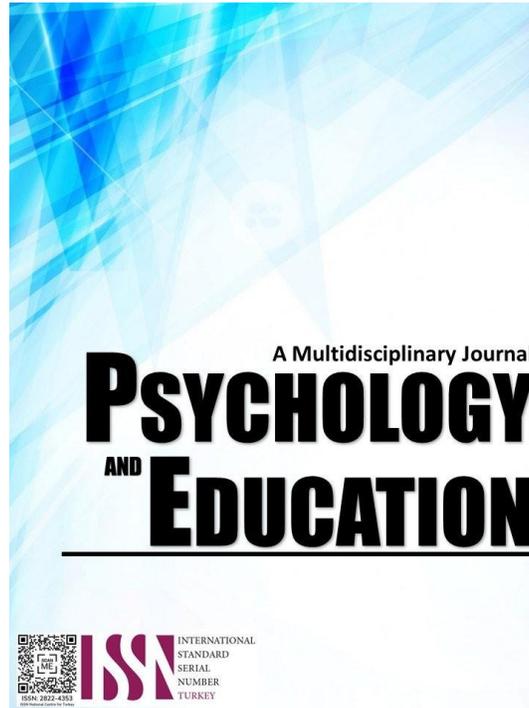


# HIGH SCHOOL HONOR GRADUATES FROM PAROCHIAL SCHOOL OF CATANAUAN: NAVIGATING COLLEGE SUCCESS AND CURRENT STATUS



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## High School Honor Graduates from Parochial School of Catanauan: Navigating College Success and Current Status

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### Abstract

This study examines the academic, emotional, and social preparedness of honor graduates from the Parochial School of Catanauan (batches 2023 and 2024) for college. In addition, the study examines their issues, current academic status, support systems, coping strategies, and opinions on launching a program to help incoming college students. Based on the interview, many students are academically and socially prepared for college, but not all of them are emotionally prepared for the demands of college life. Organizing time for household tasks and handling financial difficulties were frequent issues. Students used coping mechanisms, including concentrating on a single task at a time, maintaining motivation, and asking friends and family for help. According to the participants, it would benefit incoming college students if it had an enhancement program that presents future challenges and explains how to address them.

**Keywords:** *college preparedness, challenges, enhancement program*

### Introduction

The transition from high school to college is an important milestone in a student's academic and psychological development. This change often entails both higher expectations and unique challenges for high-achieving students, including honors graduates. Although high school academic results are commonly viewed as indicators of future success, the realities of college may pose unexpected challenges that put students' readiness, resilience, and adaptability to the test.

This study focuses on the honor graduates of the Parochial School of Catanauan, a private school in Catanauan known for cultivating academic excellence. These individuals come to college hoping to build on their secondary education accomplishments. However, more than just intellectual ability is required to navigate the complex environment of college life, which includes everything from emotional and social adjustment to academic pressure. Martinez and Maravilla (2020) support this viewpoint, stating that self-efficacy and emotional resilience are just as important components of college readiness as academic preparation. According to Conley (2007), many honors students achieve in high school by memorizing information and scoring well on standardized tests. However, they frequently lack exposure to independent learning, time management, and critical thinking, all of which are necessary in college. As a result, even students with good secondary school grades may struggle to adapt to the more demanding, independent atmosphere of higher education.

According to the research cited above, high school honor graduates face several hurdles as they transfer to college. Poor time management is a common issue that often leads to procrastination and difficulty meeting academic responsibilities. This study aims to investigate the academic, emotional, and social preparation of these honor graduates, the specific problems they faced, the coping mechanisms or support networks they used, and their present academic standing and the enhancement program they are pursuing. By examining their experiences, the study aims to offer significant insights into the real-life paths of honor students in higher education.

### Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the college journey and current status of high school honor graduates at the Parochial School of Catanauan for school years 2023 and 2024. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How prepared were the honor graduates for college academically, emotionally, and socially?
2. What challenges did they face during their college education?
3. What support systems and coping strategies did they use?
4. What is their current academic status?
5. What are the participants' views on the idea of a college preparedness seminar as an enhancement program for incoming first-year students?

### Literature Review

#### *College Readiness*

College readiness is more than just academic achievement; it also includes emotional and social fitness. Students' backgrounds have a substantial impact on their preparation, including study abilities and time management—social-emotional learning (ACT 2021). College readiness extends beyond academic accomplishment to include emotional and social fitness. A student's background, including access to resources, family environment, and past school experiences, has a substantial impact on their ability to manage time, develop

study habits, and adapt to the demands of higher education.

Academic honors are awarded to students who demonstrate sustained distinction not only in their academics but also in their overall demeanor and engagement in school activities. According to the Department of Education's guidelines, students aiming to be honor students must maintain a general average of at least 90%, with no failing scores in any academic area (DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2016). Students who achieve an average of 90 percent and above are considered honor students. There are three categories of honor students, depending on their general average: With Honors, With High Honors, and With Highest Honors.

Despite their outstanding academic results, many high school honors graduates struggle to prepare for college, particularly in fundamental subjects like mathematics and science. The cognitive and non-cognitive readiness of pioneering senior high school graduates in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, found that while students had average non-cognitive abilities, many had below-average cognitive levels, indicating a lack of preparation for university study. This emphasizes the importance of rigorous readiness evaluations and bridging programs to support honor graduates in transitioning to postsecondary education (Digamon & Mortiz, 2023). This study highlights the importance of thorough readiness evaluations and bridging programs to support honor graduates as they transition to postsecondary education effectively.

College preparation includes not only academic skills but also emotional and social qualities required for success in higher education. Students' non-cognitive abilities, such as self-regulation, tenacity, and social awareness, are crucial for managing the demands of college. To promote holistic student development, effective college-preparedness programs should include social-emotional learning components alongside academic preparation (Conley, 2021). Preparation for college life includes both intellectual and emotional preparation. A student's emotional well-being has a substantial impact on their college experience; if they are unable to manage their emotions effectively, they may lose concentration and fail to meet their academic goals. Parental participation, especially in single-parent families, has a significant influence on high school pupils' academic success. According to research, honor students require emotional and intellectual support from their parents in order to thrive despite hurdles (Valencia & Roberto, 2020). Families play a crucial role in helping students thrive in college life. According to research, students who receive support from their families are more likely to perform well academically, manage stress effectively, and overcome problems throughout their college years.

Parental participation in various forms, such as monitoring academic progress and decision-making, is positively associated with greater academic success among Grade 12 students. This commitment is significant for honor students trying to retain their academic position. (Mella et al. 2020). Studies show that students who feel supported by their families tend to do better in school and handle the stress of college life more easily.

Structured programs addressing mental health, equality, and student involvement have an important role in preparing kids for post-secondary difficulties. Maintaining funding for mental health professionals and using equity-focused strategies to help different student groups. (Kennedy & Walls, 2024). These programs not only help students manage stress and emotional difficulties but also promote inclusion and active participation, which are critical to preparedness and personal development in college. Incorporating such initiatives during the transition period can significantly improve students' readiness and overall college experience.

### ***Challenges Faced by College Students***

Anxiety, lack of motivation, and stress are some of the emotional issues that first-year college students confront, and they can all have an impact on academic achievement and social functioning. For honor students, these emotional difficulties are sometimes compounded by the need to maintain their previous academic achievement (Shamionov et al., 2023). College students often face various challenges, particularly in managing their emotions. Stress, anxiety, and poor time management are among the most commonly reported problems, as supported by several studies. These issues can significantly affect students' academic performance and overall well-being, especially during their first year of college.

Financial hardship remains a significant obstacle to academic achievement for many college students. Half of college students said their financial status made it difficult for them to focus on their studies. These difficulties were particularly severe for low-income, first-generation, and parental students, many of whom worked full-time while pursuing their education. Despite the provision of institutional support services, a large percentage of students were either unaware of them or found them insufficient to satisfy their needs (Mowreader, 2025). Aside from emotional problems, financial problems are also common challenges faced by many college students. Yes, there are state universities with free tuition and some scholarships, but they still need to pay for other academic costs such as transportation, food, school supplies, and internet access.

Effective time management is critical for college students, as poor organizational skills can severely impact sleep quality. The study underscores the need to develop time management methods to improve not only academic achievement but also general well-being (Knowlden, 2023). The transition from high school to college is not easy. That is why some college students struggle to adjust to college life when it comes to time management. Poor time management leads to disorganization, wasted time, stress, and lower academic performance in college.

College students frequently struggle to balance academic responsibilities with social activities, which can lead to time management issues. Students struggle to prioritize work, which can lead to procrastination and stress. Constant access to technology and social

media exacerbates these concerns by providing major diversions. Implementing regular timetables and setting realistic goals can help students better manage their time, lowering stress and boosting academic performance (CollegeNP, 2023). Without practical time management skills, students may struggle academically, experience increased stress, and even burn out. As a result, understanding how to set priorities, stick to schedules, and avoid distractions is critical for their overall performance and well-being in college.

Students' past scholastic experiences and expectations impact how they socialize in college. Those from organized, high-performing backgrounds may first struggle to transition to the less supervised and more socially demanding college environment (Timmis et al., 2022). Those who come from controlled, high-performing contexts, such as honor students, may struggle to transition to the more independent, socially dynamic character of college life. This sudden adjustment might cause feelings of loneliness, pressure to fit in, or trouble forming new peer connections.

Financial stress can negatively affect students' academic performance and well-being, making it harder for them to focus on their studies and adjust to college life. These experiences suggest that, for some students, financial difficulties are an added burden that requires careful budgeting and, at times, external support (Baik et al., 2019). Financial challenges also affect the students' performance. That is part of their basic needs, their food budget, and their school budget. It will also add to their stress in college.

Remote learning caused substantial stress for students, but those who used adaptive coping techniques such as regulated schedules and seeking peer support were able to maintain their academic performance. This is crucial for honor students under pressure to achieve even in challenging learning contexts (Cahapay & Rotas, 2022).

### ***Coping Strategies and Support System***

Parental support, particularly active communication and promotion of independence, can help ease this emotional weight. Such engagement enables students to develop emotional resilience as they adjust to the college environment (Edlynn, 2023). Active communication and the promotion of independence capture the balance that parents must strike between involvement and overbearingness. This kind of support fosters emotional resilience, which is vital for students dealing with the pressures of a new academic and social environment.

Perceived peer support, academic optimism, and a clear professional identity all have a substantial impact on a student's academic transition, which in turn determines college achievement. These internal and environmental influences help kids set goals, maintain motivation, and persevere through setbacks (Zhu et al., 2025). Peer support, academic optimism, and a clear professional identity capture both the emotional and motivational dimensions of student development. These internal and external influences are crucial in shaping how students navigate academic challenges, set meaningful goals, and remain motivated despite setbacks.

Managing emotions like stress and worry is critical since emotional instability can lead to academic exhaustion or even dropout. For honor students, maintaining high expectations while adjusting to greater independence and academic rigor can strain them internally, making emotional management a critical aspect of their sustained success (Shamionov et al., 2023). As they adapt to greater independence and academic difficulty in college, they may experience emotional strain, making it vital to develop coping strategies to sustain their performance.

Providing options for social interaction, such as peer mentorship and student groups, can help students form relationships and establish a feeling of belonging. This social adjustment is particularly critical for honor students, who may prioritize academics over social contact but still require a support network to thrive in the long run (Bolo, 2024)—the importance of social interaction as a key factor in student well-being and long-term success. Even though honor students often prioritize academics, they are not exempt from the need for connection and support. Even high-performing students thrive best in environments where they feel connected, supported, and socially engaged.

To maintain academic excellence, honor students use a variety of learning strategies, including time management, effective note-taking, and periodic review sessions. These tactics help honor students balance their academic workload and maintain excellent performance. (Cabrega et al., 2024). Some students are aware of their learning styles, which gives them an advantage, as not all students have this self-awareness. Strategies such as time management, effective note-taking, and even listening to music have helped students manage stress while continuing their academic responsibilities.

Resilience is important, especially when pupils face setbacks, since individuals who develop adaptive reactions are more likely to remain motivated and focused. Overall, these studies imply that navigating college success is a dynamic process that requires building academic confidence, managing emotions, and engaging in meaningful social interactions to remain on course and achieve personal goals (Bolo, 2024). Students who develop adaptive coping mechanisms tend to sustain their motivation and focus, which are essential for overcoming challenges. Navigating college is not a simple, linear process but rather a dynamic journey that involves building academic confidence, managing emotions effectively, and fostering meaningful social connections.

### **Methodology**

This section presents the research design, participants, research instrument, procedure, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

## Research Design

The researcher used a descriptive design; its purpose is to characterize the features of a phenomenon or situation without altering or interfering with it. It aims to examine their college journey and current status, specifically whether they are employed or still studying. Survey, Questionnaire, and Interview are possible data collection methods for the study.

## Participants

The participants in the research are the ten (10) high school honor graduates of the Parochial School of Catanauan for the years 2023 and 2024. According to the Department of Education, high school is the secondary level of education, encompassing Grades 7-12. However, since the focus of this study is graduates, the respondents, specifically those who have completed Grade 12, are considered formal high school graduates. The researcher used purposive sampling to ensure fairness and, at the same time, to provide a meaningful way to select respondents.

## Instrument

To gather the necessary information, the researcher used a survey questionnaire and an interview. The interview gave qualitative insights. Through interviews, the researcher got detailed stories and experiences of students about their college journey or current situation.

## Procedure

The researcher used a qualitative research design. Before the actual data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary permits to collect data in the locale. The researcher formulates a question for a survey and an interview, and the results are presented in a research paper. The qualitative insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the college journey and the current status of high school honor graduates from the Parochial School of Catanauan for school years 2023 and 2024. This procedure aims to provide actionable recommendations to enhance student-teacher interactions and improve academic outcomes.

## Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis and are presented according to five major themes: college readiness, challenges faced, coping strategies, current academic status, and enhancement program. Thematic analysis is a technique for detecting, evaluating, and communicating patterns or themes in data. It is appropriate for research seeking to investigate people's lived experiences.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues may arise during the conduct of the study, and the proponents anticipated them. It was assured that this study would involve the students as human subjects. The considerations below will be used to protect respondents' data privacy. The respondent will first receive the informed concept. All participant responses will be kept confidential. Personal information should not be shared, and data should be stored securely. The respondent has the right to refuse to be recorded during the interview. Ensure transparency in how data will be collected, analyzed, and reported.

## Results and Discussion

Using thematic analysis, the study shows that participants were academically and socially prepared; many, however, experienced emotional difficulties, including homesickness, time management challenges, and pressure to adjust to a new environment. Despite these challenges, most students found ways to cope primarily through peer support, family encouragement, and classmates. Overall, many maintained strong academic performance, although some experienced temporary setbacks. These results highlight that academic excellence in high school does not always translate to emotional readiness for college. The transition to higher education requires a holistic preparation that supports not just intellectual growth but also emotional resilience.

### *The Preparedness of College Students*

It is often assumed that high academic performance automatically leads to college readiness. However, many studies suggest that intellectual ability alone does not guarantee that students are fully prepared for the realities of college life, which also require resilience, time management, self-discipline, and social adjustment (Conley, 2007)

### *Academic Preparedness*

“My high school life prepared me to who I am today”. High school experiences that promote critical thinking, time management, and self-directed learning help students prepare for college and adulthood. For many kids, high school serves as the basis for identifying their abilities, establishing personal objectives, and molding their beliefs. These formative years are critical in preparing students for the demands of higher education and life outside the classroom. Based on the answer of the participants, he stated that the life he has during high school really helps him today not only in subject but also the technique on how to finish it. In relation with the statement, participant 7 stated “I prepared myself because even before I knew college is not easy”.

Participant 7 observed her environment she noticed other struggle in their college life that is why she think it as an advance. Many students enter college knowing that they will face greater challenges than they did in high school. With this understanding, kids attempt to form positive behaviors early on to help them deal later. According to one participant, knowing that college would be more demanding helped him to better manage his time and improve his study practices in high school. While early preparation had some benefits, participants stated that it did not totally eliminate the difficulty of transitioning to increased academic demands and personal duties. It just gave them the tools they needed to address these issues more confidently.

While some participants felt that their high school education provided a good foundation for college, others expressed that their senior high school background did not fully match the demands of their current courses. One participant shared, “I didn’t use or encounter my major subject from senior high school now that I am in college,” highlighting the gap between what was studied before and what is required now. Another participant reflected, “I am not totally prepared because there’s a big difference between college and senior high school.” These statements suggest that academic preparedness is not only about prior knowledge but also about how well high school learning aligns with college expectations.

### ***Emotional Preparedness***

“I’m somewhat prepared because I already expect a lot in college”. There are also students who entered college already emotionally prepared because they were aware that college life would not be easy. This awareness helped them set their expectations, build inner strength, and develop coping strategies even before they began their college journey. As shared by some participants, this readiness made it easier for them to manage the pressures of college and adapt to their new surroundings.

### ***Emotional preparedness is a key part of overall college readiness, helping students navigate new social and academic pressures.***

Participant 1 shared the pressured she’s facing “I am not totally prepared emotionally because of the pressure and college is harder than senior high school”. One of the most difficult parts of transitioning to college is facing emotional challenges. Many students struggle with adjusting to a new environment, unfamiliar people, and different routines. This period of change often brings feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and uncertainty, which can affect their overall well-being and academic focus. As shared by participants, these emotional struggles were just as challenging as their academic tasks. Six out of ten participants stated that they are not emotionally prepared, “I am from Catanauan and I am studying in Lucban Quezon, the transition is hard and I felt lack of motivation to keep going.” A particularly challenging aspect of this emotional adjustment is being far from one’s family and the life they were used to. Being separated from familiar support systems can intensify feelings of isolation and make the adjustment period even more difficult.

### ***Social Preparedness***

In terms of social preparedness, most participants felt ready to interact with others as they transitioned to college. Nine out of 10 reported no significant difficulties adjusting socially. One participant expressed, “I don’t have a hard time with the social aspects because I like making friends,” while another stated, “I love meeting other people, and I think I am learning from them.” These responses suggest that having a positive attitude toward social interaction and openness to new relationships helped them adjust to the college environment.

However, one participant admitted that she was not socially prepared due to shyness, saying that it made it harder for her to connect with others. This highlights that while many students may feel socially confident, others may need more time or support to overcome personal barriers, such as low confidence or introversion, especially in a new, larger setting like college.

### ***The Challenges of College Students***

Even high-achieving high school students can face challenges in college. The shift to a more self-directed environment requires academic skills, emotional resilience, and social confidence.

### ***Time Management***

One of the most common challenges shared by participants was time management. Nine out of ten participants reported having difficulty managing their time, as they struggled to balance multiple activities and academic tasks simultaneously. Participant 1 stated, “It’s hard to manage time, time for studying, for oneself, and for responsibilities.” Another participant reflected, “There are a lot of activities, and unlike senior high school, there are some professors that are hard to please.” These responses highlight how students felt overwhelmed not only by the volume of work but also by the higher expectations and stricter standards of some college instructors. This reflects the struggle of adjusting to greater independence and the multiple demands of college life.

### ***Financial***

Aside from academic and time management difficulties, some participants also faced financial challenges during their college transition. Specifically, Participant 3 and Participant 5 mentioned that financial concerns added to the pressures they experienced. Although most participants focused on academic and emotional adjustments, two participants highlighted that managing their school expenses, allowances, and daily needs sometimes became stressful.



### The support system and Coping strategy

Support systems and coping strategies are a big help to a college student to survive their life. It serves as their motivation, knowing that there is someone behind you who supports you—knowing that you are not one in a boat, having a group while doing tasks and activities and recharging before having another battle in college.

#### Support system

All ten participants stated that their primary source of college support is their family. They emphasized that their families help them not only financially, but also emotionally. One participant shared, “I have my family to support me financially and emotionally,” while another expressed, “My family made sure that I am okay. They are my first priority.” These statements reflect how families continue to play a vital and consistent role in the lives of college students. Whether it is providing encouragement during stressful moments or assisting with educational expenses, families remain a crucial foundation for students during their college journey.

In addition to family, many participants recognized friends as an important part of their support system in college. Six out of ten participants shared that having friends who offer encouragement and assistance helps them cope with the demands of college life. Having a friend who supports you, especially in times of pressure, activities, and stress, is a blessing. They are also the reason why you keep going, knowing that you are not alone in a battle. This shows how friendships provide emotional comfort, motivation, and practical help in handling schoolwork and personal struggles.

#### Coping Strategy

Having challenges is normal and part of life, and as many participants shared, if there are problems, there are also possible solutions or ways to ease the stress. Most participants discussed the coping strategies they used to manage the pressures of college. Many of these strategies were personal and self-directed, showing how students tried to take control of their situation in their own ways. Participant 4 shared, “Fake it until you make it,” describing an approach of projecting confidence and strength even when feeling uncertain. Others mentioned practical strategies such as “One task at a time” to avoid becoming overwhelmed, or “Go out with friends” to unwind and find emotional relief. Some participants also turned to positive self-help practices like “Read and watch motivational quotes” to stay inspired during difficult times. These coping strategies reflect how students actively seek ways to handle their challenges, combining emotional, social, and practical methods to support their well-being.

#### Current Academic status

When asked about their current academic status, four participants described themselves as being in good standing. At the same time, six shared that they were in average standing managing to pass but facing various challenges. This shows that while some students have adjusted well to college demands, others are still navigating the difficulties of their chosen courses. One participant shared, “My current academic status is struggling and surviving, from engineering to psychology. I am a shifter, but the lesson I learned is to accept my mistake and to keep going.” This statement reflects not only the academic challenges faced but also the personal growth that can result from difficult decisions, such as program changes. Overall, the participants’ responses highlight that maintaining a strong academic status in college is not always easy and can involve setbacks, adjustments, and continuous effort.

Table 1. Current Academic Status of College Students

Participants		Course	Status
Participant 1	Enrolled	BS IT	DL, GOOD
Participant 2	Enrolled	BS NURSING	AVERAGE/GOOD
Participant 3	Enrolled	BSed – FILIPINO	GOOD
Participant 4	Enrolled	BS PSYCHOLOGY	AVERAGE/STRUGGLING
Participant 5	Vacation/Enroll Soon	BSEd – FILIPINO	GOOD
Participant 6	Enrolled	BSBA – HR	GOOD
Participant 7	Enrolled	BEED	AVERAGE
Participant 8	Enrolled	BSBA – MM	AVERAGE
Participant 9	Enrolled	BSBA - HR	AVERAGE
Participant 10	Enrolled	BS PSYCHOLOGY	AVERAGE

#### Enhancement Program

After stating their responses during the interview, the participants also expressed strong agreement on the importance of enhancement seminars or preparatory activities for incoming college students. They emphasized that such initiatives play a vital role in supporting students' academic and emotional preparedness as they transition into higher education. According to Participant 4, "Seminars and orientations are good, and through these, students can develop a strong personality." This suggests that beyond academic knowledge, these activities contribute to the development of essential soft skills such as confidence, time management, and adaptability. “They have the idea how to manage some challenges because they are aware of it”. These preparatory experiences allow students to process the demands of college life in advance, reducing anxiety and helping them to build a proactive mindset before classes officially begin.

## Conclusions

This study explored the experiences of honor graduates from the Parochial School of Catanauan as they transitioned to college. Most participants felt academically and socially prepared, crediting their high school experience for helping them develop study habits, time management, and interpersonal skills. However, emotional readiness varied; some adjusted well, while others struggled with homesickness and adapting to a new environment. Time management was the most common challenge, as participants struggled to balance academic tasks, personal responsibilities, and activities. Financial concerns added to the stress for some. To cope, all participants relied mainly on their families as their strongest support system, providing both emotional and financial help. Six participants also mentioned friends as an important source of encouragement, especially during stressful times. Their coping strategies included focusing on one task at a time, spending time with peers, and seeking motivation from positive quotes. In terms of academic status, four participants described themselves as in good standing, while six reported average performance and ongoing struggles. These findings highlight that success in college requires not just preparation, but continuous adjustment, resilience, and strong support systems. When asked about enhancement programs, most participants agreed that seminars on college preparedness would benefit future first-year students, particularly in strengthening emotional readiness and coping skills.

Based on the results, discussion, and conclusions, the researcher hereby recommends the following:

Given the study's findings, which emphasized the emotional obstacles and adjustment issues faced by honor graduates during their transition to college, future research should focus on establishing a structured College Preparedness Program. This program should be designed to improve students' emotional preparedness, teach practical coping strategies, and increase understanding of the frequent issues students experience in college. Workshops on emotional intelligence, time and stress management, peer mentorship, and simulated college scenarios might all be important components. Evaluating the program's performance can give valuable information for educational institutions seeking to improve the preparation of incoming college students.

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