

# ChatGPT; “cheating service” or “powerful tool”?

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## FULL TEXT

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ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence technology, is currently being used by many Emporia State students to assist them with homework and other tasks. This technology, which is available to anyone with access to the internet, may change the way professors teach at universities like ESU.

“During the transition period, it's going to be tough,” said Thomas Mahoney, associate professor of mathematics and economics. “But eventually, there's just going to be this acknowledgment that technology exists. And we want students to be successful with that technology.”

Mahoney first encountered the new technology around six months ago and plans to use it in his mathematics classes in the future.

“I'm seeing ChatGPT as a powerful tool that future programmers, and probably people in other disciplines, need to be able to use to be effective in the workforce going forward,” Mahoney said.

Some students, like senior computer science major Matthew Postel, use the online resource as a way to get help when stuck with difficult assignments by copying and pasting an answer into the chat window.

“If I have no idea what to do, and I don't have time to go see my professor,” Postel said. “I can be like, ‘Hey, I'm stuck. Where do I go from here?’ and it's (ChatGPT) like, ‘Oh, you do this? That's a good point. I do that.’”

While Postel says he does not use it to cheat on assignments, he has had many conversations with students who do and says it is “not even remotely surprising” that students are using it to cheat.

“I think it's going to be very powerful for everyone,” Postel said. “But if you aren't using it properly, a lot of the time it's probably more of a detriment than actually a help. If you're just using it to write your essays for you, that's not actually helping you. It's helping you pass the class but yeah, that's it.”

The Academic Dishonesty policy at ESU states that “academic dishonesty, a basis for disciplinary action, includes but is not limited to activities such as cheating, plagiarism, or any other academically unethical activity as defined in the course syllabus by the faculty member and based on standards of the academic discipline.”

There are no current updates to the policy that state what would happen in the case of ChatGPT usage by a student to plagiarize.

“Each syllabus is supposed to specify what is considered academic honesty and dishonesty,” Mahoney said. “I'm sure you're going to have a sharp increase in cases where a professor is accusing a student of using this particular technology. I don't know how one goes about proving or disproving that.”

Mahoney encourages professors to instead embrace the powerful tool.

“It's important for students, and also professors, to learn how to use it to be more effective in their jobs,” Mahoney said. “I think it's a mistake to pretend that it's just a cheating service.”

However, he says that ChatGPT's “ethical concerns” are substantial and gives others a word of caution while using this technology.

“It's important to remember that with ChatGPT, it can only give responses that are as smart as the data that was fed in,” Mahoney said.

ChatGPT does not access the internet and can only give out the most recent knowledge programmed into it. When asking ChatGPT about its most recent knowledge-cutoff date, it replied with September 2021.

Joel Frase, junior computer science major, also uses ChatGBT and has friends on campus who use the program for their homework.

"It gets some answers not completely right still, but I think over time it'll start to get everything right pretty much," Frase said. "There's still plenty of room for it to get more sophisticated than it is."

However, other AI programs are already working on more sophisticated technology that can do this, according to Mahoney.

"As we move forward, GPT4, the next generation, is going to be connected to the internet," Mahoney said. "I don't know what Microsoft and Google's systems are, I don't know where their knowledge stops."

## DETAILS

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