



Derby Entrepreneurship  
Center at Tufts

*GCEC Virtual Webinar*

# **Entrepreneurship at Warp Speed, Continued: Accelerating Student Success through AI**

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# GCEC 2025 Panel: Entrepreneurship at Warp Speed: Teaching in the Age of AI



“AI is not a bad resource but I believe it **replaces a lot of thinking and generation of new ideas and thoughts**, making course work more passive and something to just check off of a list instead of it being an actively engaging process.”

*- A student in ENT162 Bringing Products to Market*

# Struggle!

## **Bad struggle wastes time**

- Bored in lectures
- Struggling to conduct secondary research
- Data synthesis takes time from customer interviews
- Struggling to explain the product concept
- Lack of conflict resolution skills leading to poor team dynamics

## **Good struggle promotes learning**

- Self-teach concepts and learn
- Discovering the TAM is too small through secondary research
- Having time for customer interviews that resulted in a pivot
- Invalidating hypotheses via product testing with working prototypes
- Practicing difficult conversations to resolve team conflicts

# AI-Infused Entrepreneurship: reduce bad struggle, maximize good struggle, accelerate student success.

**11%**

Tufts Undergraduates take ENT courses

**85%**

ENT course sections embrace AI

**82%**

ENT Students took courses that embrace AI



# With intentional infusion of AI, students can:

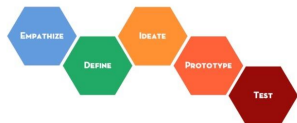
1. Self-teach new concepts.
2. Accelerate secondary research.
3. Augment data synthesis.
4. Test with working prototypes.
5. Practice difficult conversations.

# 1. Students can self-teach new concepts.

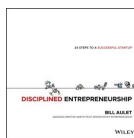
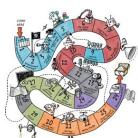
Before: Instructor lectures, students disengage.

After: Students self-teach and learn, then present to peers

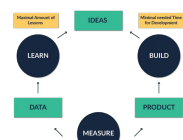
## 1. Design Thinking



## 3. Disciplined Entrepreneurship



## 2. Lean Startup



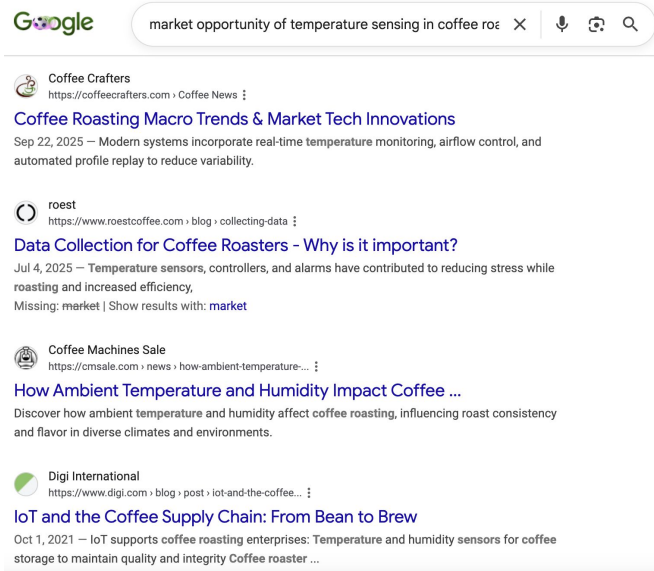
## 4. Problem Statement Canvas and Lean Canvas

|                 |                          |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| NAME<br>[ ]     | IDEAS<br>[ ]             | PROBLEM STATEMENT<br>[ ] |
| DESIGNER<br>[ ] | PROBLEM STATEMENT<br>[ ] | PROBLEM STATEMENT<br>[ ] |
| DESIGNER<br>[ ] | PROBLEM STATEMENT<br>[ ] | PROBLEM STATEMENT<br>[ ] |
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## 2. Students can accelerate secondary research and learn to check for authoritative sources.

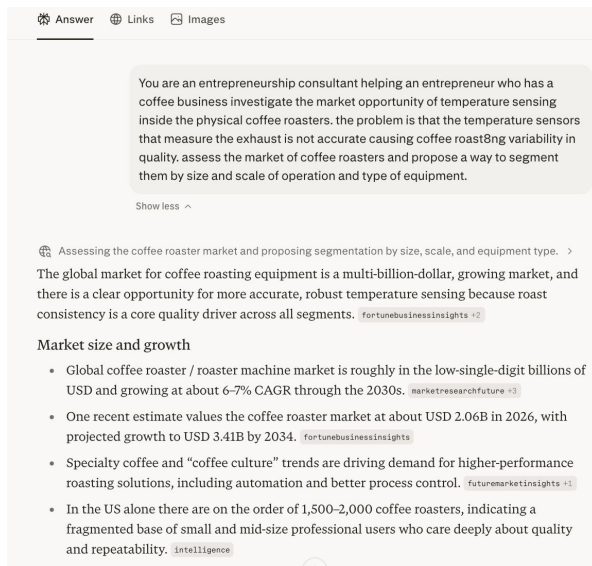
Before: Google search.



Google search results for "market opportunity of temperature sensing in coffee roasting". The search bar shows the query and a microphone icon. The results list several articles:

- Coffee Crafters**  
https://coffeecrafters.com › Coffee News ›  
[Coffee Roasting Macro Trends & Market Tech Innovations](#)  
Sep 22, 2025 — Modern systems incorporate real-time temperature monitoring, airflow control, and automated profile replay to reduce variability.
- roest**  
https://www.roestcoffee.com › blog › collecting data ›  
[Data Collection for Coffee Roasters - Why is it important?](#)  
Jul 4, 2025 — Temperature sensors, controllers, and alarms have contributed to reducing stress while roasting and increased efficiency.  
Missing: market | Show results with: market
- Coffee Machines Sale**  
https://cmsale.com › news › how-ambient-temperature-... ›  
[How Ambient Temperature and Humidity Impact Coffee ...](#)  
Discover how ambient temperature and humidity affect coffee roasting, influencing roast consistency and flavor in diverse climates and environments.
- Digi International**  
https://www.digi.com › blog › post › iot-and-the-coffee-... ›  
[IoT and the Coffee Supply Chain: From Bean to Brew](#)  
Oct 1, 2021 — IoT supports coffee roasting enterprises: Temperature and humidity sensors for coffee storage to maintain quality and integrity Coffee roaster ...

After: Perplexity summary & sources.



Perplexity AI summary and sources for "market opportunity of temperature sensing in coffee roasting".

**Answer** | **Links** | **Images**

You are an entrepreneurship consultant helping an entrepreneur who has a coffee business investigate the market opportunity of temperature sensing inside the physical coffee roasters. the problem is that the temperature sensors that measure the exhaust is not accurate causing coffee roast8ng variability in quality. assess the market of coffee roasters and propose a way to segment them by size and scale of operation and type of equipment.

Show less ^

**Assessing the coffee roaster market and proposing segmentation by size, scale, and equipment type.** >

The global market for coffee roasting equipment is a multi-billion-dollar, growing market, and there is a clear opportunity for more accurate, robust temperature sensing because roast consistency is a core quality driver across all segments. [fortunebusinessinsights +2](#)

**Market size and growth**

- Global coffee roaster / roaster machine market is roughly in the low-single-digit billions of USD and growing at about 6-7% CAGR through the 2030s. [marketresearchfuture +3](#)
- One recent estimate values the coffee roaster market at about USD 2.06B in 2026, with projected growth to USD 3.41B by 2034. [fortunebusinessinsights](#)
- Specialty coffee and "coffee culture" trends are driving demand for higher-performance roasting solutions, including automation and better process control. [futuremarketinsights +3](#)
- In the US alone there are on the order of 1,500-2,000 coffee roasters, indicating a fragmented base of small and mid-size professional users who care deeply about quality and repeatability. [intelligence](#)

# 3. Students can augment data synthesis by comparing key takeaways with AI insights.

Read the following verbatim responses to participants of the \$100k competition and pull out the salient insights, common themes, and outlier opinions in bullet form.

Would have liked some more robust feedback from the judges during the two pitching stages  
They were very helpful in shaping our team.  
logistic on the day of the finals/semifinals could be improved. Asking the teams to be there more than 1h in advance to the start of the competition was a bit unnecessary. Everything else was smooth!  
Coaching with Elaine and Idicula was extremely helpful. However, written feedback was rather vague.  
Everything I needed was provided. I really enjoyed talking to Cody about marketing.



## Salient Insights

- **Coaching and Direct Feedback:** Several participants highlighted the importance of coaching and direct feedback. Specific mentions of valuable input from individuals like Elaine, Idicula, and Cody suggest that targeted, personalized coaching was highly appreciated.
- **Judging Feedback Quality:** Many expressed a desire for more robust and actionable feedback from the judges, especially between rounds. The quality of written feedback was sometimes seen as vague.
- **Event Logistics:** Comments about the logistics of the event days, such as the excessive early arrival requirement, were noted. However, overall, the organization was often praised for being professional and clear.

## Common Themes

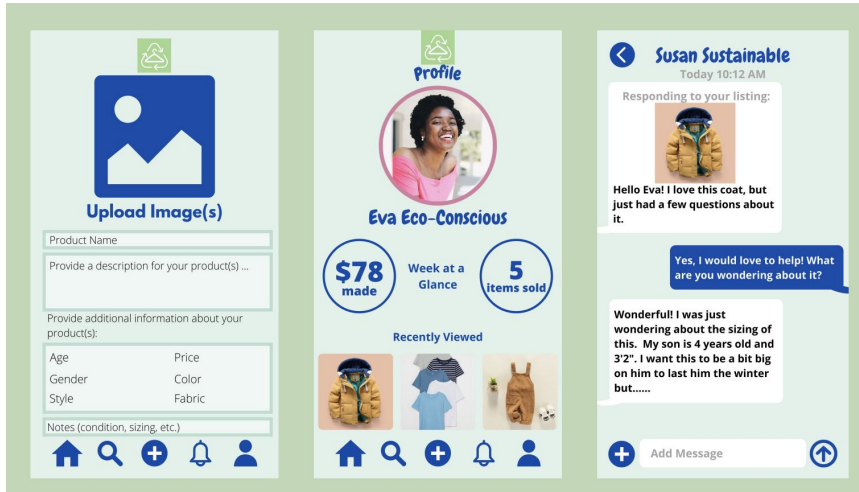
- **Value of In-Person Interaction:** In-person resources, including coaching and clinics, were frequently mentioned as more beneficial than online or less direct forms of engagement. Participants appreciated the tangible and direct interaction provided.
- **Mixed Opinions on Structured Activities:** While some found structured activities, such as the clinics and pitching sessions, extremely helpful, others felt they were less additive compared to more personalized, one-on-one sessions.
- **Communication and Professionalism:** The competition was generally well-regarded for its organization and the clarity of communications, with DEC (presumably the Derby Entrepreneurship Center) specifically praised for its information dissemination.

## Outlier Opinions

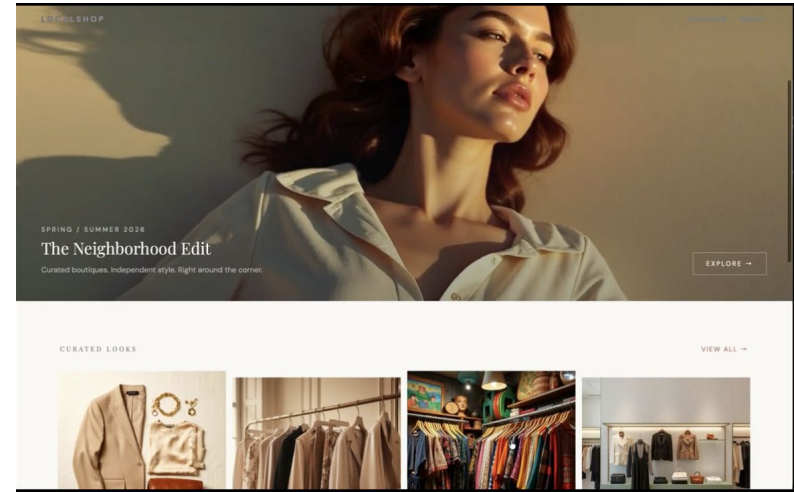
- **Disparity in Coaching Quality:** Some participants noted variability in the helpfulness of feedback based on the coach's background. One even mentioned a coach who discouraged them, which contrasts sharply with the positive notes about coaching generally.

# 4. Software entrepreneurs can make working prototypes to test with customers.

Before: Wireframes limit what students can test with customers.



After: Working Lovable prototype transforms level of testing.

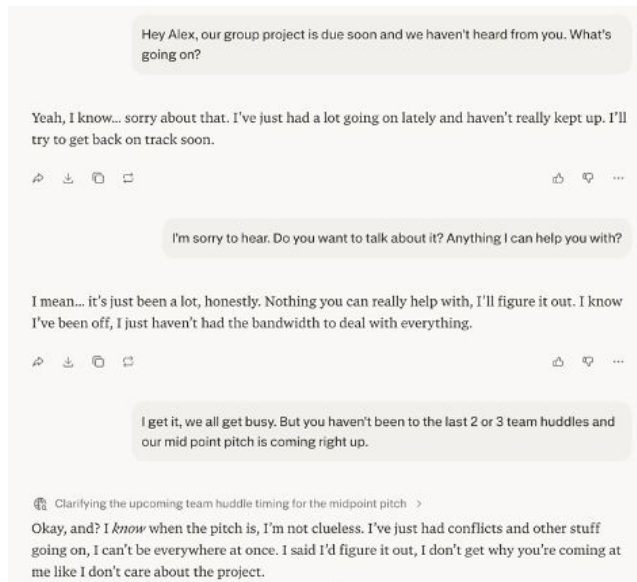
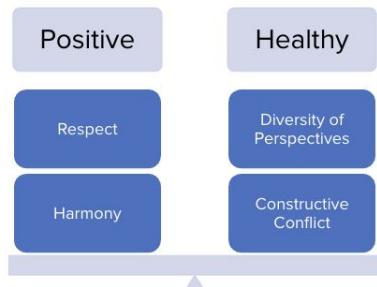


# 5. Students can practice difficult conversations safely with an AI persona.

Before: Instructor delivers theoretical lecture.

After: Students practice conflict resolution safely with AI persona.

## CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT is a Cornerstone of Success



# Student success gains are apparent across courses and instructors.

| <b>Entrepreneurship 101 outcomes</b>  | <b>Spring 2023 (before AI)</b>                                                                            | <b>Spring 2026 (after AI)</b>                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Problem-solution fit at Week 7</b> | Over 50% of teams struggled with problem-solution fit                                                     | Teams worked from interview data and achieved problem-solution fit much earlier                                  |
| <b>Go to market strategy</b>          | Teams were vague and high-level – stopping at “social media”                                              | Teams used AI for comparables and were hyper-specific in channel strategy                                        |
| <b>Financial literacy at Week 10</b>  | Teams struggled with basic concepts and use generic top-down approaches for market sizing and forecasting | Teams were solid in basic concepts and adopted a bottom-up, actionable approach by checking assumptions using AI |

# Not everything can be accelerated with AI.



Idicula, our Entrepreneur-in-Residence, coaches a medical device team in our summer venture accelerator

# But for those who can benefit, AI can be incredibly empowering.

Before: Introduction to Making final project - LEDs that light up with sound; low complexity; low fit and finish



After: Introduction to Making final project - electronic chess; high complexity; high quality; good fit and finish



*\* 84% of students taking this course are in a liberal arts or fine arts discipline with no prior technical training*

# Importantly, intentional AI-infusion teaches fluency, judgement, and critical thinking skills.

“When I use it in my courses, the answers many of the AI tools provide are maybe 70 per cent correct. This is where the real opportunity is for student learning -- the ability to develop and improve upon their **critical thinking skills** to discern what is correct, what is incorrect, and where the student needs to look to **find authoritative sources**, not available to the AI tool, to **critique the AI answer**, update it, to provide the correct set of facts, arguments, or conclusions, and as such **improve upon it.**”

- *Ron Lasser, instructor for ENT 109 Societal Aspects of Design*

**Breakout Discussion:**  
**How have you used AI to  
accelerate student success,  
and how might you ensure  
your learning outcomes are met?**



[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1V\\_u7a0CTeQgSVXWaljuG8u4q8oqr6t0\\_Xzo5SkobRUU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1V_u7a0CTeQgSVXWaljuG8u4q8oqr6t0_Xzo5SkobRUU/edit?usp=sharing)

# Themes from breakout room discussions

- **Speed and efficiency gains** — AI accelerates ideation, pitch development, marketing, and operations, freeing people for higher-order thinking; high schoolers especially benefit by skipping the design bottleneck
- **Human judgment remains essential** — Customer discovery is a persistent struggle, warm VC intros still matter, and the emerging pedagogical frame is putting humans at the center with AI as collaborator, not leader
- **Frameworks and intentional use are still nascent** — The group is early in building structured approaches; AI use is largely audit-driven or ideation-focused rather than embedded strategically across programs
- **Quality vs. sameness tension** — AI raises output quality floors in presentations and marketing, but risks homogenizing the work; the open question is how to preserve authentic student voice and differentiation
- **Institutional and legal friction** — University tool access is hard to secure, and R1 campus firewalls around AI reflect a real unresolved tension: open founder use may put spinout IP at risk, and the legal landscape isn't clear yet

Prepared using Claude Sonnet 4.6

Chen, Elaine, et al. "AI Use in Entrepreneurship Programs: Breakout Session Discussion." *Entrepreneurship Centers Peer Convening*, 26 June 2026.

# Themes from AMA: How might we....

- Still teach human skills like B2B enterprise sales in the age of AI?
- Avoid glorifying what AI can do and put students back in charge?
- Help students accelerate progress by borrowing lived experience?
- Help students think of AI as a tool that gives them superpowers instead of thinking of AI as a person you delegate to?
- Help students be thoughtful about whether- and how- AI can be helpful in their particular domain?

# Join the conversation

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# **Appendix**

## **Edited Zoom Meeting AI Notes**

# Quick Session Recap

In the GCEC Virtual Connection session focused on "AI in Entrepreneurship Education," Elaine Chen of Tufts University started by sharing the AI-infused entrepreneurship approach at Tufts, where 82% of entrepreneurship students experience AI in their classes. She explained Tufts' choice to encourage students to learn and master a variety of mainstream AI tools on their own - a skillset that will help them succeed professionally once they graduate. She stressed the importance of using AI to reduce inefficiencies while maintaining valuable learning experiences, such as customer discovery and product testing.

Elaine presented five examples of how Tufts is integrating AI tools into their entrepreneurship curriculum, including teaching self-directed learning, enhancing secondary research capabilities, synthesizing unstructured data from

interviews, creating working prototypes for customer testing, and using AI personas for conflict resolution training.

The session included breakout room discussions where participants shared their experiences implementing AI in various university programs, with key themes emerging around the need to position AI as a tool rather than a replacement for human skills, particularly in areas like sales, storytelling, and team leadership.

Participants discussed challenges around IP protection, the speed at which students are adopting AI tools, and the importance of helping students understand when and how to effectively use AI in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

# Detailed discussion notes

The group discussed AI usage across different university centers, with Jill reporting that Harvard students are using AI extensively for venture development, customer discovery, and various business functions with minimal guidance from staff. Mindy from Case Western Reserve University shared that their group was early in developing AI frameworks and primarily using it for audit and ideation purposes, while also noting concerns about IP protection at R1 research universities. Both discussions highlighted the need for better sharing of best practices for AI deployment governance across institutions.

The group discussed the integration of AI in education and entrepreneurship, highlighting themes such as the need for human oversight, the lack of a standard playbook, and the importance of teaching skills that cannot be fully replaced by AI, like sales and storytelling. Laurel from Michigan State emphasized that employers value students who have built AI tools rather than just used them, while Catherine noted the role

of panels and judges in pushing presenters to explain their processes. Elaine raised concerns about formulaic storytelling in venture pitches and the challenges of IP protection. Jaap highlighted the continued importance of human-centered skills in business development, such as sales and team leadership, which cannot be fully replaced by AI.

The group discussed positioning AI as a tool rather than an equal partner, with Mindy emphasizing that students should view AI as a "superpower" that requires human expertise to leverage effectively. Laura introduced an analogy comparing AI usage to the Tony Stark/Jarvis relationship, noting that having AI tools alone doesn't create expertise. Jill built on this by discussing the importance of helping students understand where and when to use AI effectively, providing examples of businesses where AI is helpful versus those where it's not.