

How AI Is Transforming Scholarship Application Review Processes



AI & Scholarships

Objectives:

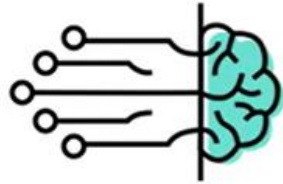
- High-level understanding of how AI functions
- Learn innovative ways organizations are using AI applications to streamline and enhance the review process
- See a workflow example of how AI can be used for scholarship review
- Demonstration of AI scholarship application scoring and recommendation
- Takeaway: Presentation PDF, Links & Resource list

The Turning Test:

Originally titled 'The Imitation Game' in 1950

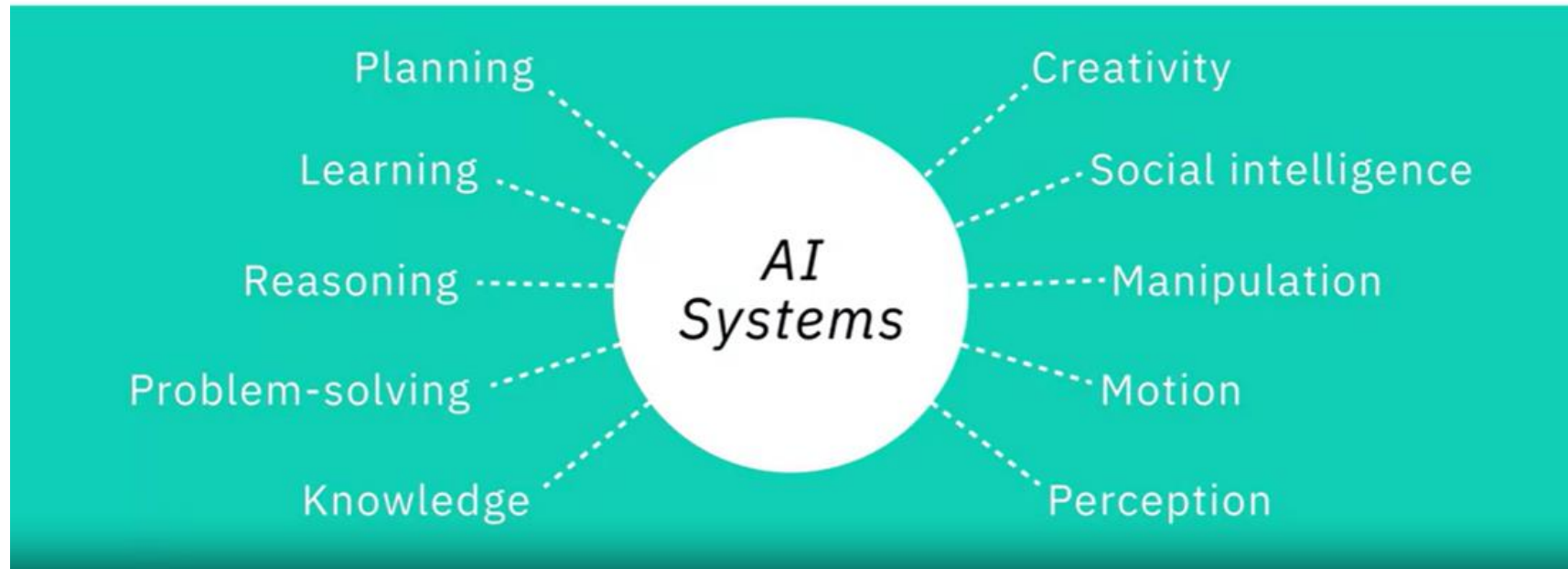
“A computer would deserve to be called intelligent if it could deceive a human into believing that it was human.”





Artificial Intelligence

A branch of computer science dealing with the simulation of intelligent behavior



Classification of AI



Narrow AI
(weak AI)

Performs specific
tasks



General AI
(strong AI)

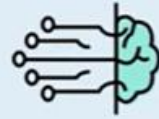
Possesses human-like
cognitive skills



Super AI
(conscious AI)

Aims to surpass
human intelligence

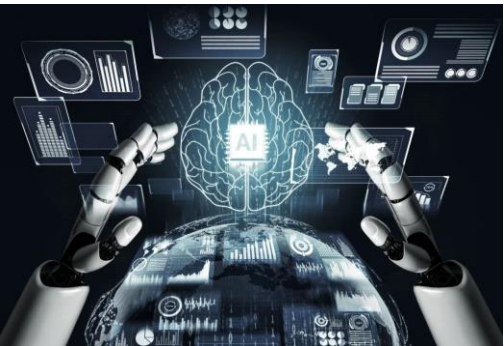




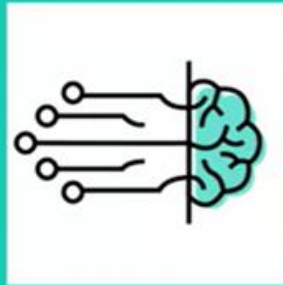
Artificial Intelligence



Machine Learning
(a subset of AI)



Understanding the differences in key AI concepts



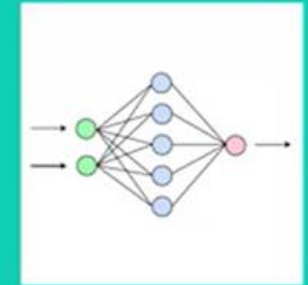
**Artificial
Intelligence**



**Machine
Learning**



**Deep
Learning**



**Neural
Networks**





Supervised Learning

An algorithm is trained on human-labeled data. The more samples you provide a supervised learning algorithm, the more precise it becomes in classifying new data.

Unsupervised Learning

Relies on giving the algorithm unlabeled data and letting it find patterns by itself. You provide the input, but not labels, and let the machine infer qualities.

Reinforcement Learning

Relies on providing a machine learning algorithm with a set of rules and constraints and letting it learn how to achieve its goals. You define the state, the desired goal, allowed actions, and constraints.



Scholarship Use Cases & Considerations

Automated Screening and Matching

- Match candidates with appropriate scholarships based on eligibility criteria
- Reduces the workload on scholarship committees by quickly filtering ineligible applications and highlighting high-potential matches

Natural Language Processing

- Analyze scholarship essays for grammar, coherence, and alignment with the scholarship's goals and values
- Ensures consistency in essay evaluation and reduces bias while saving time for human reviewers



Scholarship Use Cases & Considerations

Bias Detection and Reduction

- Algorithms are programmed to identify and flag potential biases in the scholarship review process, ensuring decisions are equitable across demographic groups
- Promotes equity and ensures that underrepresented groups have an equal chance at scholarship awards

Predictive Analytics and Award Decisions

- Analyzed past application data (outcomes) to predict the likelihood of success for current applicants, and align long-term program goals (can make data-informed adjustments to achieve outcomes)
- Ensures alignment with organizational goals and maximizes the impact of scholarship funds



Scholarship Use Cases & Considerations

Application Status Tracking and Feedback

- Chatbots provide real-time updates to applicants about their application status, deadlines, and required documents
- Improves communication with applicants, reducing administrative delays and increasing completion rates

Fraud Detection

- Identify fraudulent applications by cross-referencing submitted data with external databases (e.g., academic records, identity verification systems) Need to have the correct data security measures in place
- Protects the integrity of the scholarship process and ensures funds reach deserving candidates



Scholarship Use Cases & Considerations

Personalized Applicant Feedback

- Generates personalized feedback for applicants, helping them improve future applications
- Encourages more applications from adult learners and underrepresented groups by providing actionable advice

Enhanced Accessibility for Non-Traditional Applicants

- Simplify applications for adult learners, especially those balancing work or family commitments, by providing voice-to-text features, auto-filling capabilities, and simplified forms
- Makes the process more inclusive for adult learners and reduces the technological or literacy barriers that may deter applicants



Scholarship Use Cases & Considerations

For Funders – Data-Driven Program Design

- Analyzes application trends and outcomes to help scholarship providers optimize eligibility criteria and fund allocation (equity, inclusion, outcomes)
- Improves the relevance and efficiency of scholarship programs over time

Considerations

- Data security, AI tools must be trained, evaluated, and monitored to avoid perpetuating systemic inequities
- Must be clear about how AI is used in decision-making to foster trust among applicants and funder staff
- AI tools should augment/assist, not replace, human judgement (especially essay/personal statement evaluations)



Workflow Example for Scholarship Review

- 1. Application Submission:**
 - Use platforms like SmarterSelect or ScholarshipUniverse for application collection
 - Integrate identity verification (e.g., ID.me)
- 2. Automated Screening:**
 - Filter applications using AI tools to ensure eligibility criteria are met (e.g., GPA thresholds, residency)
- 3. Essay and Content Review:**
 - Use NLP tools like OpenAI or Grammarly to evaluate essays for grammar and alignment with scholarship goals
- 4. Reviewer Assignment:**
 - Assign applications to reviewers based on expertise or program focus using workflow automation tools (e.g., Zapier)
- 5. Bias Detection and Fairness Checks:**
 - Use AI platforms to analyze reviewer scores for patterns of bias
- 6. Final Decision and Communication:**
 - Automate notifications to successful applicants and feedback to those not selected



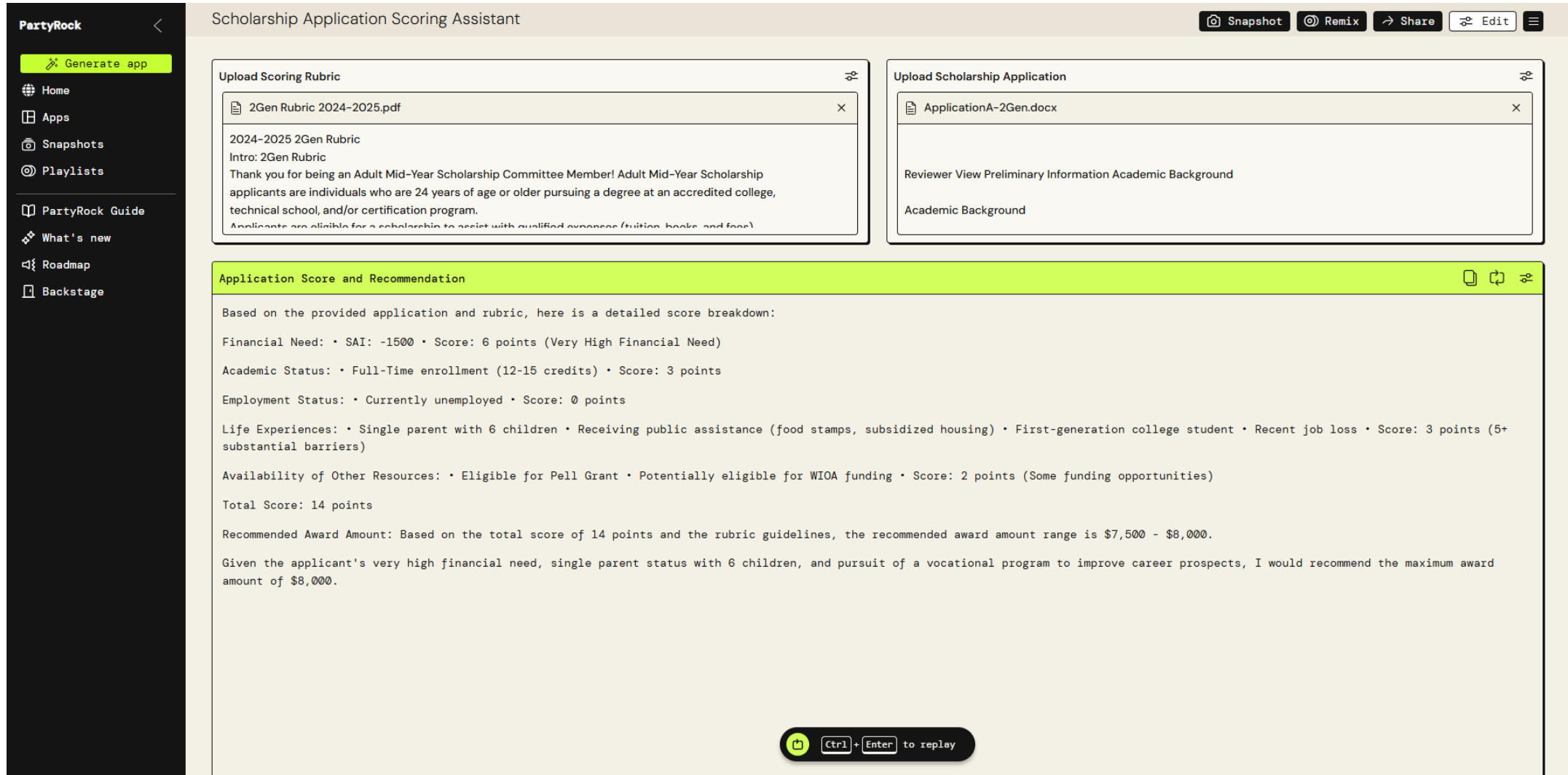
Demonstration

Simple Scoring Recommendation App Using AWS PartyRock

Tools:

- Natural language coding: using the rubric, review the application providing the application score and recommendation.
- Scholarship scoring rubric
- Scholarship application

Example – Simple Scoring Recommendation App Using AWS PartyRock



The screenshot displays the PartyRock Scholarship Application Scoring Assistant interface. The interface is divided into several sections:

- PartyRock Sidebar:** A dark sidebar on the left contains navigation options: Home, Apps, Snapshots, Playlists, PartyRock Guide, What's new, Roadmap, and Backstage. A "Generate app" button is highlighted at the top.
- Header:** The main header is titled "Scholarship Application Scoring Assistant" and includes utility buttons for Snapshot, Remix, Share, Edit, and a menu icon.
- Upload Scoring Rubric:** A panel on the left shows an uploaded file "2Gen Rubric 2024-2025.pdf". The content of the rubric is displayed below, including an introduction and eligibility criteria for the Adult Mid-Year Scholarship.
- Upload Scholarship Application:** A panel on the right shows an uploaded file "ApplicationA-2Gen.docx". The content of the application is displayed below, including reviewer view preliminary information and academic background.
- Application Score and Recommendation:** A central panel with a green header displays the results of the scoring process. It provides a detailed score breakdown based on the provided application and rubric, including financial need, academic status, employment status, life experiences, and availability of other resources. The total score is 14 points, and the recommended award amount is \$7,500 - \$8,000. A final recommendation is provided based on the applicant's circumstances.
- Footer:** A small button at the bottom center indicates "Ctrl + Enter to replay".

AI & Scholarships Resources

Essay Review and Scoring

Grammarly (Free Tier)

- Helps improve grammar, tone, and style in essays.
- Offers feedback on clarity and engagement, which is useful for evaluating applicant essays.

Website: <https://www.grammarly.com>

Hemingway Editor

- Analyzes essays for readability and clarity.
- Highlights complex sentences, passive voice, and unnecessary words.

Website: <https://hemingwayapp.com>

ChatGPT (OpenAI Free Tier)

- Can provide high-level feedback on essays or generate example responses for comparison.
- Offers suggestions for improving content and structure.

Website: <https://chat.openai.com>

Scholarship Review and Application Screening

Google Sheets with AI Add-Ons (e.g., GPT for Sheets)

- Combine Google Sheets with AI tools like "GPT for Sheets" to automate scoring and flagging of applications.
- Free tier with limits; great for handling structured data.

Add-on: Available via Google Workspace Marketplace.

Zapier (Free Tier for Basic Automation)

- Can automate workflows, such as pulling applicant data from forms and sorting it into categories.
- Helps streamline repetitive tasks like initial data screening.

Website: <https://zapier.com>

AI & Scholarships Resources

Student-Scholarship Matching

ScholarshipOwl (Free for Basic Use)

- Uses algorithms to match students with relevant scholarships.
- Can provide insights for organizations seeking to design better matching systems.

Website: <https://www.scholarshipowl.com>

OpenRefine

- A free tool to clean and organize data for student-scholarship matching.
- Useful for ensuring data integrity before applying AI models.

Website: <https://openrefine.org>

Customizable AI Tools

Microsoft Power Automate (Free Plan)

- Create workflows to automate student data matching and document analysis.
- Integrates with Microsoft products for managing scholarship data.

Website: <https://powerautomate.microsoft.com>

AI-based Google Forms Add-ons (e.g., FormLimiter)

- Automate limits and conditions for scholarship applications.
 - Simplifies sorting and prioritization of responses.
- Available in Google Workspace Marketplace.

AWS PartyRock App Builder

- An Amazon Bedrock 'playground' that is an intuitive, plan language, generative AI application-building site.
- In just a few steps users can create apps and experiment with generative AI.
- You can keep your app private or share it on the platform.
- No programming, storage or other tools needed.

Website: <https://partyrock.aws/>

AI & Scholarships Resources

Ted Talks:

[Mustafa Suleyman: What is an AI anyway? | TED Talk](#)

[Alona Fyshe: Does AI actually understand us? | TED Talk](#)

[Kriti Sharma: How to keep human bias out of AI | TED Talk](#)

Questions & Discussion

Shared experiences?

Use cases?

Concerns?

Do you think parents/youth will accept AI integration?

Expect it?

Hope we are using it?

How to get started using AI in your organization?
(policies)

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Community Foundation of Sarasota County
(serving Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee & Sarasota counties)

<https://www.cfsarasota.org/>

Community Indicators Dashboard

<https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/cfsc-indicators>

The Giving Partner

<https://www.thegivingpartner.org/>