AI Faculty Burnout: **Fostering** Wellbeing through Social Learning

Stacy Ybarra Evans Jessica Hajek Valerie Martinez Laura Petersen

Our Lady of the Lake University

Context

To foster well-being among AI faculty and mitigate burnout, it is essential to explore the potential of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education (Ybarra, 2024). Generative AI has the potential to empower faculty members, enhance pedagogical practices, and mitigate the alarming prevalence of burnout (Ybarra, 2024). Additionally, instructional development programs for college faculty related to generative AI should focus on enhancing fundamental teaching skills, making AI more familiar to educators, and preventing burnout (Hill, 2023). Furthermore, the use of AI technology in monitoring students' health significantly raises students' awareness to conduct timely self-examination and enables sustainable healthy lifestyle behavior change, which can indirectly impact faculty well-being (Pratama, 2024). Fostering well-being among AI faculty through social learning involves leveraging generative AI, promoting inclusive teaching practices, and considering the long-term impact of well-being initiatives on both faculty and students. As Our Lady of the Lake University upgraded to Blackboard Learn Ultra, our Blackboard Community of Practice of OLLU faculty was instrumental in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. By sharing resources, knowledge, and best practices, we collectively addressed burnout and promoted well-being among faculty and students during this transition to create a supportive and inclusive environment within higher education institutions to mitigate burnout and promote overall well-being.

The Challenge

To address the urgency of faculty burnout in the context of rapidly evolving fields like AI, innovative strategies leveraging AI itself to enhance course development, lesson planning, and assignment management are essential. These strategies can alleviate the administrative burden on faculty, allowing them to focus on core teaching and research activities. The use of AI in education presents various challenges, including the need to identify and introduce ethical challenges to teachers and students (Akgün & Greenhow, 2021). Additionally, educators face the challenge of incorporating smart devices in in-class education and education research (Okagbue et al., 2022). Furthermore, the development of AI technology has led to an urgent demand for intelligent, compound, and applied talents, necessitating the construction of special programs in universities (Wang, 2021). The ubiquity of AI in society also calls for consideration of what educated 21st-century digital citizens should know about this subject (Touretzky et al., 2019).

In the context of medical education, the system for educating medical students is approaching a crisis due to the growing externalization of available medical knowledge outside the minds of physicians and stress-induced mental illness among learners (Wartman & Combs, 2019). This highlights the need for innovative approaches to address these challenges, such as leveraging AI to enhance medical education. Moreover, the use of AI techniques in psychology and social work requires preparing professionals for the daily use of AI, emphasizing the strengths and challenges of contemporary AI techniques regarding prediction, adaptivity, and decision systems (Åhs et al., 2022).

Incorporating AI into education also requires evaluating the impact of AI education interventions, as evidenced by the evaluation of a UK postgraduate educational intervention using participatory action research for radiographers (Venter et al., 2023). This evaluation highlighted the frequent challenge experienced by program directors and emphasized the importance of foregrounding these challenges during the planning phases of similar modules or courses.

Leveraging AI to enhance education presents various challenges, including ethical considerations, the need for specialized programs, and the evaluation of AI education interventions. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the effective integration of AI into education, ultimately alleviating the administrative burden on faculty and allowing them to focus on core teaching and research activities.

The Case Clinic Process

To explore solutions, Dr. Ybarra convened a Case Clinic comprising of three faculty members experienced in AI education. Following a structured approach outlined by Wenger-Trayner et al. (2023), the Clinic embarked on a collaborative journey to explore solutions to faculty burnout. This structured approach involved a series of facilitated discussions, fostering open communication and shared problem-solving.

Vision Setting: Dr. Ybarra initiated the clinic by sharing her vision: "I'm working toward a world where AI faculty feel valued, empowered, and supported to excel in their work with AI." This vision set the tone for the clinic, emphasizing a faculty-centered approach.

Seeking Solutions: During our faculty OLLU Blackboard Ultra Community of Practice, we discussed existing resources in Blackboard Ultra and the overall culture of AI usage in the program. During our transition to Blackboard Learn Ultra, several faculty members discovered innovative ways to integrate AI tools, streamlining their workflow and enhancing the learning experience. Dr. Ybarra then posed the central question: "Could you help me develop strategies to address faculty burnout and promote well-being while integrating AI into course development?" This prompted clinic members to brainstorm solutions that addressed both faculty well-being and practical challenges in utilizing AI for teaching in Blackboard Ultra's upgrade.

- **Rubric Generation:** "The AI Design Assistant has been a game-changer for me! With just a few clicks, I can generate a comprehensive rubric aligned with my learning objectives. It saves me so much time and ensures consistent grading."

- **Question Banks:** "I was thrilled to find that Blackboard Ultra's AI can create entire question banks from my existing course materials. This has not only saved me valuable preparation time but also allowed me to quickly assess student comprehension and adapt my instruction accordingly."
- **Module Structure and Content:** "I was initially hesitant to use AI for course design, but the AI Design Assistant exceeded my expectations. It helped me generate a clear module structure and even suggested relevant content to include. It's like having a co-pilot for course development!"
- **Accessibility:** "As an instructor committed to inclusive learning, I was impressed by Blackboard Ultra's AI-powered accessibility features. It automatically checks my content for accessibility issues and offers suggestions for improvement, ensuring all students can fully participate in my course."

Understanding the Landscape: Clinic members delved into the specific challenges faced by faculty at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU), located in San Antonio, Texas. The institution is a private Catholic university founded in 1895 by the Congregation of Divine Providence. The institution emphasizes values such as community, integrity, and service, fostering an environment where students can grow both academically and personally. OLLU offers a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, with a strong focus on liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies. The university is known for its diverse student body and commitment to social justice, providing a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. OLLU has several campus resources, including the Center for Mexican American Studies and Research, which reflects its dedication to cultural understanding and academic excellence. Faculty at OLLU are encouraged to engage in continuous professional development and research, often supported by various grants and institutional resources.

Moving Forward: Dr. Ybarra expressed interest in exploring the creation of a faculty mentorship program and a workload management committee ("You have me thinking..."). She acknowledged the value of collaborative problem-solving in addressing faculty burnout when using Blackboard Ultra.

Subsequent Actions: Following the Case Clinic, Dr. Ybarra plans to implement the recommendations. This includes establishing both the faculty mentorship program and the workload management committee. These initiatives will create a structured system for supporting new faculty and for addressing workload concerns. Additionally, Dr. Ybarra plans to organize social events to foster a sense of community among faculty and provide space for open discussions about workload and well-being.

Discussion

The Case Clinic underscores the significance of leveraging AI in social learning to address faculty burnout. Through collaborative problem-solving and shared experiences, faculty members developed strategies that promote wellbeing and cultivate a supportive work environment. The Case Clinic process exemplifies a collaborative approach to improving faculty working conditions in AI programs. By harnessing the power of social learning, institutions can mitigate the impacts of burnout and foster a culture of wellbeing within academic communities.

References

Åhs, F., Mozelius, P., & Espvall, M. (2022). Preparing psychologists and social workers for the daily use of ai. European Conference on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, 4(1), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.34190/eciair.4.1.771

Akgün, S. and Greenhow, C. (2021). Artificial intelligence in education: addressing ethical challenges in k-12 settings. Ai and Ethics, 2(3), 431-440. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-021-00096-7

Hill, R. (2023). Ai as fad or ai as lasting? priorities for college faculty instructional development for generative artificial intelligence. Irish Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning, 7(2), 136-145. https://doi.org/10.22554/ijtel.v7i2.154

Lindsay, B., Bernier, E., Boman, J., & Boyce, M. (2022). Understanding the connection between student wellbeing and teaching and learning at a canadian research university: a qualitative student perspective. Pedagogy in Health Promotion, 9(1), 5-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/23733799221089578

Okagbue, E., Ezeachikulo, U., Nwigwe, E., & Juma, A. (2022). Machine learning and artificial intelligence in education research: a comprehensive overview of 22 years of research indexed in the scopus database.. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1845778/v1

Pratama, R. (2024). Application of artificial intelligence technology in monitoring students' health: preliminary results of syiah kuala integrated medical monitoring (skimm). Narra J, 4(2), e644. https://doi.org/10.52225/narra.v4i2.644

Touretzky, D., Gardner-McCune, C., Martin, F., & Seehorn, D. (2019). Envisioning ai for k-12: what should every child know about ai?. Proceedings of the Aaai Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 33(01), 9795-9799. https://doi.org/10.1609/aaai.v33i01.33019795

Venter, R., Skelton, E., Matthew, J., Woznitza, N., Tarroni, G., Hirani, S., … & Malamateniou, C. (2023). Artificial intelligence education for radiographers, an evaluation of a uk

postgraduate educational intervention using participatory action research: a pilot study. Insights Into Imaging, 14(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13244-023-01372-2

Wang, L. (2021). Construction of special program of artificial intelligence in applied universities of finance and economics. Converter, 708-712. https://doi.org/10.17762/converter.336

Wartman, S. and Combs, C. (2019). Reimagining medical education in the age of ai. The Ama Journal of Ethic, 21(2), E146-152. https://doi.org/10.1001/amajethics.2019.146

Ybarra, S. (2024). Empowering faculty vitality and mitigating burnout through generative ai in higher education., 281-308. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1351-0.ch014