The promise and peril of chatGPT for our courses

It would be easy to see chatGPT as a major disruption to education, a harbinger of the end of college writing or even higher education. While it does provide tools for students to cheat, any new and interesting technology offers us the opportunity to leverage it for better education. Here are some recommendations and resources for faculty. Most importantly, don't lose heart—we can still assign essays, take-home exams, programming assignments, etc.

Recommendations:

1. **Talk with students about this technology, your expectations, and some of the ways we might use it appropriately** (more on that in #3). Try not to assume students will cheat by using a punitive tone (in your syllabus, for example), and underscore the benefits for students and civilization of learning and practicing writing skills. When you talk about consequences of plagiarism, don't just mention grades—talk about personal growth, integrity, the social good, career skills, etc. Ask them to reflect on the kind of learners they would like to be.
2. **Share ideas with colleagues** (such as in the Facebook group RU Online, with CITL professionals, in the hallways, etc.). Be sure to report successes!
3. **Incorporate chatGPT into your assignments.** Ask students to write a prompt (including references) that they think will produce a high quality essay and ask them to critique, fact check, and check for plagiarism what chatGPT comes up with. They could also use the essay as an outline for a better, more thorough essay (citing chatGPT—one university is suggesting it be cited as "personal correspondence" (irony noted)). Have students use chatGPT to write an essay and then have them use "track changes" to show how they would make it better.
4. **Check the "version history"** in Word or Google docs to see how the student constructed the paper.
5. **Get to know students' writing** (as you are able—we know some classes are big). The usual plagiarism checkers may not work in this case, so one way of watching for plagiarism will be to be familiar with student writing. Give small, low (or no)-stakes assignments and have students do writing in class.
6. **Make writing a habit (and even a pleasure).** Get students in the habit of writing a lot (you don't have to grade all of it). Talk about the benefits and pleasures of writing. Model it.
7. **Refocus assignments on oral presentations, debates, podcasts, videos, etc.** in addition to or instead of essays. Or make a presentation, debate, podcast, or video as the subject of an essay; this makes it more difficult for AI to write something because it relies on text-based sources.
8. **Spend more time doing in-class writing and other work.** Be sure to incorporate this into your syllabus/schedule, as well as extra time working with and discussing the technology (see below for a resource on this). Keep in mind that some students may have accessibility concerns you will need to negotiate if you expect students to finish work in class.
9. **Use an ethics code in your class or department.** Invite students to help create or revise it.
10. **Incorporate a personal reflective element in the writing assignment.** Include a reflection on the process of writing or developing the topic and research—something that might demonstrate that they went through the process of writing. (This is particularly useful in conjunction with #5

so you know students' writing and processes.). Also consider having students use personal examples in their writing.

If you'd like to dig deeper into AI and higher ed:

[Putting Learning at the Center in light of AI](#)

 [Incorporating some of the ideas above into your syllabus](#)

[General ideas for working with/around AI in writing](#)

[Talking with students about AI](#)

[AI and quackery, fact-checking, etc.](#)

[Higher ed futurist Bryan Alexander leads a panel discussion on AI](#)

[NYT on using chatgpt wisely](#)

[Chronicle on the future of undergrad writing and AI](#)