

Beyond the Bot

Building AI Literacy in Student Services at the University of Toronto

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What we will do together

1



See the evidence

What student surveys tell us about AI use, trust, and readiness.

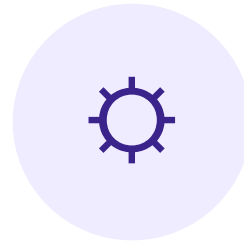
2



Hear what students want

Training, clearer guidance, and a real voice in institutional decisions.

3



Rethink AI literacy

Move from fear and policing toward learning, judgment, and responsible support.

4



Leave with a plan

A simpler implementation checklist and a pilot activity you can use right away.

Quick pulse: Where is AI already showing up?



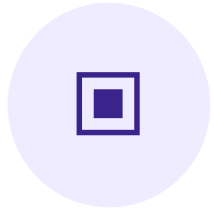
**Writing
support**



**Information
finding**



**Study
support**



**Career
prep**



**Student
communications**



**Accessibility &
accommodations**



1 minute: In pairs, name one place AI is already shaping your work or your students' experience.

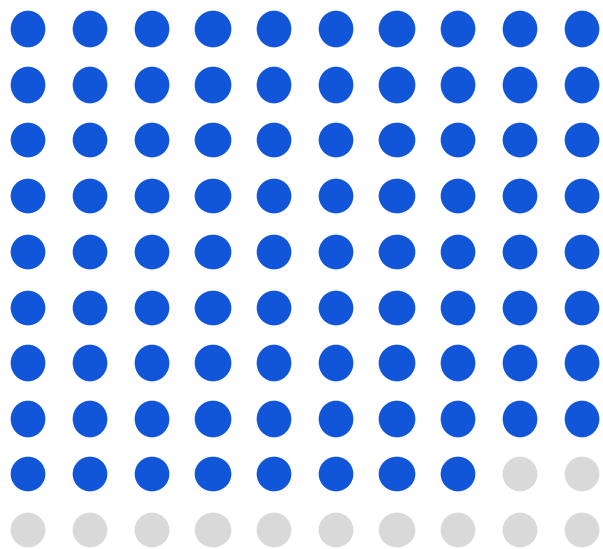
Students are already using AI...

Percentage of students using AI in their learning

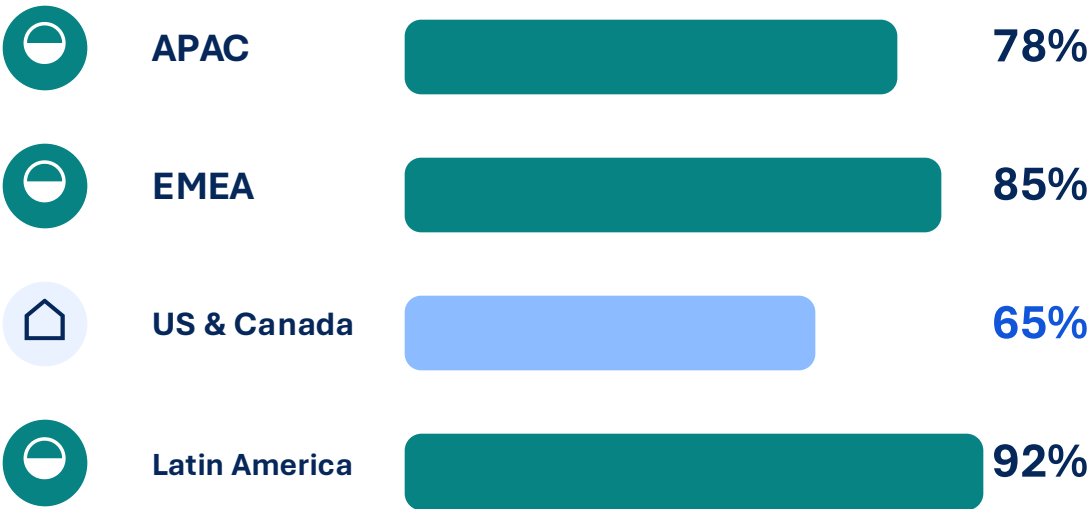
Question: Have you used / are you using AI in your learning?

88%

of students globally say they use AI in their learning



Regional differences matter



AI use is mainstream globally, but adoption is lower in US & Canada.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI can elevate learning — and erode independent thinking



Learning elevation

DEC 2026 reports students see real learning benefits when AI supports thinking, practice, and challenge.

61%

focus more on thinking through ideas

31%

attempt more challenging work than before



Early signs of dependence

The design question is how to preserve independent thinking while reducing unnecessary friction.

21%

find it harder to work through problems without AI

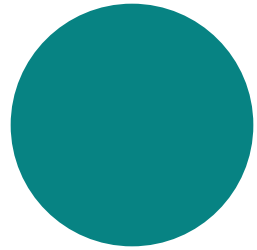
19%

notice they retain less because they rely on AI

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Design tension: reduce bad friction while preserving learning, agency, and human judgment.

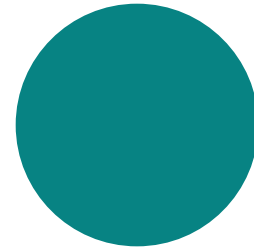
...but confidence, trust, and readiness lag



29%

say instructors are
well equipped to guide
AI use

DEC 2026

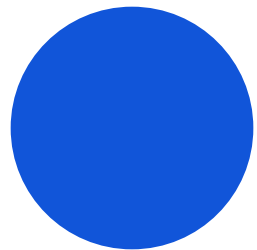


17%

of students in US & Canada
say instructors are
well equipped

DEC 2026

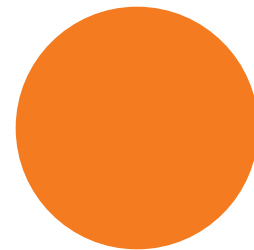
High use, uneven guidance, rising concern



60%

worry classmates may
use AI for unfair
advantage

DEC 2026



41%

worry AI could reduce
job opportunities in their
field by graduation

DEC 2026

Where AI is most promising for student life and student services

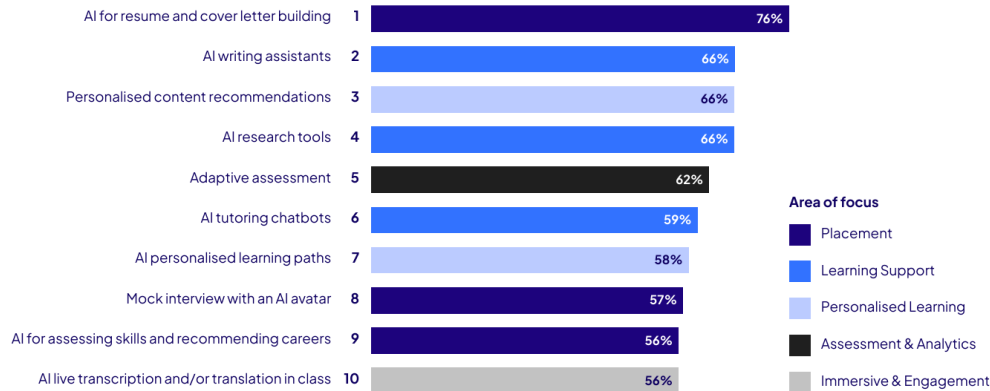
Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024 | Section 3. Perception and Attributes

Resume writing is most positively perceived across AI use cases



Top 10 AI use cases in higher education most positively perceived by students

Question: To what extent do you agree the following AI use case is useful/ will improve your learning journey/outcome



Note: rankings are based on unrounded percentages
Source: Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey, 2024

18

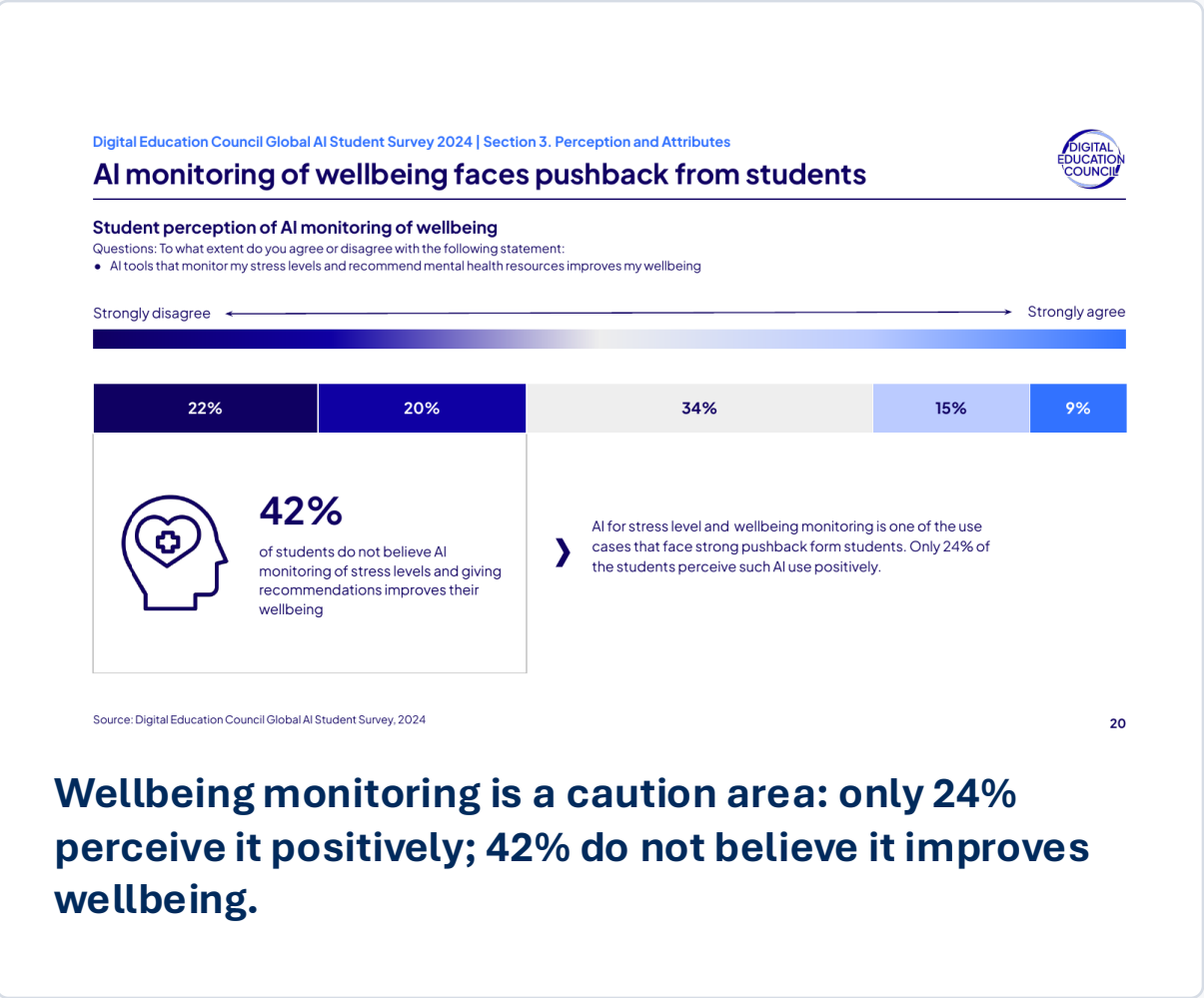
Students respond most positively to career, learning-support, and personalized-use cases.

For student life leaders, the near-term sweet spots are:

- 24/7 resource finding and tri-campus wayfinding
- Tailored event, club, and opportunity recommendations
- Resume, cover letter, interview, and career reflection support
- Accessibility support: captioning, transcription, translation, alt text
- Study-support tools that scaffold rather than replace learning
- Administrative simplification that gives staff more time for people

Design point: the strongest use cases help students find people, opportunities, and next steps more easily — without replacing relationships.

Guardrails for SL Leaders-where caution slows us down



Wellbeing monitoring is a caution area: only 24% perceive it positively; 42% do not believe it improves wellbeing.

Use these tests before you scale

- Does it improve access or just efficiency?
- Can a student understand what the AI is doing?
- Is there a clear route to a human when the issue is complex, sensitive, or high stakes?
- Has privacy, consent, bias, and accessibility been reviewed?
- Are staff trained enough to use it responsibly with students?



What students say they want from institutions



Train us

Students want hands-on AI literacy support, not just warnings. They want practice with real tasks and help using AI effectively.



Guide us

Students want clearer expectations, practical examples, and staff who feel prepared to talk about AI with confidence.



Include us

Student voice is still stuck at 34% — the same share as in 2024 say their institution actively seeks feedback on AI.

Student message: Help us navigate this well.

Why this is student affairs work

AI literacy is student development work and a student-success, public-responsibility, and change-management leadership practice.



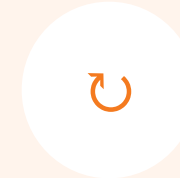
Student development

Build students' judgement, discernment, agency, ethical reasoning, digital confidence and capacity to know when to use AI-and w when to seek human support.



Public responsibility

Protect privacy, fairness, access, academic integrity, belonging and trust in student support contexts where power, data and vulnerability are present.



Change leadership

Give staff shared language, examples, approved tools, role-specific boundaries, and escalation routes so responsible use is not left to individual judgement.

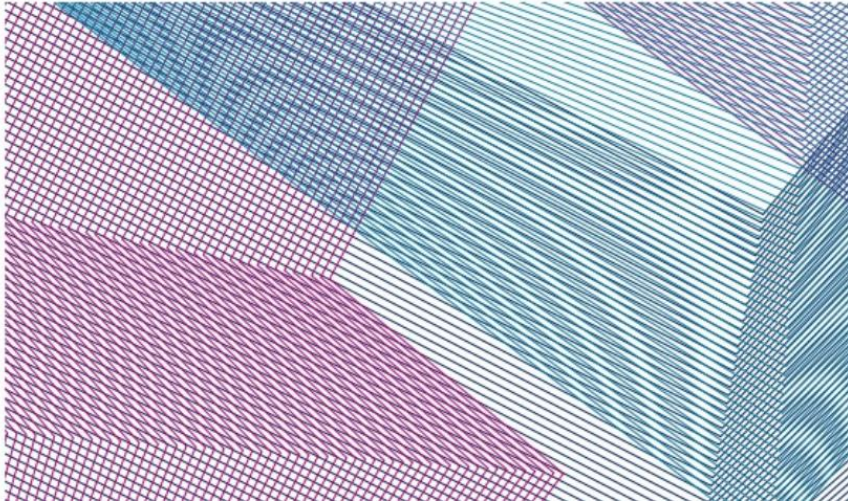
Leadership frame: not “how do we adopt AI faster?” but “how do we help students and staff use AI in ways that strengthen learning, agency, equity and care ?”

AI Task Force

Toward an AI-Ready University

Report & Recommendations

Delivered June 2025



U of T's AI-ready landscape

A practical institutional frame: capability, governance, data, and use-case discipline.



AI readiness

Build shared language and baseline capability for students, staff, and leaders.



Secure tools

Clarify which tools are approved and what data they can handle.



AI-ready data

Improve data quality, access controls, documentation, and accountability.



Use-case review

Prioritize high-value, lower-risk pilots with privacy, equity, accessibility, and quality review.

i The institutional question is not only “what can AI do?” but “what conditions make responsible use possible?”

U of T's Student Services Working Group Highlights

1 Student support

AI tutors, learning support, career-skill tools, accessibility supports, and better navigation to services.

2 Engagement + wayfinding

Personalized suggestions for clubs, events, and activities; tailored communications; tri-campus resource finding.

3 Operational relief

Document scanning, scheduling, email triage, note synthesis, degree planning, and other repetitive admin tasks.

4 Guardrails and training

Tri-campus guidelines, vetted tools, staff/student AI literacy, privacy, equity, accessibility, and consent.

“It is not merely about adopting technology but about shaping its use to align with U of T’s academic mission and supportive community values.” AI U of T AI Task Force – Student Services Working Group

Core cautions named in the report

- Bias and inclusivity
- Accessibility and cost
- Privacy, consent, and secure data use
- Keeping student support human-centred

The U of T Student Life case

From individual experimentation to shared, values-led practice.

1

Leader learning

2024–2025 AI literacy
and experimentation

2

AI in a Day

Hands-on practice
with ethics, privacy,
equity, and human-
centred boundaries

3

Office hours

Role-specific
questions and
practical use cases

4

Working Group

12-month process
for a Student Life AI
framework

5

Framework + pilots

Guidance,
guardrails,
scaffolded learning,
and measurable use
cases

Staff insight: readiness was not the main barrier. Clarity was.

What staff told us

Readiness was not the main barrier. Clarity was.

Ready, but waiting for permission

Comfort averaged 6.2/10. Most had experimented. 24 of 28 saw AI as more opportunity than risk.

Clarity, not capability

Staff asked: What is encouraged? What is off-limits? What tools are safe? What does responsible use look like in my role?

Concerns as engagement

Privacy, equity, accessibility and human-centred boundaries dominated; these concerns signal care, not resistance.

Design implication: a practical guide may unlock more responsible adoption than another generic AI overview.

What this looks like in UofT Student Life

Scalable program patterns participants can adapt.



Advising + wayfinding

Clarify questions, identify resources, prepare for advising conversations — without replacing professional judgment.



Accessibility + accommodations

Support comprehension, organization, communication, and alternative formats — with privacy and consent boundaries.



Career learning

Practice interviews, translate skills, reflect on resumes, and prepare for human coaching — with bias checks.



Learning strategy

Use AI for self-testing, elaboration, study planning, and metacognition — not to bypass learning.

Not all friction is a failure!

AI is a service design and leadership issue – not just a technology issue.

Keep Productive Struggle

Do not let AI replace reflection, practice, source-checking, drafting, or problem-solving.

Preserve Human Connection

In high-stakes or sensitive contexts, AI should route students to people - not away from them.



"AI's greatest strength - removing friction from work and relationships - is also a liability."

Zohar, Bloom, and Inzlicht, 2026

AI fluency for Student Life: five (potential!) moves

Use this as shared language for staff development, student workshops, and pilot review.

1

Understand

What can the tool do, and where does it fail?

2

Evaluate

Can I verify quality, sources, bias, and fit?

3

Disclose

Who needs to know AI was meaningfully used?

4

Protect

What data must never enter this tool?

5

Escalate

When must a person take over?

Only generate what you can evaluate — and always design a human handoff.

Learning literacy before AI literacy



AI can strengthen learning when it helps students...



self-test and check understanding



organize and summarize ideas



elaborate, reflect, and question



plan next steps and study strategies



AI can weaken learning when it...



replaces problem-solving



bypasses analysis and writing



reduces productive struggle



becomes a shortcut instead of a support



Design principle: focus on process, metacognition, and supported learning — not just output.

Best Practice Patterns Across Higher Ed



Keep humans in the loop

Use AI for coaching, feedback, and support.



Design for guided use

Learning comes from structured tutors, prompts, and scaffolds.



Build skills, not dependency

Critical thinking, source-checking, ethical use, creativity, and communication.



Fix the student journey

Reduce friction across the student life cycle and across siloed systems.

Activity 2: Use-case triage

Should we use AI here — and under what conditions?



Value

What student or staff value would this create?



Risk

What could go wrong, and who could be affected?



Human handoff

Where must a person review, approve, or step in?

2-minute activity

Choose one use case from your context. Answer the three questions (What is the value? What is the risk? Where does a human need to step in? , then decide: ready to test, needs guardrails, or human-led only.

Examples: advising chatbot · accessibility conversion · career mock interview · resource finder · case-note summary

A simpler implementation checklist

Use these six gates before you pilot any AI tool or workflow.



Purpose

What student problem are we solving?



People

Who benefits, who is burdened, and who may be excluded?



Data

What information goes in, and what must stay out?



Equity

Could this widen bias, access gaps, or surveillance?



Human handoff

When must a person step in?



Evidence

How will we know it improved the student experience?



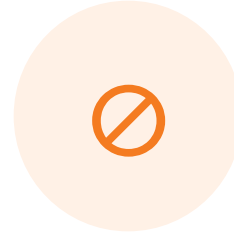
If you cannot answer one of these clearly, slow down before implementation.

Build a safer 30-day pilot



We will test...

one specific student-facing
use case



We will not...

use AI for tasks that need
close human judgment



A person steps in when...

risk, ambiguity, distress,
or fairness concerns appear



We will know it worked if...

the student experience is
clearer, more equitable,
or more effective



4-minute activity: Draft one pilot with a partner, then name one guardrail.

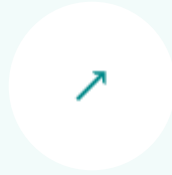
Close: three leadership commitments

Move from concern to capability, with students at the centre.



Clarify

Make expectations visible:
what is encouraged, what is
risky, and what is off-limits.



Enable

Build staff and student
capability through examples,
practice, office hours, and
shared language.



Govern

Use lightweight review:
purpose, people, data,
equity, human handoff, and
evidence.

Final question: What is one AI conversation, guardrail, or pilot you can take back to your team next week?

Close: one stop, one start, one ask

STOP

What AI practice, assumption, or ambiguity should we stop tolerating?

START

What small, safe experiment should we begin next week?

ASK

What support, permission, data guidance, or partnership do we need?

The integration of AI in student affairs is not just about adopting new technologies; it is about reimagining how to support and empower students in their educational journey...**And above all else, remain committed to the core values of student affairs.”**

Brady, (2024). The transformative potential of AI: Recommendations for student affairs leaders.
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education & Glass Half Full Consulting