Facilitator Preparation

Hackathon Structure & Collaboration

- Three-day breakdown:
  - Day 1: Define and understand the problem, aim to develop an MVP concept or early prototype.
  - Day 2: Develop the solution (prototype or proof of concept).
  - Day 3: Present the results.
- Cross-functional teams: Include diverse skills and perspectives to ensure robust problem-solving and solution design.
- Data Structures & Design: Identify the data you will need, its structure, and how AI can leverage it.

Facilitator's Role

- Orientation on problem framing: Help participants define the problem clearly and align on success metrics.
- Broaden participants' AI perspective: Showcase multiple AI platforms to spark creative solutions.
- Keep the focus on user experience: Remind everyone to solve a real need and deliver tangible value.

Mindset & Approach (Framing)

- Pain point first: Identify the core problem you're solving before zeroing in on any specific AI features.
- AI as enabler: Treat AI as one tool among many—rather than the sole focus, it should serve the broader goal.
- Iterate & learn fast: Embrace rapid experimentation and quick failures to move the project forward efficiently.
- Student-first, technology-powered: Keep the user (students, faculty, or admins) at the center while using AI to enhance their experience.

Success Metrics & Goals

- Define success early: Know your desired outcomes and measures of success from the start.
- Narrow the scope: Be realistic about how much you can accomplish; smaller, well-defined goals often lead to better results.
- Build meaningful impact: Focus on what will truly move the needle for learners, faculty, or administrative stakeholders.

Avoiding the "Hammer" Trap

- Broaden AI understanding: Many are only familiar with GPT-based solutions; demonstrate diverse AI capabilities (e.g., computer vision, data analytics, recommendation systems).

- Hammer searching for nail: If you fixate on AI, you risk bending the problem to fit the tool. Instead, clarify the overarching "house" you're building and see how AI fits in.
- Right tool for the job: Consider a variety of tools (AI or otherwise) to address the problem effectively.

Key Takeaways:

- Start with the problem (the pain point) and define what success looks like.
- Use AI as a means to an end, not the end in itself.
- Ensure everyone in the hackathon sees AI as part of a broader toolkit and understands its range of capabilities.
- Work quickly, learn, and iterate—don't wait for a perfect idea before getting started.