

The Impact of AI-Integrated Pre-College Bridge Program on First-Year Student Success

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Abstract

The transition from high school to college can be challenging for students. College classes are more demanding, schedules are less structured, and students must learn to manage their time independently. Many students also feel nervous about meeting new people and adjusting to a new academic environment. To support this transition, many colleges offer pre-college bridge programs that prepare incoming students before their first semester begins. Bridge programs focus on building important skills such as time management, study habits, and critical thinking. In pre-college bridge experiences, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools should also be introduced as part of academic preparation.

We explored how to use AI responsibly to assist with studying, brainstorming ideas, understanding assignments, and practicing problem-solving. Learning how to use AI as a support tool could help freshmen feel more prepared for college-level coursework and more confident in completing assignments. The bridge program provided opportunities to connect with other incoming freshmen and mentors, which could reduce anxiety and help build early friendships. In this study, we reflect on how the bridge program—along with guided AI use can improve academic readiness, confidence, and sense of belonging during our first year. Overall, this experience shows that combining traditional bridge support with responsible AI integration can strengthen both academic success and student confidence during the transition to college.