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Faculty Are First Responders in Averting an Epidemic of Intellectual Atrophy

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This year, for the first time in history, college seniors will graduate **never having experienced a full semester** without generative AI. The technology certainly has its many benefits, but when it replaces the mental struggles of learning, students lose something irreplaceable: **the slow, difficult work that builds expertise and strengthens critical thinking.**

As education experts from two California State University (CSU) campuses, we view overreliance on AI in much the same way as our public health colleagues view students' academically motivated **misuse of stimulants.** Indeed, we view America's educational institutions as key to preventing a potential epidemic of intellectual atrophy. Instead of making faculty obsolete, AI has intensified the need for their expertise and guidance. Like vaccines or exercise, authentic intellectual struggle, which well-prepared teachers foster, is preventative medicine for the mind.