

The University of Arizona Global Campus research highlights how responsible AI can strengthen online student learning

CHANDLER, AZ, UNITED STATES, August 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New research from [the University of Arizona Global Campus \(UAGC\)](#) offers evidence that thoughtfully designed artificial intelligence (AI) tools can enhance student learning by supporting writing development, increasing confidence, and expanding access to timely feedback in online courses.

Published in the International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the peer-reviewed study examines student experiences using a custom AI-based feedback tool in first-year online writing courses. Rather than replacing instructor feedback, the tool was intentionally designed to complement faculty guidance by providing developmental, rubric-aligned feedback that helps students make informed revision decisions.

"Responsible AI implementation begins with instructional purpose," said [Nathan Pritts](#), principal AI strategist at UAGC and author of the study. "Our findings suggest that when AI is intentionally designed to support learning, not replace teaching, it can help students engage more deeply with the writing process while preserving instructor expertise and student ownership."



Dr. Nathan Pritts, professor and program chair for First-Year Writing and faculty fellow for AI Strategy at UAGC



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The pilot study found that students used the AI feedback tool throughout the writing process,



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from early drafting through final revision, and generally viewed the feedback as valuable in strengthening their writing. Among survey respondents, five of seven rated the tool as very or extremely useful, while six of seven reported increased confidence in revising their work after using the tool.

Students also emphasized that the AI-generated feedback was most valuable because it offered actionable guidance focused on organization, argument development, and revision strategies instead of simply correcting grammar or rewriting content. The research found that students exercised discretion in deciding when to use the tool, reinforcing the importance of positioning AI as an optional learning resource rather than a required component of coursework.

The findings contribute to ongoing conversations across higher education about responsible AI adoption, particularly in online learning environments where timely, individualized feedback can be challenging to provide at scale. The study concludes that AI-based feedback tools can extend formative learning opportunities while maintaining instructor oversight, student agency, and alignment with course outcomes.

"This research reflects the UAGC commitment to exploring innovative approaches that enhance teaching and learning while maintaining the quality, integrity, and student-centered focus that define the online learning experience," said Pritts.

The article, "Student Perspectives on AI-Based Feedback in First-Year Writing: Perceptions and Instructional Implications," appears in Volume 7, Issue 1 of the International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and is available as an open-access publication.

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