

DCE Bot Club: Building a Community of Practice for GenAI-Enhanced Teaching

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Faculty Panel:

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Presentation Summary:

This session explores how DCE's Bot Club, a faculty-led initiative at Harvard's Division of Continuing Education, is fostering a collaborative community of ~30 faculty members who are passionate about integrating Generative AI tools into their teaching. At our January kickoff, faculty members had shared chatbot project ideas on a variety of use cases and subject domain. Selected examples include:

- A series of guest lecture assistants for a Corporate Responsibility course
- A role play / simulation bot to help students manage challenging conversations
- A critical thinking trainer to help students navigate polarizing views

A total of 10 faculty members from the Bot Club have/will have implemented in Spring/Summer25. Analyzing just four of the Spring2025 courses, we recorded >90 conversations/threads, comprising 14,000+ student-bot messages.

In the faculty-led panel, we discussed topics that are relevant to chatbot integration-including rigorous bot testing and student onboarding strategies, LLM hallucination, content bias and sycophancy, to the nuance of cheating with AI and authentic assessments.

We have also shared additional tools and resources we curated for the community:

Key Takeaways:

1. Faculty-Led Innovation in Generative AI Integration

Harvard Division of Continuing Education's *Bot Club* highlights the power of grassroots faculty innovation in advancing pedagogical change. With a community of ~30 faculty members experimenting across disciplines, the initiative has created space for low-barrier exploration of generative AI, peer knowledge-sharing, and sustained engagement. Instructors emphasized that having a trusted, collaborative space to exchange ideas and prototypes helped them move from curiosity to implementation.

2. Bots Are Enhancing Learning Through Purposeful Pedagogical Design

Implemented AI tools serve clearly defined teaching and learning goals. Faculty shared examples such as:

- A course assistant that supported learning with foundational statistics concepts and R programming
- A turbot for an Evolutionary Psychology course loaded with all lecture material
- A brainstorming buddy for a Creativity and Innovation course on UN's SDG goals
- A capstone assistant guiding students through the project and data selection for the Modern Analytics Course

These chatbots demonstrated a range of learning use cases—from content mastery to project guidance to creativity—showcasing how generative AI can enhance learner agency, scaffold learning, spaced practice, and feedback when tied to pedagogical intent.

3. Designing with Generative AI Requires Iteration, Precision, and Pedagogical Intent

Faculty shared that building and deploying generative AI tools in their courses prompted them to adopt new habits and frameworks in instructional design. We had a great dialogue on some nuanced topics re: the opportunities and challenges of chatbot implementation:

- **Misrepresentation and Hallucination Need Pedagogical Safeguards**
In one course, a chatbot designed to support review of Evolutionary Psychology material inaccurately mis-interpret some core concepts on the nature/nurture discussion—a claim that is in contrary to what is presented in the course material. This prompted broader reflection on the importance of testing chatbot responses carefully, especially when dealing with nuanced or debatable content.
- **Supporting Critical Thinking Requires Intentional Design**
While critical thinking augmentation was inherent in many of these bot design (e.g. in the Creativity and Innovation course the chatbots are build for scaffolding learning on divergent problem solving), faculty also noted that due to effort minimizing psychology, students may tend to accept AI outputs uncritically. Encouraging deeper engagement required prompt strategies that provoked

analysis, invited alternative perspectives, and pushed beyond surface-level responses.

- **Clear Onboarding Builds Better Use**

Student engagement improved when instructors explained the AI's role and limitations from the start. Low-stakes activities, orientation discussions, and scaffolding helped set appropriate expectations and promoted more meaningful interactions.

These insights suggested the need for careful attention to both pedagogical and technical factors

4. Tools and Shared Resources to Accelerate Responsible Adoption

To support faculty experimentation, the Bot Club team curated practical, easy-to-use resources:

- **DCE's Checklist of Considerations:** A [faculty-DCE team co-created resource](#) guiding bot builders through pedagogical, ethical, implementation, platform selection and other considerations
- A **Prompt Library**, built with faculty contributions, that allows instructors to learn from real implementations and adapt proven approaches to their own teaching.

Resources for additional information (websites, articles, training, contacts, etc.):

Presentation [material](#) (DCE and HUIT team contact information is on the final page)