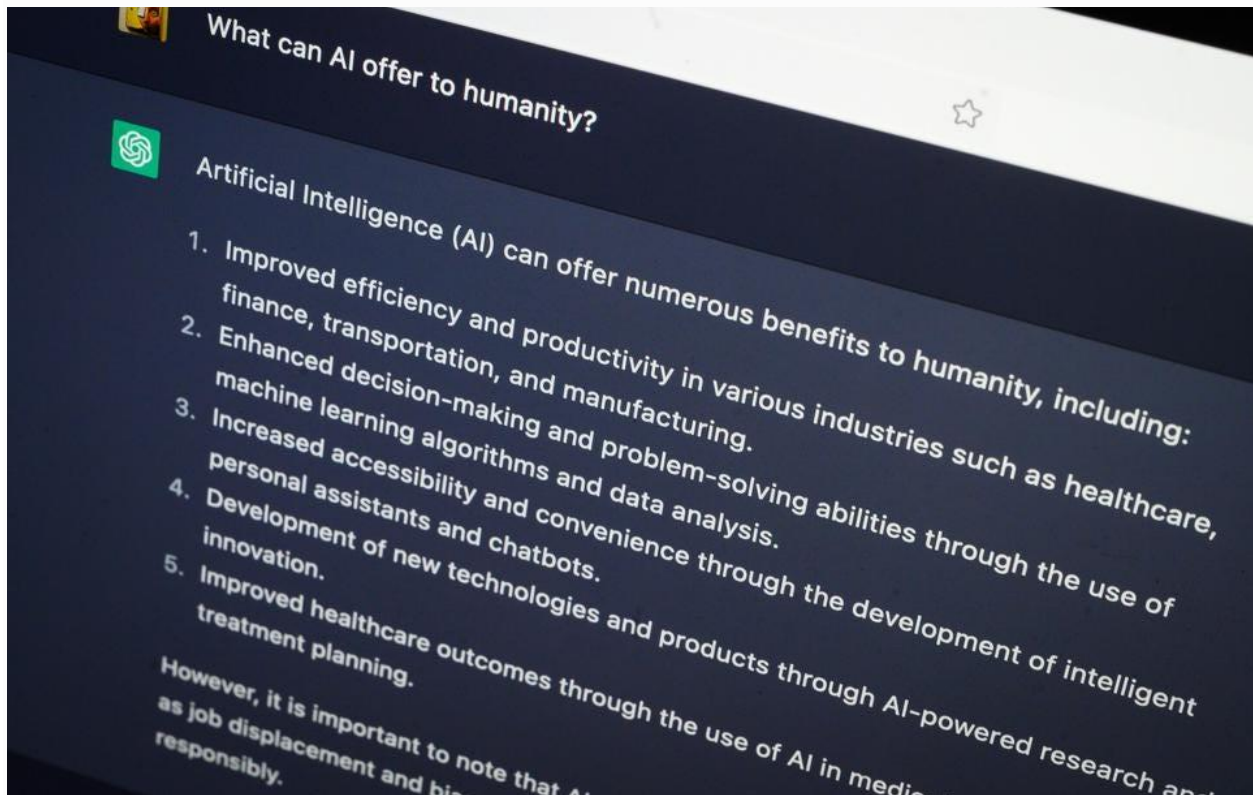# How To Boost Your College Applications Using AI — Without Cheating The Essay

Dr. Aviva Legatt

LONDON, ENGLAND - FEBRUARY 03: In this photo illustration, the OpenAI "ChatGPT" AI-generated answer ... [+]

The use of ChatGPT and other AI tools has added to the noise that surrounds the college application process every year. Analysts question whether the college essay will survive, if students will cheat, and how ChatGPT will impact educational equity. For the first two concerns, solutions discussed in the college admissions world include the use of proctored and handwritten essays, or sending in portfolio materials in lieu of essays. As I covered in a recent

[piece on Forbes,](#) Common App delayed the release of its prompts, possibly due to ChatGPT concerns.

While ChatGPT has many questioning the role and usefulness of the college essay, there are ways to make the college admissions process more efficient and effective in the exploration and application phases.

Prepare For Campus Tours

When students go for campus tours, they are often unsure about [which questions to ask.](#) Before embarking on a long journey for a college visit, use artificial intelligence to help you to generate some questions. Here's an example of how you would ask ChatGPT could help you prepare you for your tour:

Act as a prospective student visiting Vanderbilt University who's interested in engineering, debate team, and Asian-American life on campus. What are some questions to ask on a college tour when interacting with my tour guide?

The"Act as" feature in ChatGPT allows you to get a more personalized answer for your own needs and preferences while inserting personal details about your life and targeted characteristics.

However, ChatGPT did not generate my personal favorite human tour question: *Can you tell me about 1-2 initiatives or academic programs that people on campus are talking a lot about these days?* This question is gold because it helps students to get some clues about aspects of campus life to emphasize in college essays based on current trends.

Create A College Application Timeline

Many students and families struggle with managing all of the college application tasks associated with the college application process. AI can support you to stay organized and create deadlines for yourself. Here's an example query where ChatGPT can help your calendar:

timeline and deadlines. Develop a comprehensive timeline for April 2023-December 2023 that includes essay writing, including my supplement essays, creating my resume and activity list, filling out application forms, filling in the FAFSA. I am applying to early decision and early action colleges that have deadlines in November as well as regular decision colleges which have deadlines in January. Give an answer in tabular format.

Here is ChatGPT's (partial) response:

process, taking into account early decision (ED), early action (EA), and regular decision (RD) deadlines:

Month	Task
April 2023	Begin brainstorming and outlining ideas for your personal statement and supplemental essays
May 2023	Draft your resume and activity list; continue working on your personal statement and essays
June 2023	Seek feedback on your resume, activity list, and essay drafts from teachers, counselors, or peers
July 2023	Revise your personal statement and supplemental essays based on feedback; finalize your resume
August 2023	Begin filling out the Common Application or Coalition Application forms
September 2023	Register for and take any required standardized tests (SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests); request letters of recommendation from teachers and/or counselors
October 2023	Complete the FAFSA; gather required financial documents and fill out the CSS Profile, if applicable; finalize your personal statement and supplemental essays for ED and EA schools

College admissions timeline by ChatGPT

The output of "tabular format" is super helpful for keeping dates and tasks organized and holding yourself accountable to complete application goals.

Research The Most Important Financial Aid Metric: Net Price Of Colleges

Net price is the important figure in evaluating college costs, not tuition and fees. It is equal to out-of-pocket expenses minus, grants, loans and education tax benefits. That is the term to use when you query ChatGPT, you want to ask about the net price for the colleges you're interested in, rather than tuition and fees. You also want to get the links to each college's net price calculator so that you can calculate your expected out-of-pocket expenses:

I am a prospective undergraduate student who's looking to know the net price I can expect to pay at certain institutions. Can you show me the average net price of these 5 institutions along with the weblinks to these institutions' net price calculators? New York University, University of Pennsylvania, Vanderbilt University, Notre Dame, Rice University. Give an answer in tabular format.

Here's ChatGPT's (partial) response:

the 2020-2021 academic year, along with the links to their net price calculators. Please note that net prices may have changed since then, and the actual net price for you will depend on factors like your family's income, the availability of financial aid, and other individual circumstances. Always use the net price calculators provided by the institutions to get the most accurate estimate.

Institution	Average Net Price (2020-2021)	Net Price Calculator Link
New York University	$39,935	https://npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/nyu
University of Pennsylvania	$29,899	https://npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/upenn
Vanderbilt University	$23,962	https://npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/vanderbilt
Notre Dame	$30,536	https://npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/notredame
Rice University	$22,821	https://npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/rice

Net Price List from ChatGPT

NET PRICE LIST FROM CHATGPT

Now that you know about the net price query, you can begin to research the financial aspects of colleges in a more efficient way as well as easily find calculators for each school.

Create Your Personalized College List

As students and parents, you have many criteria for what you're looking for in a college; including location, size, list of interested majors, and net price. Here's what it might look like to query ChatGPT, according to your criteria:

I am seeking a list of colleges, including their websites, within 6-8 hours driving distance from Philadelphia, PA, with an average net price between $10,000-$20,000. These colleges should have an active fraternity scene, engineering programs and a flexible curriculum. Give the answer in tabular format.

While AI is not a substitute for [college fairs](), virtual college information sessions, and campus tours, it is a great tool for putting together an initial college list based upon your criteria and discovering new schools you may not have considered. After getting the initial list from ChatGPT, you can double-check the fit of these colleges by digging into their specific programs, resources and admissions information.

Discover Relevant Scholarships

While there are many websites to find scholarships, AI can create a list of opportunities for you based on your academic performance, identity groups, affiliations, and any other personal qualities. Note that the data on ChatGPT is only included until 2021, so you must include this year in your query to generate the most up-to-date response:

I am a prospective undergraduate student who's looking for scholarships. Some details about me are that I'm a neurodivergent woman with 1550 on my SAT and a 4.0 GPA. I am excellent at Lacrosse and debate and have received awards for both pursuits. Show me a list of available scholarships that I can apply for from 2021 including the award amounts and websites where I can learn more. Give an answer in tabular format.

Once you have the list of scholarships, you can then revert back to the timeline query I shared above and start organizing your scholarship deadlines.

One final point: If you like what you see on your ChatGPT lists, you can always follow up your query with another: "Can you add more to this list?" While using one AI tool alone cannot substitute in-depth research and human-to-human connection in your college search and discovery process, it gives you a way to kickstart and supercharge your college application process in a way that's never before been possible.