

Ask Thunder uses artificial intelligence to provide quick access to information

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Many experts predict (<https://www.financedigest.com/ai-will-power-95-of-customer-interactions-by-2025.html>) artificial intelligence (AI) will power 95 percent of all customer interactions by 2025. We see AI used in our homes with Amazon Echo products or targeted ads on websites based on our browsing history.

Georgia College strives to stay at the forefront of technology advances, while providing the best service possible to our students and public. The newest development—the chatbot Ask Thunder, which launched in early December 2018 with AI capabilities for round-the-clock service.

Got a question about dining hours? Want to find out when the next basketball game takes place? Just Ask Thunder. It's designed to point you directly to the information without having to search the entire website.

Developed by the Department of Information Technology, this tool allows 24/7 access to connect to information and an easy format to ask questions about Georgia College.

“We have been working on this for a while developing the technology behind the tool and gathering the content for it,” said Cindy Bowen, director of operations for information technology. “Information Technology has worked closely with campus departments and the Student Government Association to gather content and provide the answers to the most pressing questions about our university.”

From Dec. 21- Jan. 2, it provided a valuable resource for many seeking information about Georgia College.

“While campus was closed, 66 valid questions were submitted to Ask Thunder, 40 were answered correctly, 11 identified gaps, and 15 were answered incorrectly,” said Bowen. “We will continually refine our database to improve response accuracy and address identified gaps.”

More and more people indicate they want to receive information when it's convenient for them and without having to necessarily deal with people. Gartner research (<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2018-09-12-gartner-survey-finds-consumers-would-use-ai-to-save-time-and-money>) shows 58 percent of people surveyed said they would use AI if it helps them save time by taking over some tasks.

“With the ever changing student body, the need to bring more adaptive and self-service orientated technologies to campus is growing at a faster and faster pace. Utilizing resources like EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education through the use of information technology, we identified an opportunity to bring a new service technology to Georgia College,” said Jamie DeFoor, director of system administration in IT.

“We dubbed this service Ask Thunder. Technically, it's a frequently asked questions (FAQ) database with a cognitive learning engine. This type of service is a foundational element of the technology trend called artificial intelligence (AI).”

The tool is similar to those seen on other websites. You type your question into a textbox, and information is provided to best answer your request day or night. It can be accessed from the top of any Georgia College webpage. It's labeled “Chat-FAQ.”

“Chancellor Wrigley recently shared in a report to the Board of Regents that artificial intelligence offered promise to assist in meeting two University System of Georgia goals— student success and efficiencies,” said Bob Orr, former chief information officer. “Ask Thunder is our grass roots effort using affordable technology innovatively to create a virtual assistant to answer



IT and University Communications team members collaborated on creating and implementing Ask Thunder.

common questions immediately. Our collective goal is to save a phone call, email or in person contact by providing just-in-time information for a user in need.”

If you have a question you'd like to submit, you can request to add that here. (https://docusign.gcsu.edu/feed_thunder)

More information on Ask Thunder is available here. (<http://www.gcsu.edu/technology/ask-thunder>)



From left to right: Maria Gordon, administrative assistant, Jamie DeFoor, director of system administration, Cindy Bowen, director of operations, and Keely Hopkins, director of web communications.



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