say ChatPDF just so I can get a quick rundown of summaries and what's happening in really dense, detailed large documents and also to help understand what's going on in the text. And then I would also say Turbo AI for-- I would say like I'm studying for the LSAT currently and making flashcards and understanding, it just helps understand information much better and a quick pace.

Nice. Well, Fairouz, I'd like to stick with you for the next question, please. What has surprised you the most about AI and accessibility?

I would say just how convenient it is. Honestly, I feel like my life before AI was just very-- I struggled a lot, just to even through high school. I know AI right now is like a new thing for newer generations when it comes to learning. I feel like in high school, I just struggled a lot.

And like I often went to tutoring, which I don't often do now because there's so many different tools that I've never, ever heard of. Like when I was in middle school and high school that I use now in replacing tutors. would just say, yeah, it's convenience. It's something that really surprises me.

Nice. Brynn or Meghan, what has surprised you?

I can take this one. I think ultimately how powerful it is, yet how little we understand it and how deeply embedded it is into just our lives now and just how quickly that happened. Again, I have issues understanding how to use it sometimes or how it works. It's a big issue right now, honestly, is we know how to train artificial intelligence, but we don't necessarily know why it's able to do what it does. We don't know why it's able to understand the nuances of human language so well. We just know how to train it and make bigger and better models. So I think that, and just like, again, as a data scientist, delving into that has definitely been extremely surprising for me.

And then also, again, just how deeply it is embedded into our daily lives. Like Fairouz was saying, she's using it to study for the LSAT. People just use it all the time. People sometimes query ChatGPT more than they do Google now.

So I think that just the level-- and again, it's not leaving. So just how deeply embedded is into daily life I think is extremely-- has been very just mind-boggling to me.

Brynn, how about you, what surprised you?

Yes, I'd say I think to echo Fairouz and Meghan. I kind of just like the versatility of AI. I remember when ChatGPT first dropped, I would have been, I think, a senior in high school and seeing how it's grown so far and how it continues to evolve and then also just how versatile AI is in general. You can use it for as far as you can use it for captioning. You can use it to make things plain text to be easier to digest. You can use it for all sorts of things. And I think that versatility is something like I didn't imagine it having when I first started using it or first heard of it back in 2022 or 2023, I think that was when that was.

Nice. Well, Brynn, I'd like to stick with you for the next question, please. Where did you learn about the different ways to use AI on your accessibility journey? I mean, how did you learn all this?

Oh, yes. I'm going to say honestly by word of mouth and then also like online, like chat platforms, if that makes-- like Reddit or something like that. I think one of the first ways I remember using AI is using it to, like I'd have an essay and I'd input it into ChatGPT. I'd be like, what are some tips on how I can make this better?



And that was kind of like the only way that I used it. And then when I got to school, one of my professors was like, well, AI isn't all bad. Like, I use it for this and this. I wouldn't use it like, completely make my lesson plan, but I would use it to do this. What are some ways that I can express information? What are some ways that I can improve in this way?

And so I'd say there and from my peers and from different professors too, is how I learned, like, oh, AI, I can ask it this, I can prompt it this way. I can use the specific word to make it do this prompt versus what-- versus something else. So definitely by word of mouth and then also like maybe sometimes even googling, like, how can I make this ChatGPT prompt better and finding out different ways or keywords to use as well.

Sure. Fairouz or Meghan, where did you learn all this?

Yeah, I can go. So I initially was very against it with AI tools usage and classroom settings or whatever because like I learned in high school, like that's basically cheating. You're giving like an unfair advantage to other students and how hard they worked on their assignments and everything. But it's honestly my critical race theory professor that really endorsed it. And I'm like, happy that she did.

She was actually the reason why I even started using some of the AI tools that I have. And like I'm very thankful for it. AI has been honestly a blessing for me in learning things because I'm not just like-- I wouldn't say like I'm taking advantage or I'm like in a different-- I'm sort of like in a different level than other students because I'm having it easier for myself or whatever.

I think especially as someone who has a disability, I think it's giving me an easier way of figuring out things. And I'm happy that my professor even gave me the tools and resources to understand what AI is and how to even use them.

Nice. Meghan, how about you?

Yeah, I agree completely with what Fairouz said. My older sister actually has an auditory learning disability. And AI has really transformed her learning journey for her. And that question kind of reminded me of that.

I think Google's NotebookLM allows you to create podcasts off of things like you can create a podcast, and there's other platforms too that I've used that create podcasts that you can listen to to learn things, or you can put in a study guide, and it creates a podcast for you, which I love. Auditory learning for me is also a big thing. But my sister used that.

And she also use-- she used a lot of different AI tools to really personalize her learning journey because there are some classes where it doesn't really tailor to all learning styles. So it's really cool to be able to get-- for example, get information from your lecture, get information from your slide show, PowerPoints,



whatever, and then be able to take that information and then have a large language model. Like create a different sort of learning experience for you for essentially free.

And I think for me, that's pretty monumental, all things considered. And again, the way what Fairouz kind of said reminded me of the conversation, I mean, generally around equality versus equity. I think a lot of teachers have become narrow-minded on equality. Every student gets the same resources. But in reality, we know that that's not very conducive to everyone's success.

Some people need different tools than others. Some people need more tools than others and to receive the same academic results. And I think AI has been able to step in as a way for students to-- for example, students that can't afford a tutor to have-- I know there are virtual agents out there. You can create your own tutor or have a specific model that's very niche in one subject.

It's really opened the doors for a lot of people. I think it's made education more equitable, and I think that's a conversation that needs to happen.

Nice. OK, so we have one more question before we get to the questions from the people in the chat. And people who are viewing, please continue to put your questions in the chat. So the last question, I think I'll start with you, Meghan. What advice would you give people who want to explore AI and accessibility? Yeah, I think just go for it. I think a lot of people-- like Fairouz was saying, she was nervous about, oh, I'm cheating. Oh, I'm doing something bad. Just do it. The resources are out there. They're open source. For the most part, free. I mean, obviously like ChatGPT, there are levels. You can buy a premium subscription. But that's mostly for if you're doing like programming stuff, you need tokens. But for the most part, these are free open source resources. Just play around with it in your free time. Try things out. See what works. See what doesn't, see what's good, see what's bad. I think for me, honestly, when ChatGPT first or OpenAI first launched the model that kind of changed the world, I was really scared. I was so scared.

From my perspective, I was like, this is about to be terminator. The world is about to end. I'm not going to be employed. Like, I was so scared, like my little 15-year-old self. But then I took a minute and I just tried it out. I saw what it was capable of.

And then I think once I got past that initial apprehension and just saw just the pure computational power of this thing that they made, I got really excited about all the possibilities of what I could do. And after that, it just-- again, I was able to do so many cool things.

And once I got better at using it, once I got-- and I think by using it, I mean prompting it to get what I wanted. Again, that's an art. I would really also recommend to everybody watch a video on how to properly prompt AI. There's also a lot of open source resources on Reddit or GitHub, on specific prompts or specific workflows for prompting something to get a response that you want. It can be difficult.

Actually OpenAI is doing something where they allot different amounts of tokens to certain queries based on what the query is. So you're not necessarily getting an equal amount of OpenAI's computing power per query. So again, that prompting is really important as not every query gets the same energy from OpenAI's ginormous data centers.

But I would definitely, again, look into how these models work. You don't have to know how to code, just maybe have an overarching understanding of how they work. And then I would really get into prompt prompting. How do we prompt them to get what we want? That would definitely be my biggest recommendation.

Excellent. Thank you. Brynn, how about you? What advice would you give people who want to explore AI and in their accessibility journey?

Yes, I'd say. I think, in essence I can sum it up with, if you remember the story of the tortoise and the hare, slow and steady wins the race, I think at once when you're first dipping your feet in, it can be very overwhelming with all of the tools that are accessible to you, whether that's ChatGPT, whether that's Otter.ai, whether that's all these various AI tools that can definitely be like, whoa, this is so much. But I think taking your time to research different models, see what's best for you, and then you can proceed with, OK, maybe I didn't like this tool as much, and this tool actually is a better suited for my needs.

So definitely taking your time doing your research to figure out what works best for you and understanding what works best for-- what tools work best for like favors Meghan might not be the best for me. And understanding that that's OK. And just knowing that it's all about what I can use to succeed in everything.

Then also, I'd say you're kind of-- I think people are kind of already doing this once they do want to learn more about accessibility and AI, but continuing to lead with curiosity as well. As mentioned before, I will sometimes have those AI hallucinations and stuff. So making sure that even though you are leading with curiosity with whatever it is that you are using it for, making sure that you're like double checking if it's like giving you information, making sure that you're double checking those sources and everything.

And then also make sure that double checking with those sources and then also seeing how else you can better source that information and those prompts as well. And then the last thing I was going to say, as far as accessibility as well too, don't be afraid to ask for help. I know obviously AI is a tool for help as well, but also asking other people like hey, what have you done? Like, how has this helped you? What are some tips and tricks that you might have as well?

So Brynn, I'm just going to follow up quick. Who do you ask-- who are you asking for that help? Oh yeah. I'd say if you know somebody else who might also be disabled or work with disabled people, be like, hey, what tools have your students use? What tools have your friends use? What tools have you

used and how they helped you? And also your peers too. If you are in college, you could ask like your classmates, you could ask professors who and then just other people who are in that same field of what you're asking for help in.

Sure. Excellent. Fairouz, why don't you bring us on home with this final question before we get to the questions from the chat? What advice would you give people?

I would just say saying what Brynn was saying about just be very cautious. Do your research. Make sure that whenever you're looking into your research and-- whenever you're looking into research about what AI tools work best for you, just play around. Play around with it, see which one really helps you understand things.

Talk to your SAS, like Student Accessibility Service in college, if you can. Talk to them about AI use. They'll help you out with finding tools too. I think there's this tool called Glean that I recently learned about through the Student Accessibility Services at my college. And it's really helped me learn better, too because it has this odd audio recording effect in it. And I'm allowed to record audio and transcripts in class. So that also helps me understand better in class too.

So honestly, I would just say be cautious, too, because some teachers and professors, they're totally against it, which I can understand to a point. But yeah, just see whatever works for you, honestly. OK, great. Well, thank you all for answering those questions. We now are going to take the questions from the chat. There are quite a few, so we may not get to all of them. I'm going to apologize in advance if we don't get to your specific question. I'm just going to take them as I've been given them.

We're going to start with a question from Michelle. No, it's actually a comment and a question. This is for you, Brynn. So Brynn, Michelle says thank you for your description of using AI for accessibility. And then the question is, what specific tools have you found to be most useful for captioning or visual descriptions, if any?

Yes, for captioning, I'm going to say, and for visual descriptions, well, I think it's literally just called Apple AI, and that's just the name. And then you can also use that-- you can use that for captioning and also a visual description needs as well.

And then there's also another service. It's this organization called AccessLOOP. It was founded-- well it's done by two women. One of the founders, her name is Orla Pearson and she actually used to be like a captioner for 25 years. So AccessLOOP and-- for AccessLOOP and Apple AI for captioning services and then also Apple AI does have little visual descriptions as well too.

Nice. All right. So the next one is going to be for all of you. It's from Susan Erwin. And Susan asks, some faculty and students have raised questions about the use of AI due to environmental concerns. What are your thoughts, or do you have any responses to that?

Is this just like-- sorry, is this-- can you repeat that actually?

Sure. So it was sort of a statement and then a question. So some faculty and students have raised concerns and questions about the use of AI due to environmental impact, the environmental impact to it-- all the energy consumption that comes along with powering the data centers for AI. Do you have any thoughts or responses? Have you thought about that at all?

Yeah, it's always been in the back of my mind. I think in-- I don't know if this was in North Carolina, but maybe somewhere else-- a community literally rejected a data for being built in their community, because ultimately it would have drastic environmental impacts to their community with the cooling, with the energy consumption, with the electrical waste. It would just be terrible for the community.

And I think, unfortunately, it's a bit with-- AI is just the new thing, especially with just like startups, et cetera. People are running to build data centers, specifically Sam Altman right now, and with him trying to expand OpenAI and other things. And there is inevitably an environmental impact with building that many data centers that, again, like ginormous amounts of consumption because they're ginormous and they're doing tons of computations constantly.

I think that ultimately, there's just no regulation within the US at all. I think there is some regulation in China, I think there is some regulation in the UK about artificial intelligence in general. But within the United States, there's just like no regulation at all. And that's leading to a lot of very valid environmental concern, because a lot of companies are taking advantage of the fact that there is no US regulation. And I would definitely stay educated on-- again, that's a con of using AI. Like we've been discussing a lot of the pros, that's a con. If you are extremely worried about the carbon footprint that artificial intelligence is causing that could be a reason to not use it. Unfortunately for me, I'm again like a research lab I'm building and augmenting a language model. So I have to interact with it. I have to do it.

Right now I'm looking into ways to be able to interact with AI a little bit more environmentally, ethically and sustainably. It's been difficult, but yeah, it's definitely something that's always in the back of my mind, and I think it's important to talk about and to teach your students and tell them about so they can make their decision on whether they want to use it.

Sure. Brynn or Fairouz, do you have anything you want to add? I will go on to the next one then. I'm going to skip a question. I'll come back to it though. So Justin Eccles asks, do you have concerns with AI hallucinations? And then how do you verify the information?

And Brynn, I know you were talking about that in one of your last answers there, so I know you touched on it, but how about other people like Fairouz or Meghan. Are you concerned with those hallucinations when they happen? And then how do you go about confirming that information?

Honestly, I would just say, OK, like hallucinations when it comes to ChatGPT, I know sometimes it isn't the best. There has been like articles that have been published that have talked about AI not being your buddy or it's not being like a good tool to use as your therapist or whatever.

And I would say to combat those hallucinations, honestly, just do your research. Talk to somebody-- talk to somebody that you really trust. I would say that talk to a professional and seek help, when you really need it, because AI at the end of the day, it will help you finish your task or whatever and answer like basic questions. But at the end of the day, it's not a human.

And there are some certain limitations that AI can only do up. And I think a professional and a human, speaking to a human is like a much better option than just like using AI. Sure. Nice. Meghan or Brynn, do you want to chime in?

Yeah, sure. I agree with Fairouz. I think it's don't have an overreliance on something that we know is inherently biased, particularly those open source large language models. I think someone in the chat mentioned a proprietary closed large language models or artificial intelligence platforms. Those can be a little bit more reliable. I think also, again, like fact-checking the responses.

A lot of times when I query an LLM, I ask it to give me sources where it's getting the information from, and then I fact-check with those. But hallucinations are a really big problem. I was talking with one of my professors and she was querying, I think, about some math problem, and it totally got it wrong. It was so wrong. Like, she asked it to write a proof, and the proof was terrible.

So I think when it comes to really critical levels of or graduate level thinking, that's when AI, especially if you're on a free tier level of ChatGPT, it tends to be pretty unreliable because it's just-- regardless of what people say, it's not at the point right now where it can take the job of a professor writing or somebody writing a dissertation on something extremely, extremely complicated or on something like that. But I think right now my biggest thing is picking a good model for what I want to do. The more specific the model, the better. The more general it is, the more likely you're going to get a hallucination for your query or your prompt. Having a good prompt so it knows how to answer it and it knows what you're asking. And then again, I really like-- Microsoft Copilot is pretty good at this, giving you resources or links from what it's pulling from. So if I asked about French history, it would give me some links about where it got that information from. And then again, always-- just in general, verifying.

Again, when I was looking at stuff about building circuit boards and stuff like that, I was like, I don't know if this is-- before I go buy this, let me make sure this is like what I should buy. Then I checked in with my dad, I looked it up on Google. And it seemed pretty legit. So I went forward with that. But again, it's just critical thinking. Don't stop thinking. Don't let it think for you. Keep thinking. It's an assistive tool. It's an assistive tool, so let it assist you. Let it not think for you.

Right. Brynn, anything you want to add?



Yeah, I really appreciate what Meghan said. I think she said it perfectly. It's an assistive tool. It's not a replacement tool for your own brain and your own critical thinking. And real quick like analogy as to how, I guess, to best sum it up how I use AI. I think about if I was writing an essay and I needed to cite a source and maybe I learned something from Wikipedia, I'm not going to cite Wikipedia, but Wikipedia cites its sources. So I would go to whatever source it cited and then go there to learn that direct information. So whatever query I have and that the information I get from there, I'm then going to double check and make sure I get the source from AP or Reuters or whatever. So kind of just like what Meghan and Fairouz are saying, always double checking and make sure that I know it's an assistant tool. Not like a replacement for anything.

Sure. Well, I think we have time for one more question. So I'm going to try and squeeze this one in. Kevin Steves, he asked, how can we help others. And then specifically, teachers see the benefits of our learning when we know how to use AI appropriately. And then there's a follow-up, which is how do we prevent or overcome the stigma with AI use when we use it for good? And whoever wants to start off with that one, please jump in.

Oh, I can go. I'm trying to steal this question away from anybody. But I think that everyone's idea of what's good is pretty subjective, and I think that's where teachers and students tend to clash a lot. What is considered a good use of AI in the classroom? What is considered conducive for learning? And at the end of the day, students should be having conceptual understandings of what they're learning, that they should be able to do what they're learning. For example, if I'm learning calculus, I should be able to do calculus without the assistance of a model constantly.

Again, this is a fairly new thing. I think there needs to be ultimately more research into how we can use AI to actually create positive learning experiences, how can we use AI in a way that's not a compromising, actually learning information.

But ultimately, I think when it comes to what he was saying, which clearly it's helping his learning, clearly it's useful for him, it's useful for me, it's useful for everybody on this panel. I think it's having open conversations about it, because right now, it's sort of like, at least in my experience, and what this is, what a lot of teachers have told me they feel, is it's students versus teachers.

And it's just this battle of we want to teach you and make you learn. We want to utilize AI because it helps our learning and there's just a miscommunication on that. So I think it's just having more open conversations.

Again, just talk with your professor. Read the syllabus. See what they say about it. Have an open conversation about it. And I think, in general, just more open conversations need to occur, because I don't think-- a lot of teachers don't understand how AI works. They don't understand how it can be utilized positively for learning. Again, they just see it as a way to generate an essay in two minutes.



So I think presenting those positive learning experiences like we have on this panel today is an excellent start and just opening the conversation between teachers and students, rather than having them just be pitted against one another and separate in that conversation. Nice. Brynn or Fairouz, what would you recommend?

I'm sorry. I would just say just like-- again, see if there's some way, especially if you're a disabled person and you're working with SAS or Student Accessibility Services, make sure in your accommodations letter, you write that something about AI, like the usage of AI.

And make sure that you have one-on-one conversations with professors and how exactly you're using AI. And perhaps that will help lighten the stigma a little bit, because I know some professors are really lenient on not using AI.

But if you do explain your case, and if you do explain that, it really does help you in a certain way and you explain how exactly you're using it, I'm pretty sure all professors could probably understand from that point of view, whether it's like you're just using AI and then you're just handing in a paper, and then they could read it and then they're like, oh, OK, you definitely used AI, but you didn't explain or use reasoning to why you used it. So I think that's honestly what it is. If you explain your case, I don't think professors would mind at all.

Conclusion

I think we're rapidly running out of time.

So we would like to thank our panelists. Thanks, Zachary, for moderating the panel. We would like to thank our audience for all of their time and effort and the great conversation in the chat.

We would like to invite you to be on the lookout for registration for the final webinar in this series, designing accessible learning with AI inside and outside the LLMs, that will take place on December 11 with our guests, Dr. April Crenshaw from. She's an associate professor at Chattanooga state community college and a phenomenal instructional designer who uses a lot of AI in her work.

And Michelle Bromley from-- she's Manager of Digital Accessibility and Content at Portland State University. So we'd really love for you all to keep an eye out for that. Registration should be opening tomorrow or Monday, at the latest. So keep an eye out for that and visit us at our website to get that registration taken care of.

We would ask that if you've got a few minutes to complete our survey for today's webinar using the link that we're posting in the chat for you, or if you've got your phone handy and you can do the QR code. And if you've got something else going on immediately after, don't worry. We'll send you the link to the survey in a follow-through email in two to three days. But we'd love to hear your feedback on this so we can continue providing these webinars based on what you need and what you enjoy hearing and learning from.

On behalf of Every Learner Everywhere and our partners, thank you for being here. Thank you for the work that you do every day to support your students. Have a nice day.

