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**CHRIS DAVIS:** So welcome to the *Career and Academic Resource Center Podcast, The CARC Podcast.* I am Chris Davis, the associate director of the Career and Academic Resource Center, and today it is my great, great pleasure to be speaking to Jane Rosenzweig who is the director of the Harvard Writing Center. I've had the pleasure of working with Jane over the years that I've been at DCE. And it's a thrill to be speaking to you today, Jane. Thank you so much.

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** Thanks for inviting me.

**CHRIS DAVIS:** So we're here today to do something a little different. We're going to talk about ChatGPT, which is a subject that is very much a moving target, very much evolving very quickly, and very much a topic of conversation all over the place, including from our students. That was the impetus for me to reach out to Jane.

I had a student in a webinar a couple of weeks ago who said, talking about their plans after Extension School and applying to a doctoral program or a PhD program, and he said, I'm thinking about using ChatGPT to write parts of my application, my essays. And I thought, oh, boy, OK, now it's time to -- [CHUCKLES] maybe time to talk about this.

Before we proceed, I do want to note that we are going to be talking about several different components of ChatGPT and a broader conversation about it. But I do want to note that it is official Extension School policy, there is language about it on the academic integrity page of the Extension School website, which states that submission of work and that is not created by you that is not sourced (and certainly both of those include ChatGPT) is forbidden per our academic integrity policy. But this is already such a big area in professional circles, in the workplace, in very many other avenues, so I thought it's a great idea to talk about this.

I know that you've written about this in your Substack. You've spoken about ChatGPT in interviews that you've done. It's come quite a long way in the six months that it's been around. What would be the first thing that you would want to convey to students as a writing instructor about ChatGPT and where it stands now?

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** Right. So I first wrote an article for *The Boston Globe* about using artificial intelligence in writing just weeks before ChatGPT was released. So my timing wasn't perfect there, but I had been thinking about this for about a year because before ChatGPT, there was something called the -- well, there still is -- the GPT playground where developers and other people were experimenting with the various permutations of this generative AI.

And I had gotten myself in there because a student had told me about it. And I was already thinking even this, which is nothing compared to what you can do with ChatGPT, was a concern to me. And so my concern that I'm going to express right now is, as a writing instructor, there are reasons we assign writing in university courses. And the reasons are generally not simply to assess whether you know something but because writing is a way that we figure out what we think.

So when you write a research paper for a class that you're taking with me, I am not particularly concerned about or focused on the product, what are you going to give me at the end of this experience. I'm much more interested in the process. What questions do you have that you want to get answers to? And the research paper is your vehicle for doing that. So I think of writing in the college, the university level at every level as an exploration, a way of figuring out what we think. It's not the only way to figure out what you think, of course, but it's a useful way.

And so when we introduce this idea that people are considering using ChatGPT to write parts of their paper or using ChatGPT to generate ideas -- "What, oh, I'm staring at a blank page. Perhaps I'll go ask ChatGPT what I should write my paper about" -- That's a thing. You can do that. But it's a very different thing than what I've been working with students on for 22 years at Harvard. And it seems to me to be a much less exciting experience.

That doesn't mean -- I know, I talk to students all the time. Every paper you write is not the most exciting experience of your life. And we understand that. At the same time, the goal of writing in the courses that you're taking at Harvard Extension should be to examine evidence, to ask questions, to experience a process, and develop habits of your mind that make you a person who is thinking. And my biggest concern therefore about this casual adopting of ChatGPT at every level is that we are not thinking about what we're going to lose along the way. And I think we stand to lose a lot that we highly value.

**CHRIS DAVIS:** Right. I had heard you make that distinction in another talk too between the process and the product. And certainly out in the wild in the real world, there are different venues or places where having easier access to a product -- I've heard people talk about public listings or real estate listings, things like that being generated by the text being generated by ChatGPT. And that's one use case.

But whereas when you're a student, it depends on the field of study and the course. But generally, what instructors are looking to get from you and looking to see you get something out of is the process of forming your ideas, and then articulating them in a written format and wrestling with that process.

I do want to mention because I think this is something that a lot of people are seeing, perhaps just the headlines of it and not really going further than that, I think there have been a couple of examples, one of them was in January when, I believe, a professor at Wharton had announced that he had tasked ChatGPT with writing a response to an exam question that he poses to students, and the result was 'excellent' in his words. And I saw that being reported in various ways. ChatGPT passes Wharton admissions or aces Wharton MBA assignment or something like that.

So first of all, I think it was not very accurately discussed. But in terms of how other instructors are using it or thinking about it, what would be your concern about fellow academics, fellow instructors coming right out of the gate and saying "This is great" without maybe giving the context of "Well, this exercise was an interesting one. However, this is not something I'm encouraging students to do, and this is what this could hinder in my teaching in my classroom if students were to use it."

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** Absolutely. I mean, I think that as we've seen with each new social media platform and new technology and the smartphone and even Google, every time something is introduced, there's that push, pull between, you've got to get on this train. It's going to leave without you, and so you better embrace it, and the people who have questions and have concerns. And so there's these polar opposites there, and then everyone else exists somewhere in that nuanced gray area.

What I've seen with ChatGPT is the voices on social media who are getting the most attention in education are those early adopters. "Look at what this is going to do. This is going to revolutionize everything. I'm having all of my students use it." And, I mean, I've had people say that to me.

I'm not saying no one should ever use it. But just from expressing concerns about it, I've had people say to me things that imply that I'm just an old luddite, that I don't get technology. They say people said the same things about calculators, and therefore, you need to get with the program because everything's going to be OK.

I think we need to be neither set of those people as we think about this. I am concerned that a lot of the early classroom uses of this are shiny bells and whistles that may not have a lot of substance. That doesn't mean all of them are. People are very thoughtful. Instructors are very thoughtful with what they're trying to do.

But when I see people saying things like "Well, from now on" -- and I have seen this multiple times -- "Our students will no longer be writers. They will be editors. They will use ChatGPT to draft their first draft, and then they'll take it from there." That to me reflects a very different way of thinking about the writing process than the one that I and most instructors at Harvard that I've talked to have about the writing process.

Editing is not writing. Editing is something. It's very helpful. I've been a professional editor. When you are editing something that exists in front of you, you tend not to go through what I think are the important processes of changing your mind.

Like, what I see with a student draft when students are wrestling with their own ideas, often that final paper has nothing in it that was in that original draft. And that's very frustrating to many students, but that's important because it's that "I traveled somewhere while writing this, I started with this set of thoughts, and I moved to this other set of thoughts."

Now, you might say, well, why can't I do that? I'll type a few things into ChatGPT, and it'll generate a draft, and I'll do that same thing. Well, maybe, but I can also see a lot of situations in which that will not happen because ChatGPT is trained on all of this existing thought, and it's going to go in some direction, and you're a student. You're a good person. You have a lot going on, and you think, well, this seems like a reasonable direction, so you just take it, and then what you lose is not something measurable there. And that's what concerns me.

When I speak as a teacher to my students, this is not going to be the thing-- none of these losses or changes from technology have been particularly measurable. We can measure what people don't do anymore. But are we really going to measure whether people have as interesting thoughts, join as many interesting conversations, feel ownership over their ideas, value what they're doing in the academy in the same way?

Looking back, people will say, well, of course, we had to embrace this. But we're at a moment now where I don't think we have to just take one path and assume it's inevitable. I think we need to think about, what do we value and how are we going to preserve that?

**CHRIS DAVIS:** I shared this with you just recently. The publisher of *Insider* magazine -- I'm sure this is not going to be a singular case. I'm sure there are others that are going to pop up in the coming months. But he announced to his staff in a very long memo that he is establishing a pilot program to use ChatGPT for the reporters and the journalists there. And it was just a fascinating document because he very frankly talked about the plagiarism aspects, the inaccuracy. And I did want to talk about that with you a little bit later.

In fact, his exact words were, "ChatGPT generates falsehoods". So you can't really rely on it to aggregate information from the internet. It will make things up. And as an aside, he said also the writing's dull and generic. And it was interesting that was the last thing that he mentioned. So he mentioned those things, and then he said, this is going to be a wonderful tool for writers and editors because it will generate ideas for you. It'll help reporters who have writer's block. "It'll smash through writer's block." I think those were the words that he used.

And I thought to myself, it is interesting. It feels a little bit like people are expecting that they need to use this. And rather than it solving a problem for people, it feels like people are feeling the need to adopt this. And in some cases, very openly admitting the problems that ChatGPT has. Inevitably, I guess, it feels like they feel like they need to use it. I read the memo, and I'm simplifying a little bit. But it was like, these are the bad things about it, which are, I think, very important things for writers -- generating falsehoods, plagiarism, bad writing.

"But we're going to use it anyway because it's going to give us ideas." I thought, well, this is not a coherent message yet, but it feels like people are feeling the need to use it to prove something or other.

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** I mean, interestingly one of the things that I was thinking about early on -- and I wrote a second article for *The Globe* about this -- was it has become a helpful framework for me in thinking about this that my question was "To what problem is ChatGPT the solution?" So we often think about technology as solution-based. In the olden days, we invent a wheel, and then we have things that move on wheels.

With this sort of technology, as with many of our early 21st century technologies, it's more like, here's the technology and now figure out what to do with it. And for ChatGPT, I think keeping in mind this "To what problem is this the solution?" is a really helpful way of distinguishing perhaps between the passionate way that I'm speaking out about perhaps not using it to write your papers, and the many other ways in which it's going to get used that seem less controversial or possibly even incredibly helpful.

There's a lot of talk about how this might be used in medicine. Obviously, they're going to need to figure out the inaccuracies and falsehoods problem, or you don't want ChatGPT involved in your diagnosis. But that seems to me very different from what we're talking about when we talk about situations in which you're trying to develop your own ability to think critically. And that's where I think ChatGPT seems to be creating a problem rather than necessarily solving one.

There are academics who have been using artificial intelligence in all sorts of interesting ways already, even before ChatGPT, to crunch data, to do things that help them seek knowledge. That's different, I think, from what we're talking about with students. And it's going to be very hard, I think, to figure out exactly where to draw those lines.

But something else that I think is really important to think about is the difference between those of us considering using ChatGPT now and a generation of ChatGPT natives, as we've called digital natives, all the kids who are raised with their smartphone and the internet and everything. So if you imagine ChatGPT starting in kindergarten -- so I read an article about someone who was talking about the different ways that this was being used in K through 12. And they were speaking very excitedly about having children in elementary school use it to generate stories.

So this actually made me very sad because kids are wonderful at generating stories with their own imagination. I don't see what problem we'd be solving if we have kids use ChatGPT to generate stories instead of having them generate stories themselves. So that's an example of something I have an opinion on. But also if it becomes a thing that happens in elementary school, we are already looking at a difference in how you're developing your critical thinking and creative thinking skills from an early age.

And that's something I think we need to be concerned about. I don't think we can just say, oh, well, that'll be fine. Calculators we're fine. This is not a calculator. It may have some things in common with a calculator.

But when the calculator was released -- and I don't know exactly what the conversation was like -- but it was not about our privacy, our international and national security, the potential that all jobs would disappear, the people like the CEO of OpenAI talking about how he's prepping for disaster by stockpiling food and weapons even as he creates a company that is all about this technology. So it's not a calculator. And I think we need to just keep that in mind.

**CHRIS DAVIS:** I can see students seeing the, let's say, policy about academic integrity and taking these arguments to heart and thinking, OK, I'm going to do my own writing, but I'm going to use ChatGPT to do my sourcing for me or collect information. And there are a lot of people that I'm talking to, I think, that are less aware of this. I shared with you it was just two weeks ago that *The Washington Post* did a story. There were other outlets that covered it.

There was a legal scholar who had been doing a research study about legal scholars, legal professors around the country who have been involved in sexual harassment claims. And there was a professor at George Washington University's Law School who was mistakenly included in what ChatGPT provided to him. And it even created a *Washington Post* article that didn't exist as part of its sourcing.

So I do think that's one area that I do want to make the point to emphasize because I can see people being responsible about this and saying, "I'm going to do my own writing". But the information gathering part of it, which, yes, can be tedious sometimes, I'm going to outsource to ChatGPT. But as we're seeing, it creates made up quotes, made up articles in publications. So I am concerned about our students who do assignments that involve a lot of collecting of references and sourcing not being aware of this, and then being fed something from ChatGPT that might be completely made up.

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** I mean, absolutely right now you should not be using ChatGPT to do your research. I can't speak for what the future holds, but I have tried multiple experiments with this. ChatGPT misattributes. ChatGPT makes up quotations. ChatGPT, although sometimes it seems to be synthesizing a reading, just introduces things that weren't in the reading.

And, I mean, I've read of some comical cases of this. I mean, if you're the student who did it, it's probably not that comical. But you turn in a paper using ChatGPT, you didn't do the reading, so you don't know that the sources are not accurate in ChatGPT. So there's a very practical consideration here. This technology is not trustworthy right now. I don't know, again, what the future holds.

But the other thing is that sourcing-- when you were trying to figure out what the best sources are and whether you've looked at everything you should be looking at for a research paper, you need to really understand what kind of question you're trying to answer. And ChatGPT is not the way to do that in the sense that these large language models are trained on the world, so they often have bias. They may only be spitting out certain types of articles.

It's not a human. It's not doing this intentionally. But its algorithm may lead you down one road with a whole set of ideas on a topic and completely miss something that's really important to you and what you care about, which is why we do our own research and look for the things that seem helpful to our thinking.

People say, well, it's just like Google. There's got to be some line that you think about where you're thinking about, "When am I outsourcing my own thinking? And why is that not what I want to be doing?" And if we go all the way to the extreme of this, what is the point of going and getting an education if you're not doing your own thinking?

Now, does that mean every time you use ChatGPT, there's no point in having an education? No, but you have to be thinking about, why are you making these choices? And if you're making these choices because someone has told you that ChatGPT will open up a whole new world of ideas to you, well, that would be fabulous. But if you're making these choices because that's the quickest way to get three sources for your annotated bibliography, then you're going to miss something, and maybe you're going to miss the thing that made you really deeply invested in this project that you're working on.

CHRIS DAVIS: ChatGPT is not Google, yet. Say what you will about, yes, we must be assiduous in our internet usage just in general because there is a lot of material on the internet that is not accurate, not true. But generative AI is a different animal. It might look different than it does now in the coming years. It can't do your thinking for you, and it certainly can't provide you with accurate information now.

But, yeah, it feels like we are in a period -- and thank you for talking this through with me, Jane -- where this is a very new -- I mean, six months really. It's brand new, and already it feels like the conversation around it is very overwhelming. But as you said, we're in a period of time now where it is up to us to decide how we want to use this, what it could help us do.

JANE ROSENZWEIG: Absolutely. I mean, I always go back to what I tell my first year writing students about why we're doing what we're doing. When I was an editor earlier in my career at *The Atlantic Magazine* and I was fact-checking a very short piece of writing, and the head of the fact-checking department had a question for me about it, and I didn't know the answer. And she said, "If you're going to sign off on something, put your name on something. Don't you want to know whether you believe it and whether it's true?"

And I always talk about this with my students because that's -- we can't put a monetary value on that. We can't put a time value on that. Maybe you could do things more quickly with ChatGPT. But there is some value in if you're going to put your name on something, if you're going to say this is what I think knowing whether it's really what you think. And that is why we write in college courses in many cases.

I mean, sometimes you may feel you're just writing because someone needs to know whether you understood a concept. But when we think about a longer paper, when we think about a master's thesis, when we think about a research paper, we're thinking, what do I actually think about this? And how have I gotten myself to understand that? I think as individuals are making their choices about where ChatGPT fits into their education, so more to think, "What are we all doing here? Don't you want to know if what you think is what you actually think?"

**CHRIS DAVIS:** On that note, Jane, I want to say thank you so much for having this conversation with me. I'm sure the future will bring in other questions and other maybe solutions and other advances to this technology. But so far it's interesting to think about where we are now.

**JANE ROSENZWEIG:** Definitely. Thanks for having me.

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**CHRIS DAVIS:** You have listened to the *CARC Podcast.* This is the podcast for the Career and Academic Research Center here at Harvard Extension School, and I hope you will join us again.

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