

Alethea at Florida Gulf Coast University

AI-powered academic coach guides students to success



Blending proven learning principles and generative AI to foster critical thinking



Nurturing learning skills that serve students throughout their academic journey



Infusing confidence, turning struggling students into high academic achievers

“Alethea gives us that extra tool to help students be independent learners. They’re much more purposeful. The fact is, anyone can learn from reading, they just need to learn how to do it — and that’s what Alethea has shown us.”

Dr. Tracy Elliott, Dean, University Library & Professor at the College of Education



Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), located in Fort Myers, serves more than 15,000 students who appreciate higher education and come to the school with a dream and a willingness to work towards it. The library takes an entrepreneurial view and is always on the lookout for innovations that can improve learning and student success.

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Turning reading-averse students into critical thinkers

Today’s students often struggle with reading. Many doubt their own ability to understand, are intimidated by certain types of text, and give up on themselves. That’s according to library Dean Dr. Tracy Elliott, who explains the resulting impact on learning:

“For students, that has been such a hurdle being able to read a research paper and then summarize it in their own words and really understand what they were reading, too. Faculty are giving them alternatives, mostly videos. They’ll have students watch a video and have them answer questions. But that’s not the formal deep reading that you would expect to happen in a college course. Learning is richer and more likely when there’s a reading component.”

These challenges triggered the university’s interest in Alethea, which interacts with students as they do their reading assignments. Elliott describes how it helps students be better learners: “They need some sort of conversation to walk them through the logic of what they’re reading. The Alethea Academic Coach encourages students to think about the text and think much more deeply than they ever allowed themselves to think on their own.”

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From restating information to summarizing and synthesizing

Elliott is also an instructor, and she relates the profound improvement Alethea has nurtured in her students: “Alethea gave me that extra tool to help students be independent learners. By the middle of the term, they were so much purposeful, I went from very few students to every single student understanding what they are reading. I saw one student who, in my summer course, would almost rewrite an entire study in her paper. Just two pages of exactly what they did and what they found. She went from that to the fall course to succinctly describing a whole study and synthesize it with the other studies that she used. She made the leap from being able to find one piece of evidence to support her assumption to multiple pieces of evidence. No direct quoting. No paraphrasing. Simply her own language creating new knowledge, and the writing was just incredible.”

Academic success for an entire classroom

As Elliott reports: "In one of my courses in the fall, the difference before and after using Alethea was night and day. In a previous course, this group of students submitted a standard essay, and their grades were really horrific, the large majority of them were D's and F's. By the middle of the fall course, they were much more independent learners. The writing improved tremendously, even though it was much more difficult information — highly technical, research-focused and statistics-focused. These were students that had been struggling and with the help of Alethea in my fall course, everybody got an A because they all earned it. It was phenomenal."

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A 24/7 teaching assistant at scale

Alethea has been eye-opening for faculty. Elliott says "for the first time, faculty learned where students were confused, which concepts they weren't getting, and what they weren't able to apply. The students see the difference in the learning, too, and want to use Alethea for all their courses. The academic coach allows the student to get help 24/7. If they're reading at 2:00 a.m., they can get online and have a conversation about economics or finance or statistics or sociology. We can't have a human that's going to be an expert in those fields and be able to have this conversation. It's about how students learn and how can they learn from reading. It's teaching the student how to think, and for me that's the key."

Working with faculty to enhance the library collection

Elliott notes that when the faculty build their own materials, the students are more successful. They work with the library to find the right materials for their course. Equally, the library plays a role in teaching students how to find, evaluate, summarize, synthesize, and use information to create new knowledge. According to Elliott, "we've always been the managers of content but then we learned over time in academic libraries that we also need to help students use and understand that content and not just find it. And so, the information literacy framework that was published by the ACRL back in 2015 is alive and well in Alethea."

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