



DUCHESNE HIGH SCHOOL

shaping leaders in mind, body, and spirit

Hi all,

Last week Saint Louis University sent a cautionary email to all of their dual credit teachers about ChatGPT and related software. In her email to us, the director of the dual credit program described the software as having the ability to, “produce computer-generated essays, computer code, and mathematical expressions and solutions.” She also noted that “Although this technology only emerged in November, it has already generated considerable discussion about essay writing and academic integrity.”

“Considerable discussion” may be an understatement. As I understand it, the software allows a user to enter a set of parameters that will generate a unique and specific essay. For example, I could enter something like: “A weekly principal’s letter to the families of a small Catholic high school about the artificial intelligence program ChatGPT, 400 words.” In seconds I would get a letter not terribly dissimilar from the one you are reading. What has really frightened people in secondary and higher education is the uniqueness of the product. If I enter the prompt above a second time, I would get a different “letter.” Hopefully the dangers of this software are obvious. Cheating will become easier and less obvious, and therefore more tempting. As a result, the “considerable discussion” happening in and around higher education had focused on issues touching on academic integrity and the demise of the college essay.

While those concerns are real, mine move in a slightly different direction. On Wednesday night, I had an opportunity to catch up with some recent graduates, Maria Del Guidice and Rachel Buenger. Maria is a premed neuroscience major in the honors program at SLU, with a potential minor in philosophy. Rachel is studying psychological and brain services with an emphasis on geriatric care at Washington University. She is also taking a minor in global health. I asked them about the specter of ChatGPT and how it is being addressed at their universities. Rachel told us that she is currently in a class where the professor is addressing it directly. He told her class of technology that is currently being used to determine if an essay was composed with software like ChatGPT. He also said that he is studying the artificial intelligence with the hopes of finding ways to help patients suffering with Alzheimer’s and dementia communicate.

How do we use technology to increase our human dignity? Communicating, and particularly writing, play such a significant role for many people as they grapple with the question of humanity. To surrender that part of humanity to AI frightens me. Do my students need to write an essay about Emersonian influences in *Huck Finn* in order to be successful in life? Certainly not. But using writing as a means of organizing their thoughts—for some, as a means of figuring out what they think—is an invaluable skill.

Pax,

Dominic D’Urso



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Upcoming Events

February 10

Coronation: Our pep rally will be held at 2:00, and will include an introduction of the Coronation court. The court will also be introduced immediately after the JV game, approximately 6:45. (Last week I wrote that the introduction would take place at halftime of the varsity game. I was wrong; sorry for the confusion.) As usual, all of our families are welcome to attend.

February 11

Coronation Dance: The doors will open at 6:30 with the ceremony starting at 7:00. The dance will follow the ceremony and end at 9:30. Students attending the dance are required to stay until 9:00.

February 13

No Classes: The students will not have school on Monday, February 13th. We will use the time for faculty professional development.

February 14

ACT Prep: Our math teacher Katie Long has offered free ACT Math prep every Tuesday from 2:50 to 3:50 leading up to our testing day on March 28th. We are limiting the class to current juniors. If you are interested, please email Mrs. Long (klong@duchesne-hs.org) to register.

Senior Night: We will honor the seniors on our basketball teams, diamondline, cheer squad, band, and swim team.

February 17

No School for Students: The faculty and staff will attend our annual faculty retreat.

February 20

No School: President's Day.

February 22

No Late Start: The 22nd is Ash Wednesday. We will have a regular start time and an all school mass. As always, all of our families are welcome to attend.