

Everyone. Welcome back for another deep dive. Mhmm. You know, AI in education, it's, it's the talk of the town these days. Yeah.

Everywhere you turn. Right. So today, we're, we're bringing you into a conversation among college professors. Oh, this is fascinating stuff. It is.

It is. We've got this transcript from a faculty book group at East Carolina University, and they're calling themselves Teaching with AI. This is actually their second meeting, so they've already, you know, had some time to dig into this topic. So they're not just starting from scratch here. Exactly.

Exactly. Uh-huh. And what's really cool is we've got professors from all sorts of different disciplines. You know? History, English, communications.

So it's not just, like, the tech folks who are thinking about this? No. Not at all. And that's what makes this so interesting. These are educators who are right there on the front lines figuring out how to adapt their teaching in real time.

Yeah. I mean, we're all trying to figure this out. Right? Absolutely. And one thing that really jumped out of me is this this almost universal pushback against the idea that AI is here to replace teachers.

Yeah. I was gonna say that's been a big fear for a lot of folks. Right. But these professors, they're not buying it. They're seeing AI as a tool.

Like a tool to work with, not something to be afraid of. Exactly. And they even bring up Kevin Kelly. Oh, the tech writer. Yeah.

Yeah. And he talks about how how human thought thrives on these, like, messy, inefficient moments of discovery. Yeah. I see where they're going with this. AI is all about efficiency, giving you that correct answer right away.

But is that always what we want in education? Right. Maybe there's actually value in those moments where students kinda wander around a bit. Yeah. You know, make unexpected connections, even make mistakes.

It's that whole idea of the learning process being just as important as the final product. Exactly. And it makes you think about AI in a whole new way. Instead of fearing it, maybe we could think about how to use it to actually enhance those messy, serendipitous moments of learning. Oh, I like that.

It's like flipping the script, isn't it? Totally. Totally. And it reminds me of the whole Wikipedia problem you remember. Oh, yeah.

Yeah. When it first came out, everyone was freaking out. Oh, big time. Like, students will never think for themselves again. The end of critical thinking as we know it.

Exactly. But now Mhmm. It's like, what? A standard starting point for research? I mean, I remember my professors forbidding us from even looking at Wikipedia.

Oh, I know. Right? Now they probably all use it themselves. Exactly. So the faculty is using this historical parallel to say, hey, maybe we need to take a breath.

Maybe this AI panic will, you know, subside a little, and we'll find ways to integrate it just like we did with Wikipedia. And that gives me some hope because there are some, you know, some very real concerns about AI, like critical thinking. How do we make sure students aren't just using AI to skip over, you know, the hard work of actually thinking deeply? Yeah. That's the big question.

Right? Yeah. How do we make sure they're not just getting AI to, you know, write their papers for them or whatever? Right. And it's interesting to see how these professors are really grappling with that, trying to find that balance.

And one professor, Eric Oakley, he's a historian, he talked about the need to actually slow down the thinking process. Slow down in this day and age. I know. Right? But he's worried that in this world of instant answers, students will lose the ability to carefully evaluate sources.

Or even to, like, way different perspectives or, you know, to really construct their own own argument. Exactly. Exactly. And you can really see this concern reflected in their discussion about assignments. Oh, yeah.

How are we gonna have to change things up? Right. Like, it's not just about banning AI outright. It's about designing assignments that are AI proof. I've heard some people call it, like, AI resistant assignments.

Yeah. That's good. Designing them in a way that encourages deeper learning. Like, Mandy Messerly talked about using AI to help students break down large projects into smaller chunks. Oh, that's interesting.

Almost like using AI to scaffold the learning process. Exactly. It's like providing support without just giving away the whole answer. Right. And Nikki Hancock, she had a similar approach, suggesting we gradually integrate AI into assignments.

So start with the manual stuff. Right. Make sure they have the basic skills. Right. And then slowly start introducing AI for those more complex tasks.

So it's not all doom and gloom. These professors are already finding ways to make AI work for them. It's about being creative. Right? Exactly.

And get this, some of them even see value in actually having students talk to AI as a learning tool. Woah. Like, have a conversation with it. Yeah. And Michelle Ebel even suggested that students share their AI conversation scripts with the instructor.

Oh, that's fascinating. So you can actually see their thought process, how they're interacting with the AI, what questions they're asking. Wow. Like, getting a peek behind the curtain. You wouldn't get that with a traditional assignment.

Exactly. But it also highlights something else. Even with all its capabilities, AI still lacks context. Right. It can spit out information, but it doesn't truly understand, you know, the nuances.

The nuances of a situation or a student's individual needs, and that's where we come in. Right. We provide that human connection. That guidance that AI just can't replicate. It's reassuring in a way.

We're not obsolete just yet. Not yet. Not yet. But it does raise some new challenges. Which we'll dive into in part two.

So we've heard about some of their really, like, exciting ways that these professors are starting to think about AI in their classrooms. But, you know, let's face it. There are still a lot of concerns out there. Oh, yeah. For sure.

I mean, a big one that came up over and over again in this transcript was this worry that AI could actually end up making existing inequalities in education even worse. Yeah. I mean, it's not like every student has the same access to this technology. Right? Yeah.

Or even, like, the same level of understanding about how to actually use it effectively. Exactly. And even if we could, like, magically wave a wand and give

everybody equal access, there's still this huge problem of bias that's baked into the data that these AI tools are trained on. Oh, right. Right.

Right. Like Mandy Messerly, one of the professors in the group, she made this really important point. She said, if those datasets reflect existing biases, then the outputs that we get from AI are just going to perpetuate those biases. Okay. Sure.

And that could end up really harming students who are already marginalized. It's like we can't just blindly accept whatever AI throws at us. Right. Absolutely not. We need to be teaching students how to be critical consumers of this information.

Mhmm. You know, question the sources, consider the potential biases, all that good stuff. Totally. And that brings us right back to the whole issue of context, something that AI still really struggles with. Right.

It can, like, put together grammatically perfect sentences. But Does it really understand what it's saying? Yeah. It it often lacks that kind of nuanced understanding of the audience or the purpose or the situation. All those things that are so important for effective communication.

And that's where we, as educators, I think, have such a crucial role to play. Right. We can help students develop those critical thinking skills, guide them in using AI as a tool for, you know, thoughtful and responsible communication. Make sure they're not just, like, blindly accepting everything AI spits out. It's like we're the sense checkers.

We're the ones who bring the human element back into the equation. Exactly. Exactly. And it's not just about teaching students how to use AI, but also kinda reflecting on our own teaching practices. Right?

Yeah. Like, how do we adapt to this new landscape? How do we make sure that our teaching is still relevant, still engaging in a world where AI can generate content in, like, seconds? Oh, man. That story that Justin Littlefield told about students using AI because they just felt totally disengaged in class, that was kind of a wake up call for me.

Yeah. That one really hit home. It's a reminder that we need to be creating learning experiences that are meaningful, that are challenging. Experiences that, you know, can't just be outsourced to a machine. Exactly.

And it makes you think, what are those essential skills and knowledge that we want students to develop, and how do we design our assignments and assessments to actually measure those things? It's about focusing on those learning outcomes, not just the outputs. And it's about, like, fostering a culture of learning where students are actually engaged, where they're curious, where they're willing to grapple with those complex ideas. Yes. Even when they don't have an AI tool to give them the easy answer.

Exactly. Exactly. Because that's where the real magic happens. Right? When students are genuinely motivated to learn, not just driven by, you know, grades or whatever, AI might be able to, like, generate content.

But it can't replicate those moments of, like, real human connection. Or that intellectual spark that happens in a dynamic classroom. I think that's a great place to kinda pause for a moment. We've talked about some of those anxieties and concerns that these professors are dealing with. But we've also heard some really creative and honestly inspiring solutions.

And in part three, we're gonna dive into the nitty gritty of how they're thinking about putting these ideas into practice. Yeah. Like, what policies are they considering? What resources are out there to help faculty, you know, navigate this whole new world? Yeah.

Stay tuned. Okay. So we've talked about the hopes, the fears, you know, all the brainstorming these professors are doing around AI. But now the question is, like, how do we actually move from all this talk to some kind of, you know, concrete action? Yeah.

That's the big one, isn't it? And it's clear from this transcript that these faculty members are, like, really looking for some guidance. Yeah. They want some answers. For sure.

And Bunnell even specifically asks if, you know, if the university is making any decisions about AI policies. So are they just, like, leaving it up to individual instructors to figure this all out on their own? Well, not entirely. It seems like East Carolina University actually just implemented some draft AI policies. Oh, interesting.

Yeah. And the focus seems to be on, like, data governance and then also this idea of instructor autonomy. Instructor autonomy. So, like, giving professors the power to decide how to handle AI in their own classrooms. Exactly.

It's like they're recognizing that there's no one right way to do this. Yeah. Different disciplines, different teaching styles, different students. All of that. Yeah.

It all factors in. It does. But it also puts a lot of responsibility on us as educators to really, like, think this through. Oh, absolutely. We need to educate ourselves about AI, consider the ethical stuff, and, like, come up with our own approaches.

Yeah. You can't just bury your head in the sand and hope it goes away. Right. And it sounds like ECU is at least trying to provide some support for faculty in this whole process. Yeah.

Justin Littlefield mentioned something about training sessions on generative AI. And Copilot. Yeah. Those kinds of professional development opportunities are gonna be so crucial. I think so too.

It's not enough to just, you know, throw instructors in the deep end and say, figure it out. Right. We need some guidance. Resources and a chance to, like, share experiences with each other, learn from what other people are doing. And it's not just about the, like, technical how to stuff.

Right? It's about fostering a deeper understanding of the, you know, the pedagogical and I would even say philosophical implications of AI in education. Oh, getting deep. Like, how will it impact student learning? How might it change our role as instructors?

How can we make sure it's being used in a way that's fair and inclusive? These are big questions. Huge questions. And it sounds like ECU is at least on the right track by, you know, emphasizing these open conversations and, like, a collaborative approach. Yeah.

Kevin Kuri Knight made a great point about bringing students into the discussion too. Oh, for sure. Giving them a voice, letting them help shape those policies. Because, ultimately, it's gonna affect their learning experience the most. Yeah.

Exactly. So it's about transparency, shared responsibility, and recognizing that we're all kinda figuring this out. Faculty, students, administrators, we're all in this boat. So, you know, as we wrap up our time with this book group, what have we learned? Well, for one thing, they're wrestling with the same challenges that we all are. But what really struck me was their willingness to, like, embrace the complexity.

Mhmm. To ask those tough questions and be honest about, you know, what's

freaking them out. Yeah. No one's pretending to have all the answers. And I think that's actually the biggest takeaway.

Right? There are no easy answers. No. We're all in uncharted territory. But by having these conversations, sharing our experiences, learning from each other Yeah.

Maybe we can start to find our way. Exactly. So to all our listeners out there, fellow educators who are also kinda grappling with this AI revolution, you're not alone. We're all in this together. What resonated with you from this deep dive?

What questions are you taking away? What actions are you gonna take, you know, back in your own classroom? Maybe you're inspired to rethink your assignments. Maybe explore some new AI tools or start having these conversations with your students. Wherever you are in this journey, just keep exploring, keep learning, and keep sharing those experiences.

We're all figuring this out together. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. Until next time, keep learning and keep diving deep.