



TRANSFER TALK

BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFICE OF TRANSFER SERVICES

FALL 2024 | VOL. 10 NO. 1

LOOKING FORWARD

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP AND ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

By Edwin Roman, Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator

Last year while facilitating a scholarship workshop, a student asked a question I was not prepared for: "Do you recommend using AI (artificial intelligence) to write a scholarship essay?" I was initially baffled because when I first attended college in the 1980s, I used typewriters; there was no internet or smart-phones, and I relied on things like card catalogs, printed newspapers and journals as well as microfilms to do research. This does not mean that I have not embraced technology, it just never occurred to me to utilize AI for writing.

AI, which is the capability of computer systems to mimic human behavior to perform tasks, is not a recent development. Since the 1950s, data scientists have been programming computers to solve problems as well as understand spoken language. AI's capabilities have grown concurrently with the evolution of computers. What distinguishes a product like ChatGPT is that it goes further than data analysis; it is proactive, not unlike the predictive text on your phone that makes suggestions on what words might come next based on information from your past conversations. That seems simple and promising. However, once I started experimenting with it, I found it wasn't that great for essay writing. Because of the way it is touted, I was expecting *Star Trek*, but it is a long way off from anything in depicted in science fiction.

Perhaps the biggest misconception about AI is that it has some level of human intelligence. It doesn't. As I noted above, AI *mimics* human behavior--- its intelligence is essentially statistical analysis that can only generate "unique" content based on the patterns it sees in already existing work (which is estimated, as of this writing, to be the size of one quarter of the en-

tire Library of Congress). Last year, *Time* reported that OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, used Kenyan workers and paid them less than \$2 an hour to make ChatGPT less toxic. So not only are there a lot of people behind the proverbial curtain, they are also being exploited.



"I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so that I can do art and writing." - Joanna Maciejewska

One of my experiments was with ChatGPT. I asked it to write a 500-word admissions essay on "why I want to study psychology." The experience started well with sound guidelines on how to structure the essay. Then it showed me an essay and I was stunned because I had actually already read that same essay --- earlier this year a student sent me this AI generated admissions essay for review with very minimal modifications from what ChatGPT spewed out. In fact, one of my recommendations was to provide more elaboration. Interestingly, this student did not get into the school they were applying for, which was surprising to me at the time as they had a superb GPA. However, it is not difficult to imagine that the admissions committee had likely already read that essay and knew it was AI generated. AI has raised legitimate concerns regarding plagiarism. It is important to know that there are gaps in data therefore impacting its ability to verify what it is generating. Because of this, AI can provide false information including sources that do not exist (known as "AI hallucination").

This past summer, I listened to an episode of the podcast, *Factually! With Adam Conover*, where tech journalist Ed Zitron noted the upcoming burst of the AI bubble because tech companies will soon run out of new training data to improve their AI models. One of the most interesting points they noted was how tech

Continued on the next page.

Continued from previous page.

companies must keep coming up with “innovations” to keep investors interested. Remember self-driving cars? The promise of social media? And what about virtual reality, which tech companies have been trying to foist on the public since the 1990s. AI has recently been referred to as a rerun of the dotcom bubble.

Scholarship and admissions essays, as well as job cover letters, are an opportunity to distinguish your application beyond grades. AI simply can't do that. It can't know what you've experienced and put it into words. Only you can do that. Writing is not easy, but relying on AI can negatively impact grades, as well as your long-term ability to communicate and think critically. Through the practice of writing, you are fostering a foundation of individual thinking that continually inspires new ideas.

P.S. This semester I have already worked with students on scholarship applications and some have asked if AI was used to write the essay.

Sources:

“The A.I. Bubble Is Bursting with Ed Zitron.” *YouTube, Factually! With Adam Conover*, 3 July 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8ByoAt5gCA.

“Ethical Use of AI in Writing Assignments.” *Center for Teaching Excellence*, The University of Kansas, July 2024, cte.ku.edu/ethical-use-ai-writing-assignments.

“Is AI Startup Funding a Rerun of the Dotcom Bubble?” *YouTube, Chicago Booth Review*, 22 June 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCJE57PxA5g.

Kent, Jessica A. “Should I Use CHATGPT to Write My Essays?” *Harvard Summer School, Harvard Division of Continuing Education*, 6 Sept. 2023, summer.harvard.edu/blog/should-i-use-chatgpt-to-write-my-essays/.

Krauskopf, Lewis. “Echoes of Dotcom Bubble Haunt AI-Driven US Stock Market | Reuters.” *Reuters*, 2 July 2024, www.reuters.com/markets/echoes-dotcom-bubble-haunt-ai-driven-us-stock-market-2024-07-02/.

Naughton, John. “From Boom to Burst, the AI Bubble Is Only Heading in One Direction | John Naughton.” From Boom to Burst, the AI Bubble Is Only Heading in One Direction, *Guardian News and Media*, 13 Apr. 2024, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/apr/13/from-boom-to-burst-the-ai-bubble-is-only-heading-in-one-direction.

Perrigo, Billy. “OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less than \$2 per Hour: Exclusive.” *Time*, 18 Jan. 2023, time.com/6247678/openai-chatgpt-kenya-workers/.

ON WRITING ABOUT YOURSELF

By Edwin Roman,
Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator

The one topic that you should be an expert in is you. One would think that writing about this amazing topic would come easy. However, when I work with students individually on scholarship and admissions essays, it can take quite a bit of effort to help them brainstorm an essay where they have to write about themselves. Students sometimes think that they don't have anything interesting to convey while others are hesitant to disclose too much.

When I first started working with high school students on scholarship and admissions essays nearly thirty years ago, I was quite inexperienced, so I turned to a book that I had read when I was an undergraduate student titled *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser. In this very engaging book, the author provides some key fundamental writing principles and there is an entire chapter devoted to writing about yourself.

Zinsser notes that the act of writing is unique to everyone. It is hard work: a clear sentence is no accident. Rewriting is the essence of writing well. He goes on to note that “clutter is the disease of American writing” and that there is a tendency to inflate to sound important. “The airline pilot who announces that he is presently anticipating experiencing considerable precipitation wouldn't think of saying it may rain. The sentence is too simple—there must be something wrong with it.” Zinsser emphasizes that the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components: “Most first drafts can be cut by 50 percent without losing any information or losing the author's voice.”

When writing about yourself, be mindful that writing is an intimate act between two people, conducted on paper, and it will go well when you convey your humanity. “Sell yourself, and your subject will exert its own appeal. Believe in your own identity and your own opinions. Writing is an act of ego, and you might as well admit it. Use its energy to keep yourself going.”

“Forget the competition and go at your own pace. Your only contest is with yourself.”

- William Zinsser

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS & OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

An **articulation agreement** is an agreement between two schools that helps course credit at one school to be accepted or transferred and applied toward a degree at another school.

A **joint degree program** agreement stipulates that following successful completion of the associate degree program and graduation from Bronx Community College, students will be automatically accepted into the specified baccalaureate program of the named senior college.

A **memorandum of understanding (MOU)** is an agreement between institutions that expresses an agreed course of action and conditions under which the receiving institution will accept students for matriculation.

BCC Associate in Art, Liberal Arts to CUNY School of Professional Studies Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies (Articulation Agreement)

About the Program

The Liberal Studies program at CUNY SPS is CUNY's first online BA in the liberal arts and sciences. Unlike most majors, which emphasize the mastery of a single discipline, Liberal Studies affirms the intellectual and professional value of learning to think across conventional disciplinary lines. Liberal Studies majors take classes in a variety of subjects, including English, history, philosophy, mathematics, and the social and natural sciences. Liberal Studies is also a "Z-Degree", meaning that the program may be completed without purchasing a single textbook. Recognizing that returning adults bring skills and knowledge acquired through prior college study or through work and life experience, the Liberal Studies degree also has ample space for transfer credit and credit for prior learning.

Advising notes

BCC students must have an overall 2.5 GPA and are advised to complete the following courses:

- MTH 23 or MTH 23.5 in the Mathematical & Quantitative Reasoning Pathways Required Core requirement
- HIS 10 or 11 in the World Cultures and Global Issues Pathways Flexible Core requirement
- HIS 20 in the U.S. Experience in Its Diversity Pathways Flexible Core requirement
- ECO 11 in the Individual and Society Pathways Flexible Core requirement
- FILM 91 for the COMM, THEA, FILM, MEST in Major Requirements
- ENG 140 for the English elective in Major Requirements
- If any free electives are available, students are encouraged to complete COM 31 Business Communications and/or DAT 10 Computer Fundamentals and Applications

CUNY SPS also requires an admissions essay with the application. Students are encouraged to complete the transfer application at the beginning of their final semester and may connect with Transfer Services for assistance.

See all of BCC's articulation agreements and partnerships on the Transfer Services website:

<https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-resources/transfer-services/transfer-agreements/>

TRANSFER SERVICES EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS



The Office of Transfer Services offers an array of events and workshops that includes:

- The Transfer Fair
- Transfer Planning Workshop
- Four Year College On-Campus Tabling
- Scholarship 101 Workshop

Please visit our website and click on the links for Events and/or Workshops for dates and times.

<https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-resources/transfer-services/>



DR. MILTON SANTIAGO
Interim President

DR. LUIS MONTENEGRO
Vice President for Academic
Affairs and Provost

DR. ALEXANDER OTT
Associate Dean for Curriculum
Matters and Academic Programs

TRANSFER SERVICES

EDWIN ROMAN
Academic and Transfer
Resources Coordinator
Transfer Talk Editor
edwin.roman@bcc.cuny.edu

THOMAS BRACKEN
Transfer Specialist
thomas.bracken@bcc.cuny.edu

Transfer Services provides students with services to inform and facilitate transfer to appropriate senior colleges.

Transfer Services can help you:

- Understand the educational paths that will move you toward your intended career
- Ensure that your degree program is consistent with your objectives
- Select courses to maximize the number of credits transferred
- Take charge of your planning for transfer by teaching you how to conduct research
- Understand the benefit of articulation agreements

Transfer Services addresses student needs via advisement, coordination of the transfer fair, the *Transfer Talk* newsletter, videos, and workshops.

Find us on
Facebook!



Find us on
Instagram!

www.facebook.com/BCCTransferServices/

www.instagram.com/cunybctransferservices/

TRANSFER PLANNING: WHAT TO DO AND WHEN TO DO IT

The primary reason for early and continuous transfer planning is to ensure that the desired degree program and curriculum are consistent with future career or educational plans. Waiting until the last semester may limit options. Articulation agreements and other partnerships are excellent tools for transfer planning because they provide a course of action for students, including an outline of the most appropriate courses to schedule.

0-12 Credits

- **Read the College Catalog** (students are responsible for knowing what their degree entails).
- **Explore Pathways course options.** (Pathways is CUNY's general education)
- Visit Career Development to **explore career options and their requirements.**
- **Read articulation agreements.**
- Become familiar with DegreeWorks, CUNYfirst, OSSES and **Transfer Explorer.**
- **Attend a Transfer Planning workshop.**
- Select your degree program.

13-24 Credits

- Attend the Transfer Fair.
- **Check for new articulation agreements.**
- Visit college websites.
- **Check your progress on DegreeWorks.**
- Visit Career Development and **write**

your resume.

25-35 Credits

- Attend the Transfer Fair.
- **Attend a Scholarship Workshop.**
- Explore transfer options.
- Attend senior college open house events.
- **Begin scholarship search.**
- **Check your progress on DegreeWorks.**
- Check for new articulation agreements.

36-45 Credits

- **Check your progress on DegreeWorks.**
- **Update your resume.**
- Attend the Transfer Fair.
- **Apply for scholarships.**
- Check for new articulation agreements.

Final Semester

- **Apply for graduation.**
- **Send applications.**
- Apply for financial aid and scholarships.
- **Attend orientation at your new school.**

TRANSFER APPLICATION ESSENTIALS

BCC CEEB Code: 2051

Get other college and high school CEEB codes at
http://www.suny.edu/Student/apply_tables_codes.cfm

CUNY Priority Application Deadlines:

Spring Admissions: September 15
Fall Admissions: February 1

CUNY Transfer Application is available on-line at www.cuny.edu.

You will need your CUNYfirst log-in information to complete application.

CUNY Application Processing

Center: 212.997.CUNY

SUNY Recruitment Response

Center: 1.800.342.3811

- **Students should be mindful that good grades are an important part of transferring to the institution or program of choice.**
- **Students transferring to a CUNY four-year college should check if there are specific grade requirements for courses as well as for the program of choice.**
- **Students applying to a CUNY four-year college should also note that if more than one college was attended, the GPA for admissions will be determined through a combination calculation of all attempted coursework.**

TRANSFER SCHOLARSHIPS

Be sure to visit the page on our website that details everything you need to apply for scholarships including CUNY, SUNY, and prestigious scholarships as well as searches, book recommendations and video workshops.

<https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-resources/transfer-services/transfer-scholarships/>