

BEYOND WELCOME DAY: SUPPORTING STUDENT TRANSITION AND PREPAREDNESS THROUGH 360-DEGREE VR INTEGRATION

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Abstract

The landscape of higher education is rapidly evolving, with digital technologies such as VR, AR, and AI increasingly enhancing student learning experiences. As student populations become more diverse, effective onboarding is essential for supporting transitions and fostering a sense of community. Traditionally, student orientation has relied on face-to-face formats to introduce new students to campus facilities, faculty, and peers. This conceptual paper examines the use of 360-degree immersive VR videos as a complementary tool, allowing students to virtually explore campus locations and resources before orientation day. This approach aims to better prepare students for their transition, reduce anxiety, and strengthen their sense of belonging. A pilot implementation using VR headsets was conducted in August 2025, featuring immersive tours of campus facilities and library resources led by an alum. Initial feedback from project team members suggests that VR can effectively supplement traditional orientation, creating a more inclusive and engaging onboarding experience. Recommendations for future enhancements and broader integration of VR technologies into student onboarding are discussed.

Keywords: 360-degree videos, orientation day, student onboarding, virtual reality.