Pearson

Teaching in Action

Faculty stories that inform and inspire.

Challenge

Students were often turning to ChatGPT for quick, ready-made answers, sacrificing the deeper understanding they need to succeed.

Solution

Pearson AI tools provide strategic guardrails for student learning and helps to identify and fill knowledge gaps rather than seeking shortcuts.

Impact

95% of respondents agreed the AI tools built confidence handling complex topics and helped them feel better prepared for class.

Balancing AI in the Classroom

Professor Larry Young at Florida Southern College faced a challenge that's become all too familiar across higher education: students turning to generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini for quick answers, bypassing the critical thinking essential now and for their future careers.

"Higher education is slow to respond to social changes," Young explains. "There's a new application out there, such as ChatGPT, and students are fast on it. They're looking to see how they can get through content more easily." This put Young in a position many educators recognize—watching students shortcut the deep understanding they desperately need for success in healthcare delivery, getting answers without ever thinking about the questions or attempting critical analysis.

Larry Young • Florida Southern College • Biology, Anatomy & Physiology • In-person & online

The Pearson Solution

With Pearson's AI tools, Young — who teaches biology and A&P — can confidently bring AI into his classroom, using clear guardrails to support real learning and critical thinking, while giving students a strong starting point for success.

Pearson's AI-Powered Study Tool, available in select Pearson eTextbooks and MyLab® and Mastering® courses, is an ideal solution for Young. It provides individualized support, practice, and feedback to learners directly within their assigned materials.

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The tool's "Explain" feature, which provides an AI-generated assist for breaking down concepts in the eTextbook, consistently ranked as the most used. "A student says, 'I'm having a hard time understanding action potential formation. Can you please explain this to me in a more detailed or concise way?' The chatbot will go into the section and re-explain it to the student in a different format or a different wording separate from what was used in the textbook, and possibly a little different from what I have, giving them a third voice in how to understand it."

> "They're starting to realize we can use this as a foundational tool that's going to allow for more conversations, more engagement, more review, more self-reflection."

This strategic approach transformed Young's classroom dynamic entirely. "It flips the script to, 'I'm a partner in your education. I'm here to support you, and these are the tools we're going to use,'" he reflects. Instead of students sneaking around to use AI inappropriately, they began developing what Young describes as "a more positive, healthy relationship with AI."

The Outcome

The results spoke for themselves during the Fall 2024 pilot. Students actively used the AI features to summarize diagrams, create review questions, and outline key points—exactly the kind of engagement Young hoped to see. His end-of-exam surveys revealed something remarkable: students were arriving "less anxious" and with "a better sense of what they know and don't know," leading to "higher success on exams."

Educator Reflection

By embracing change while maintaining clear educational boundaries, Young has prepared his students not just for their next exam, but for a future where AI will be an integral part of their professional toolkit.

"They're starting to realize we can use this as a foundational tool," Young concludes, "giving them a starting point so that they're not so overwhelmed." In finding this balance, Young has created a model for how educators can stay ahead of technological change while ensuring students develop the critical thinking skills that no AI can replace.