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Your team is developing an AI-powered tutoring chatbot for a university. To make it more “effective,” a manager suggests programming the chatbot to detect when a student is writing an essay and proactively offer to write “a few paragraphs” for them to “help them get started.” The manager argues this maximizes student happiness and engagement, which are the project’s key metrics.

Questions:

1. Analyze the manager’s suggestion using two ethical theories: **Hedonism** and the **Human Nature** theory. How would each theory evaluate this feature?
 2. This feature could be seen as promoting academic dishonesty. Which principles of the **ACM Code** (“Contribute to Society”, “Avoid Harm”) and the **IEEE Code** (“Public”) apply here?
 3. As a group, propose an **alternative feature** (Step 2 of decision-making) that still helps students but is ethically defensible and “develops human capabilities”.
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Answers

1. Hedonism vs Human Nature

- **Hedonism:** Likely approves — the feature increases immediate student happiness and engagement by making tasks easier, so it’s morally acceptable under a pleasure-maximizing view. (*Reasoning: hedonic ethics values outcomes that increase pleasure/comfort.*)
- **Human Nature theory:** Likely disapproves — it undermines essential human capacities (learning, critical thinking, intellectual growth) and so fails to promote human flourishing.

(Reasoning: theories focused on human nature/virtue emphasize development of capacities, not short-term comfort.)

2. Relevant ACM / IEEE principles

- **ACM — “Contribute to Society”:** The feature conflicts with contributing to genuine education because it may enable cheating rather than learning.
- **ACM — “Avoid Harm”:** It risks harming students’ long-term competence, institutional integrity, and fairness.
- **IEEE — “Public”:** Demands transparency and consideration of public trust; silently generating student essays would violate expectations of honesty and public accountability.

3. Ethically defensible alternative (Step 2)

Propose a *scaffolding assistant* that detects essay writing and offers: (a) an outline template, (b) targeted brainstorming prompts and example topic sentences, (c) step-by-step writing tips, and (d) quick checks for structure and citation suggestions — plus an explicit notice that it will not write submissions for the student.

(Reasoning: this supports learning, preserves student agency, develops writing skills, and aligns with ACM/IEEE duties of contributing to society, avoiding harm, and being transparent to the public.)