



Artificial Intelligence: GCSU prof becomes national go-to for AI in higher ed

Promise and potential? Or peril and pitfall? These days, the subject of artificial intelligence is rife with the headiness of what it can accomplish versus people's fear of the unknown. Will this rapidly evolving technology take over, destroying jobs and shaving humans aside? In particular, how will it impact higher education? Universities nationwide are turning to Georgia College & State University's Professor of Secondary Education Dr. Cynthia Alby for answers. She started with a workshop on AI at Mercer University in January and has gone on to give more than 40 seminars throughout the United States. She was interviewed on "Teaching in Higher Ed," a premier podcast. She published an article on AI for "Faculty Focus" and is part of the University System of Georgia's webinar series on AI. Her recommendation: Go with the flow. Writing will change. But everyone should use it. "The message that I try to put out there every time I talk to anyone is, 'You need to know about this, and the only way to know about it is to play with it. Read about it, work with it, use it. It's the only way. You just got to. Even if you don't want to, you still have to,'" Alby said. Late last year—after the introduction of OpenAI's ChatGPT—Alby was recovering from surgery. Her friend and colleague Dr. Elissa Auerbach, professor of art history, asked what she thought of the new technology. Alby had never heard of it. With time on her hands, she dove right in. She asked AI to write a grant for "innovative classroom furniture." It immediately produced a funding proposal with all the right parts. Its ability to think, describe the furniture and realize its importance in a classroom setting—all from a simple prompt—was startling. "My heart started pounding really hard. It's one of the strongest, weirdest emotions I've ever felt in my life," Alby said. "I felt incredibly giddy and incredibly horrified at the exact same moment. It was just surging through my head, kind of sitting there and looking at it, because I was like, 'What the hell just happened? How? How is this possible?'"



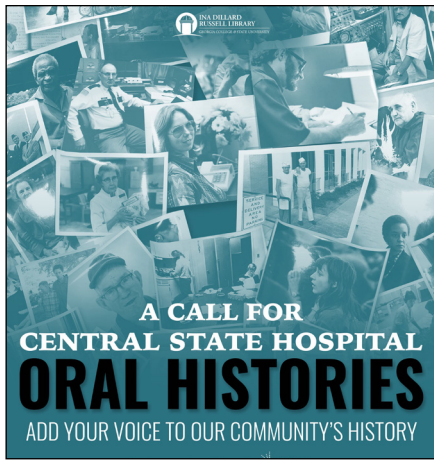
"And that was the original 3.5 version," she said. "The newer ChatGPT 4.0 came out a few months later, and many say it's as much as 10 times better." Companies have released new versions of AI since then. Only two are worth using in Alby's opinion, one through Microsoft Bing and the other ChatGPT 4.0. Now, if you're a grant writer, Alby said you don't have to write every word. All you really have to do is analyze the output, making sure it's correct. With AI, a grant writer could generate 70% more. This could mean great things for faculty, staff and students in higher education. AI quickly creates lists of titles, books, documentaries and supplies to supplement curriculum. It can write first drafts, giving writers ideas. Or AI can edit, fix grammatical errors, simplify sentences and shorten length.

It can imitate writing style, like Shakespearean, and give photos a futuristic, Renoir or comical vibe. It can imitate art—but not oil paint with textured strokes. Yet. Although AI is leaping forward—scaring even its own creators at times by learning on its own—Alby remains optimistic. In the beginning, a slide in her workshops listed all the things artificial intelligence couldn't do. "Pretty quickly, things started changing," Alby said. "By March, everything on the list was crossed off." While some may panic, Alby said ChatGPT could be a blessing. Humans are "extremely social" in their learning, therefore she believes teachers will always be necessary. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became evident that computer learning is only good in short spurts. Professors are still needed for inspiration, solving problems and mentoring. Humans need humans. The art of lesson planning won't be lost with AI, she said, because a person has to feed it instructions and information. A person must tell AI where to make changes, how to reorganize and whether a document needs updates. That requires "a lot of higher-order thinking, evaluation and analysis," Alby said. "You still have to understand what you're asking it for. AI requires a lot of direction. No amount of AI will help if you don't understand the criteria." In the end, a lesson plan needs a human to execute it. With this in mind, Alby believes students should be allowed to use AI. Allowance takes away the mystery, leading to proper use. "We can't put our heads in the sand," Alby said. "At this point, virtually every job we prepare people for is going to be heavily impacted by AI within a year or two. If we aren't preparing students to face that—we aren't preparing our students well." "So my thought is, why don't we all learn to use it?" she said. "By learning to use it wisely and ethically, we'll have a better sense of how the future needs to be directed."

Library Special Collections at GCSU documents stories about Central State

Georgia College's Special Collections is looking for individuals to record oral histories about their time working at Central State Hospital. Consider sharing your story for an oral history project in Georgia College & State University's Special Collections section at Ina Dillard Russell Library. In its 180-year existence, the hospital has held a unique place in the nation's contested past treatment of people living with mental illness. It left an indelible mark on our local community's history and identity. Lost within the sensationalized history of the hospital is the tireless labor of the community to do good, despite challenges. Over the years, thousands of community residents dedicated themselves to the success of Central State Hospital and care of the sick. They created a legacy of service that Milledgeville continues to take pride in. The project will record their stories—document-

ing the lives of people who worked every day at the "State" and contributed to its complex history. These stories will also be part of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funded project, which will include a symposium and exhibit.



The project is called "Unsilenced Voices: An Oral History Project of Central State Hospital." "Georgia College Special Collections understands that the story of a place is made up of the many stories of the people who made it what it was," said Library Director Dr. Shaundra Walker. "One of the often-overlooked aspects of the historical record is the viewpoint of workers," she said. "We want to document the stories of those who went to work every day at the 'State' and contributed to this complex history." For inclusion in the IMLS project, please contact Holly Croft in Special Collections by Dec. 15, 2023 to discuss recording an oral history of your time at CSH. She can be reached at holly.croft@gcsu.edu or 478-445-0988. Virtual and telephone interviews are available. Oral histories on this topic for Special Collections at Georgia College will be ongoing.

Did you know?

Georgia College & State University's Office of University Communications won two 2023 Best of CASE District III Awards for best news feature writing and best video. Both awards were for coverage on "Where bison roamed: Paleontological dig shows a different Georgia." The bison story was written by Cindy O'Donnell, media relations specialist at Georgia College. The video was filmed and edited by alumnus and former broadcast and video staff member, Michael Gillett, '14, '20. The story and video posted on Front Page in August 2022. They tell a story about the paleontological dig in Brunswick headed by Biology Professor Dr. Al Mead. He's a paleomammalogist who studies ecosystems of the past and the state's sole expert on fossilized mammal bones. Mead's dig spans more than 20 years of work and is the only excavation of its kind in Georgia. These are the first awards Georgia College has won from CASE, a national public relations organization.

Cambodian student is born leader: Chose business for managerial skills

Before Sovichea "Vic" Saron of Battambang, Cambodia, came to Georgia College & State University through the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program—a U.S. Department of State program—he specified his preferences, including academic goals and interests. "Georgia College was perfectly matched for me," Saron said, a senior business administration major. "They asked me if I like small towns, and I gave them the perfect description of Milledgeville. The town is small and has a relaxed atmosphere. It's just a cool place." Milledgeville reminds him of his hometown, which is the second largest city in Cambodia, known for its rich history and architectural prominence. Cambodia's known as "the land of smiles."

"The people here are so nice," he said. "I'm even more surprised that people here are just as nice as in Cambodia—even more so." Saron feels a sense of belonging at Georgia College. "It's good for your mental health to be involved in activities like the International Club, gardening, football and music," he said. "There's always something to look forward to here. I love it." Saron chose business as his major because he's particularly interested in management. "I love playing a role in making something happen," he said. "My business classes equip me with the knowledge to use strategies to lead a team." Saron wants to hone his leadership skills at Georgia College, and he's already off to a great

start. In Cambodia, he proposed and led some environmental projects with the U.S. Agency for International Development—the world's leading international development agency. Saron's also a key stakeholder with USAID Cambodia Green Future and co-founded a youth-run advocacy organization called Niron. "Whenever leadership strategizes about their campaigns—about what to do, how to do it and how to work with government agencies—I'm part of those discussions," he said. When Saron returns to Cambodia, he has one last semester before graduating with his undergraduate degree in business administration. He looks forward to working in the education sector, called Love without Boundaries.



Sovichea "Vic" Saron is from Battambang, Cambodia.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/events

Calendar table with columns for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, showing dates 28, 29, 30, 1, and 2 with event details for Friday.