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THE REFLECTIVE LEADER

Consider ways that artificial intelligence will change higher ed as we know it

By Dawn Z. Hodges, Ph.D.

To me, artificial intelligence is named Alexa, and she lives in my house. She tells me whether it will rain today, reminds me when to take the trash to the curb, and lets me know when my Amazon packages arrive. She tells me when to take cookies out of the oven and warns me when there is going to be bad weather in my neighborhood.

She's supposed to be intelligent, but she acts pretty dumb sometimes. She can't hear well, often misunderstands my southern accent, and says "hmmmm, I'm not sure" when I ask questions that require answers having to do with feelings. She does not know if I love my husband. She says we're friends, but when I quiz her about me, as she asks me to do, she knows virtually nothing. If she's been listening in on my conversations, as some say she does, she can't recall much at all. She often has a hard time choosing the song I want to listen to and will pick any crazy song as a replacement. Sometimes, she just makes random sounds — to the point where I have to unplug her.

AI has long transcended the original Alexa. I don't think I'll ever understand how it works, but as leaders in higher education, we need to know how AI can and will change our field.

Walden University posted a blog titled "5 Pros and Cons of AI in the Education Sector." The article provides a succinct definition of AI: "Artificial intelligence is a field of computer science and technology that focuses on creating machines, systems, or software programs capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. The tasks include reasoning, problem solving, learning, perception, understanding natural language, and making decisions. AI systems are designed to simulate or replicate human cognitive functions and adapt to new information and situations."

5 cons of AI

The Walden blog lists five cons of AI:

1. **Bias.** AI is only as knowledgeable as the information it has been trained on.
2. **Errors.** AI may generate misinformation.
3. **Cheating.** Students can use ChatGPT to write entire essays, answer quiz questions, and do their homework.
4. **Isolation.** If students interact with a software program more than with a teacher, they can begin to feel disconnected and isolated.
5. **Jobs.** AI has the potential to be a powerful learning tool. Some teachers worry that AI will replace them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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5 pros of AI

The article also lists five pros of AI:

1. **Assistance.** Teachers who've tried AI have found that it can help make their jobs easier. With assistance from AI, teachers can gain more time to spend with their students.
2. **Speed.** If a student feels "stuck" while working on an assignment, AI programs can provide immediate, helpful assistance if a teacher or caregiver isn't available.
3. **Individualization.** AI can individualize learning opportunities for students. For instance, ChatGPT can quickly and easily translate materials to another language.
4. **Context.** Future students could use AI to talk to Anne Frank about her life, to Marie Curie about her scientific discoveries, and to Shakespeare about his plays.
5. **Personalization.** By analyzing student performance data, AI-powered tools can determine which students need support to improve their learning experiences.

In an article titled "Can artificial intelligence transform higher education?" in the *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, the authors, Tony Bates and colleagues, write, "Many have argued that the development of artificial intelligence has more potential to change higher education than any other technological advance." Potential goals for AI in higher education are to increase outcomes, increase access, increase retention, lower costs, and decrease time to completion. These, however, are aspirational goals, according to the authors. They pose the question: "What is the reality?" Anyone interested in learning more about AI in higher education will find that article a worthwhile read.

You may be interested in another article on AI in higher education: "A meta systematic review of artificial intelligence in higher education: a call for increased ethics, collaboration, and rigour," which also appeared in the *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*.

As a freshman in college, I wrote a comparison essay about McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Hunts. I got an A on the

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solution," Polovich said. It can also go directly to the Omnilert team, which can take actions on its own, sending notifications to first responders, and passing on the detection data. You could notify the police and those in harm's way within a few seconds, he said.

AI most effective when integrated with multiple systems

The possibility of leveraging AI-driven technology for campus safety is really most important in saving time and making sure your systems are integrated across various channels — it doesn't help to save time if you have to go to multiple systems to respond. Automating responses can also help decrease human error, Drogosch said. You also want to make sure the incident response isn't a one-way call — you want to be able to have a system that can integrate responses in real time, for example, a student letting you know they're safe in the midst of an incident, or if they need more assistance, he said.

You also want to be able to integrate other safety systems with your AI, Drogosch said. For example, integrating visitor management systems to safety alerts can help you keep track of who is on your campus — and where on campus, he said. Typically, technology has enabled campus safety to react to an incident already in play. But ideally, you'd use AI to prevent an emergency event, Drogosch said. "You want your technology to see a gun on campus and be able to stop the event from taking place," he added.

One of the prime examples of where this could be useful is in response to Alyssa's Law, effective in at least six states, which mandates (among other measures) that every classroom have a silent panic button, Drogosch said. Compliance with Alyssa's Law, even if your state hasn't yet implemented it, means you're ahead of the curve, he said.

To prevent an emergency situation on campus, you'll want to notify as many people as possible as intrusively as possible, Drogosch said, similar to a fire alarm. "Why don't we have that same capability with a gunshot?" That's what Singlewire offers. It's not just a mobile device notification — it can also be pushed out to digital signs around campus, and send video clips to the emergency responding team so they can have situational awareness of what's going on. It can save time by pinpointing and sharing the exact locations of emergency events with emergency responders.

AI can detect weapons

In particular, the potential for AI to impact campus safety in the event of a school shooting is huge, Sutter said, sharing the following statistics:

- 340 school shootings occurred in 2023.
- 227 people were harmed or killed in 2023 during a school shooting.
- 80% of school shootings happen outside of a building.
- 2023 is the third year in a row of historically high numbers of school shootings.

Data shows there's time to take action between a gun being drawn and the first shots being fired in many incidents, Sutter said. "I think the reality is pretty apparent to everyone — the unfortunate truth is that gun violence in schools is up," Sutter said. The hope is to catch it early and take action before the incidents occur, he added.

For example, Polovich went over the Parkland shooting timeline and showed how AI could have impacted that tragedy's outcome. "We're not criticizing, we're not providing commentary — we're just looking at this as a boilerplate template for how this played out, and how technology could have made a difference," he said.

In the case of Parkland, there was a one-minute delay between first shot fired and on-site active shooter confirmation, and more than five minutes before the active shooter code red was called on campus, Polovich said. It's a large campus, he said, adding he wasn't criticizing law enforcement response for the incident. "There's also false alarm syndrome — the worry about causing a panic needlessly is legitimate," he added.

However, in the case of Parkland, nearly a minute before the first shot was fired, the gunman stepped in front of a camera and the weapon was visible. Something like the Omnilert gun-detection product would've been able to detect that weapon and trigger an immediate alert and trigger human verification, before offering a host of immediate response actions, he said. "Our goal is to start reacting to the gun, not the gunshot," Polovich said. AI can detect a weapon in a third of a second. Verification of that weapon by a human takes about 11 seconds. "I do definitely think modern technology could have impacted a situation like Parkland by detecting a weapon early," he said. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Halley Sutton is Editor of *Campus Security Report*, also published by Wiley. ■

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essay, but my professor wrote, "Not too much of your own thinking, I am thinking." More than 45 years later, I still remember his critique. It's the way I feel about this column. I wish I could write an entire column about AI, but I just don't know enough about it! However, my research skills still serve me well, and I hope these articles will provide good reading for you, too. ■

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