READY Education

Supporting First-Generation Students

How the Right Communication & Engagement Strategy Can Make a **Big Impact**

YOUR SPEAKERS

Dr. Christine Deacons

VP of Student Success
Ready Education

Carrie Dionne

Campus Success
Consultant & Former
First-Gen Student
Ready Education

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YOUR PANELISTS

Kow Samman
Product Manager
Azusa Pacific University

Jeffrey Olsen
VP of Student Experience
Post University

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WHAT WE'LL COVER

- The **additional challenges** first-gen students face compared to their peers

- How **digital communities** & **mobile technology** can help these students build meaningful connections and **access the right resources**

- **Specific communication & engagement strategies** universities have used to help first-gen students navigate their college experience

QUICK POLL

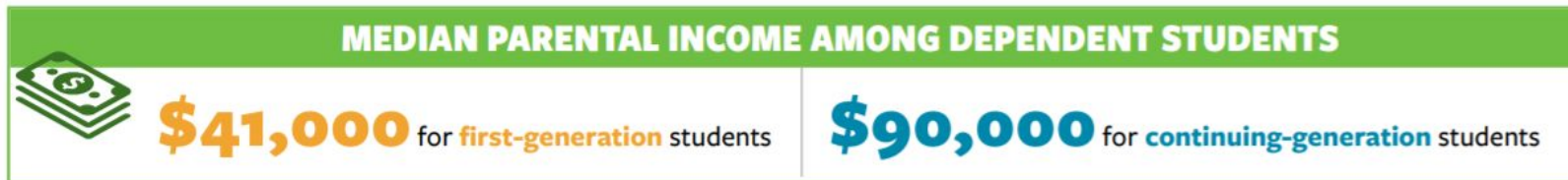# What does it mean to be "**First-Gen**"?

✉ Definition

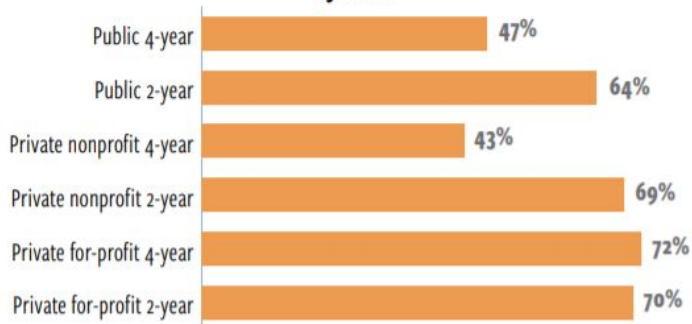# Students whose biological parents did not complete a four-year college degree.

It's important to consider **intersectionality**. Many **first-generation** students are also:

- Native American/Indigenous Peoples (2x as likely to be 1st-generation)
- Homeless
- Former Foster Youth
- DACA students and First-Gen Americans
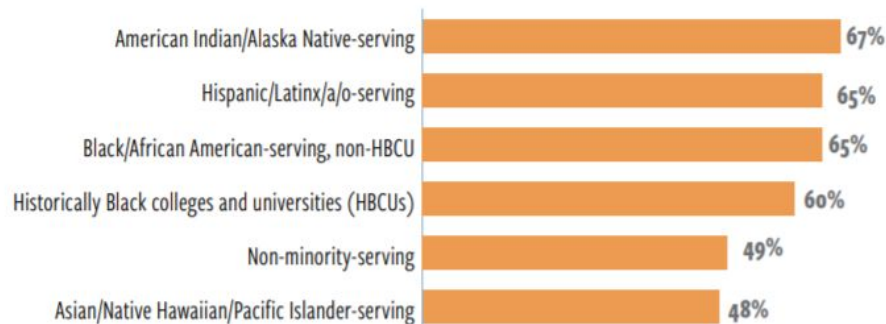- Transfer students
- Pell eligible

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Who are **First-Generation Students**?

MEDIAN PARENTAL INCOME AMONG DEPENDENT STUDENTS

$41,000 for **first-generation** students

$90,000 for **continuing-generation** students

Percentage of Undergraduates Who Were First-generation, by Sector

Public 4-year	47%
Public 2-year	64%
Private nonprofit 4-year	43%
Private nonprofit 2-year	69%
Private for-profit 4-year	72%
Private for-profit 2-year	70%

Percentage of Undergraduates Who Were First-generation, by Type of Minority-Serving Institution

American Indian/Alaska Native-serving	67%
Hispanic/Latinx/a/o-serving	65%
Black/African American-serving, non-HBCU	65%
Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)	60%
Non-minority-serving	49%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-serving	48%

(NPSAS:16, 2018)

THE **NUMBERS**

33% of U.S students are considered first-generation

(firstgen.NASPA.org, 2018)

50% are pell grant recipients

(NCES, 2015)

16% less likely to graduate than their counterparts

(Startz, 2022)

27% of first-generation students finish college within four years.

(firstgen.NASPA.org, 2018)

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First-gen students face additional social and economic **challenges** compared to their counterparts including…

- Difficulty navigating the academic system (less confidence & academic preparedness)
- Family conflicts & guilt
- Shame, confusion, anxiety
- Lower family income
- Gap in access to technology, resources for books/course materials, etc.
- Greater social isolation
- Stigma and discrimination

Sense of Belonging & Engagement

- Research
  - Tinto, Astin, Kuh
  - House, Neal & Kolb
    - Academic distress
    - Financial distress
    - Work hours

- Reluctant to ask questions
  - Fear of being "found out"

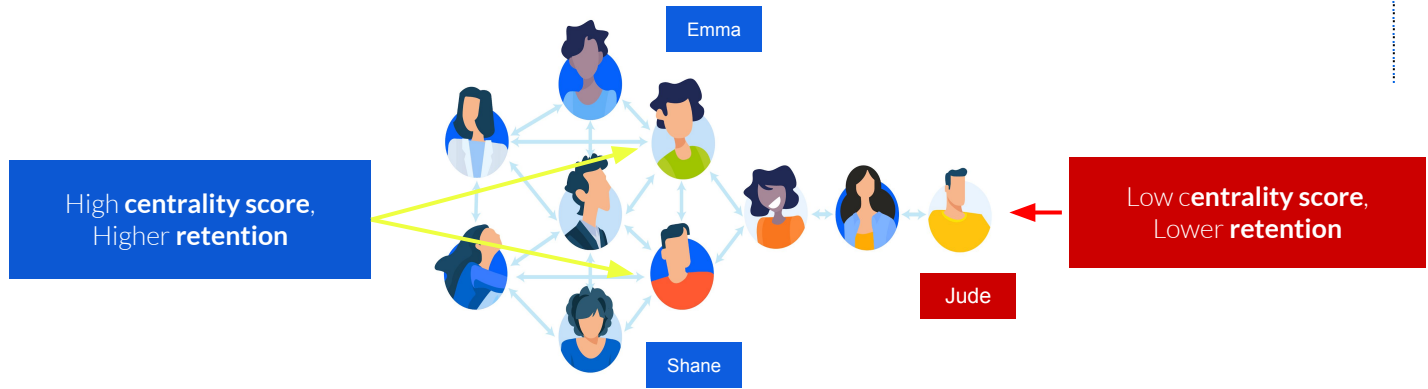- Support networks are critical for first-gen students

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Research Shows
Digital Connections Predict Retention
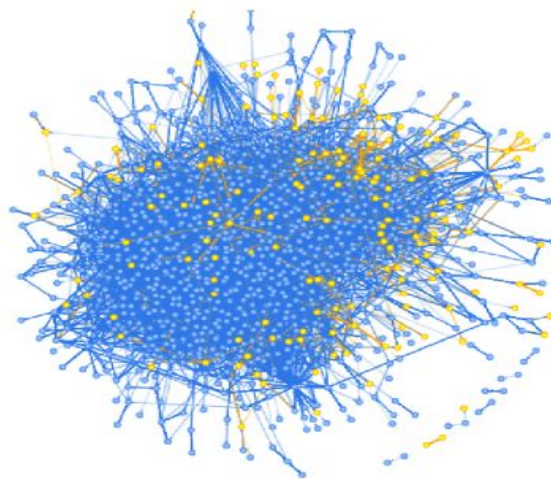
The Power of Digital Connection

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

- **Blue dots** = students who persisted **Yellow dots** = students who dropped out

- **Lines** = digital connections

How can we help **First-Gen Students** connect with each other and access resources they need?
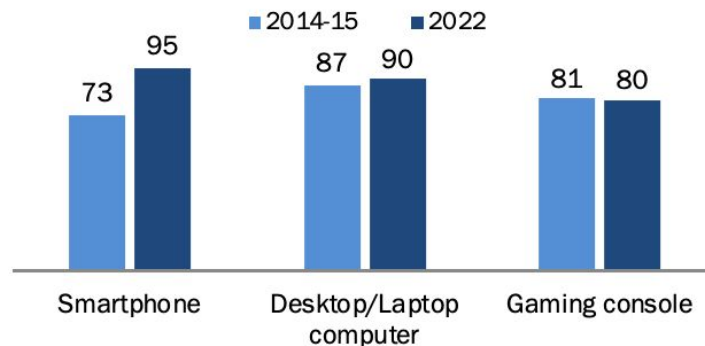
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1

Mobile access to information and resources via an intuitive, and easy to use experience.

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The proliferation of mobile in students' lives is nearly **ubiquitous...**

Nearly all teens in 2022 have access to a smartphone, up from 73% in 2014-15

% of U.S. teens who say they have access to the following devices

■ 2014-15 ■ 2022

Device	2014-15	2022
Smartphone	73	95
Desktop/Laptop computer	87	90
Gaming console	81	80

Note: Teens refer to those ages 13 to 17. Those who did not give an answer are not shown. The 2022 question wording further clarified access at home.
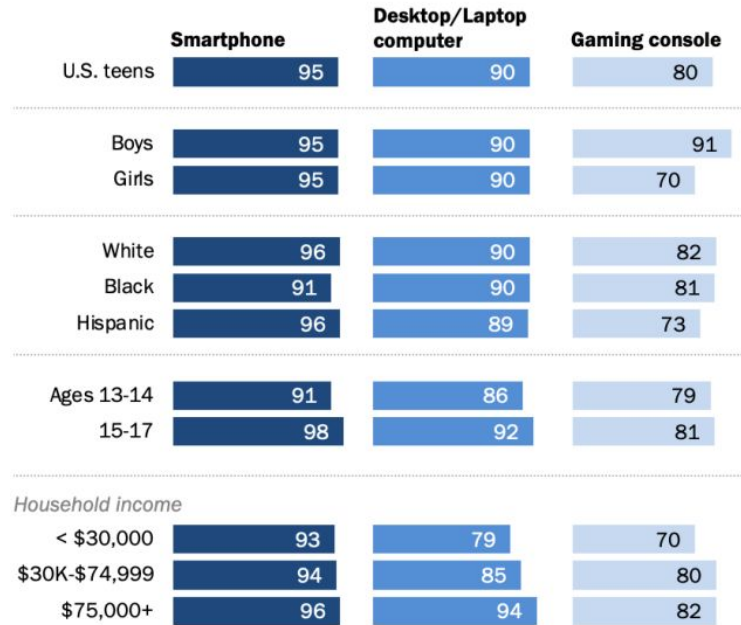Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

...across almost every **demographic**

Teens living in lower-income households are less likely to report having a computer, gaming console

% of U.S. teens who say they have or have access to the following devices at home

	Smartphone	Desktop/Laptop computer	Gaming console
U.S. teens	95	90	80
Boys	95	90	91
Girls	95	90	70
White	96	90	82
Black	91	90	81
Hispanic	96	89	73
Ages 13-14	91	86	79
15-17	98	92	81
Household income			
< $30,000	93	79	70
$30K-$74,999	94	85	80
$75,000+	96	94	82

Note: Teens refer to those ages 13 to 17. White and Black teens include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic teens are of any race. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

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Centralizing Resources & Information

- Integrating key university systems into one digital hub with Single Sign On (SSO) creates a **one-stop-shop** for First-Gen students to access everything they need

- **Help First-Gen students navigate the business of being a student—**from paying bills to understanding FAFSA requirements and deadlines.

- Eliminates trying to keep track of and understand disparate systems.

South Piedmont Community College

Supporting First-Gen Students
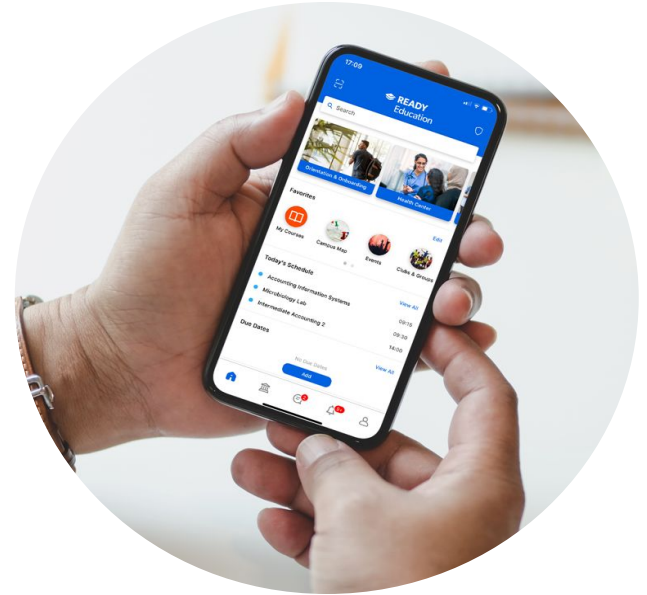
- Public, community college in North Carolina with a large First-Gen and rural student population

- Created a **Campus Guide** in their app to centralize and make finding available resources easier

- Nominated for prestigious **Bellwether Award** based on how they have used mobile technology

- Top 5 tiles so far for Fall 2022 are Academic focused: Canvas, Email, Student Portal, Campus Wayfinding, Advising

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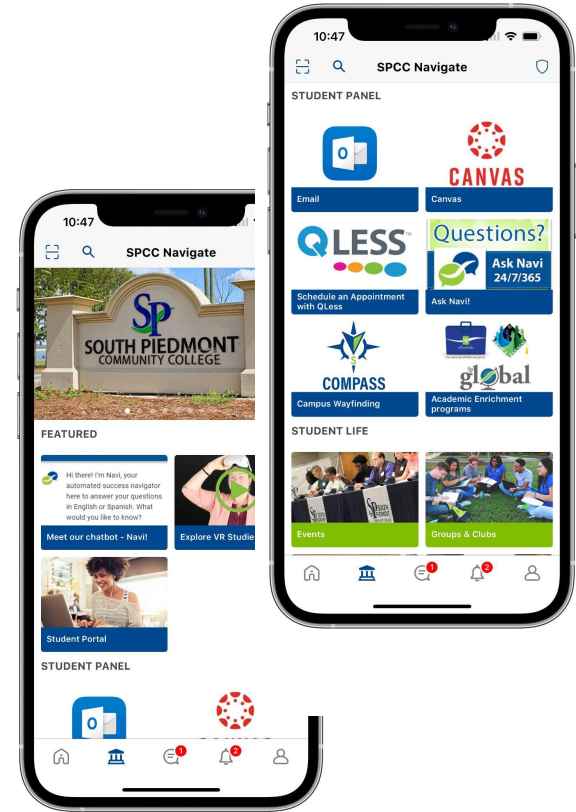
How are first-gen students **accessing information and resources** on the APU Now app and how is this **helping them navigate being a student**?

Kow Samman
Product Manager

AP

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2

Relevant, **targeted communications** to specific groups of students **in real-time**.

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Keeping **First-Gen Students Informed**

✓ **Push notifications**

✓ Dynamic **Audiences**

✓ Featured **Content**

✓ **Centralized information**

✓ Direct **1:1** or **1:many** outreach

✓ Encourage Daily Use

Public community college in Huntington Beach, California; strong First-Gen population

- "As a **First gen student myself,** I'm able to put myself in their shoes. **It's hard for them to understand and keep track of all of the important dates. Because of this, I set reminders (via push notifications**) for those dates including registration, add/drop, FAFSA, and DreamAct applications." - **Jovani V. Figueroa**

- Reduces overwhelm, increases persistence and success
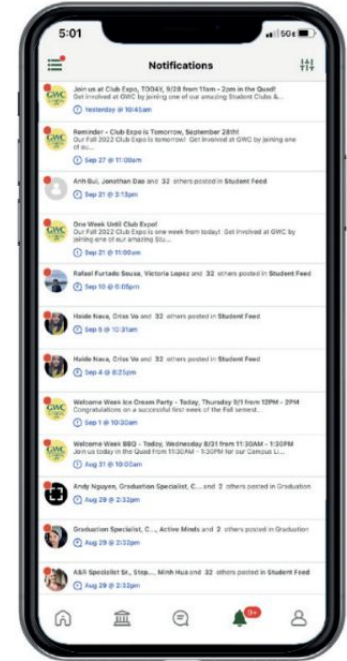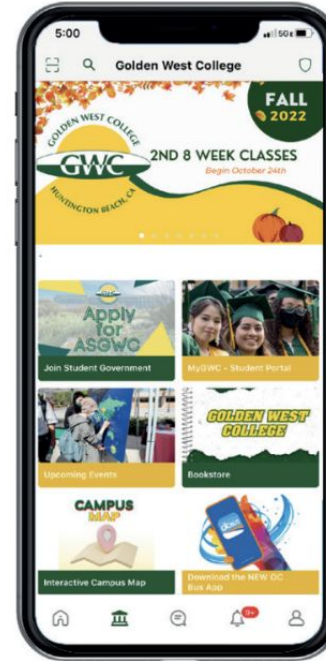
How are **audiences** and **channels** used to enhance communication with **specific** groups of students?

Kow Samman
Product Manager

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Could you tell us about how **Post's News Feed** is used to reach different populations at your institution?

Jeffrey Olsen
VP of Student Experience

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EST. 1890

3

Private, digital spaces that allow first-gen students to find each other and **build relationships** that support their **success**.

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The **Student Community** Feed

✓ Help students **build relationships** in a familiar way

✓ Open channels of 2-way **communication**

✓ Enable faculty + staff to communicate, engage, and see the **pulse of the campus**
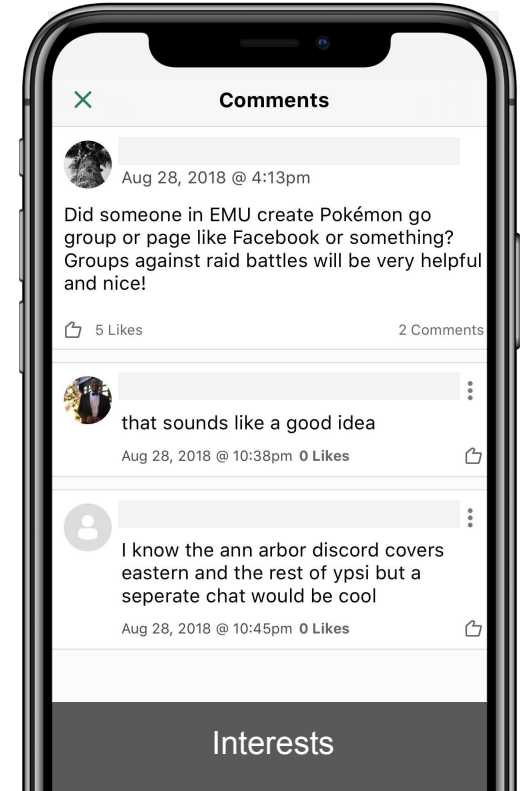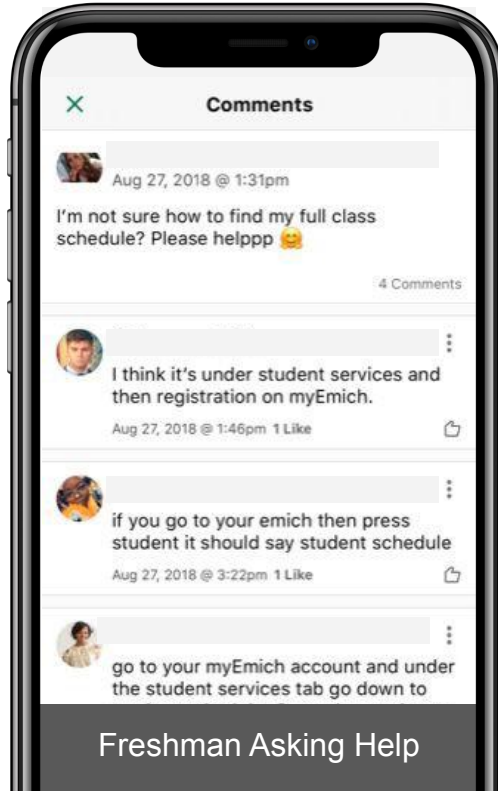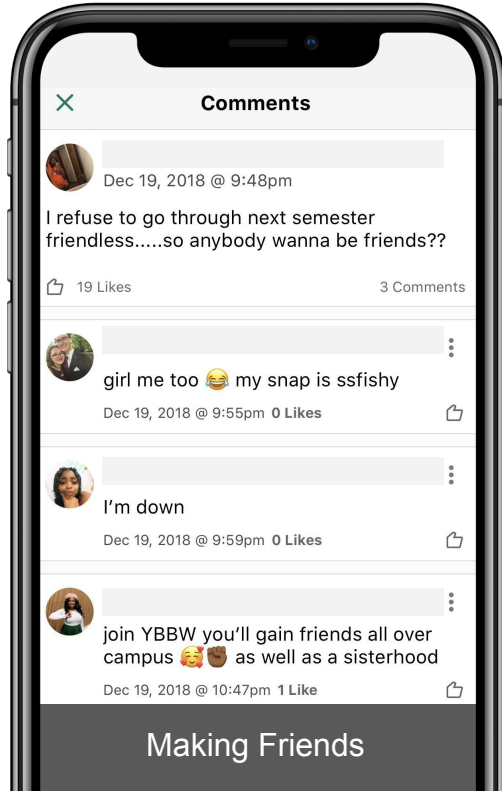
✓ Create a **personalized experience**
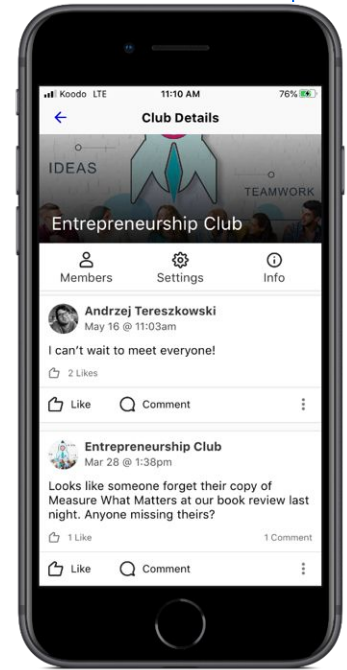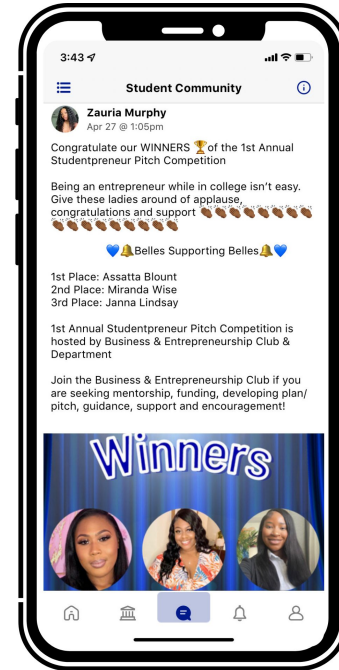
EMU Edge Program

- Grant funded

- 200+ new participants each fall

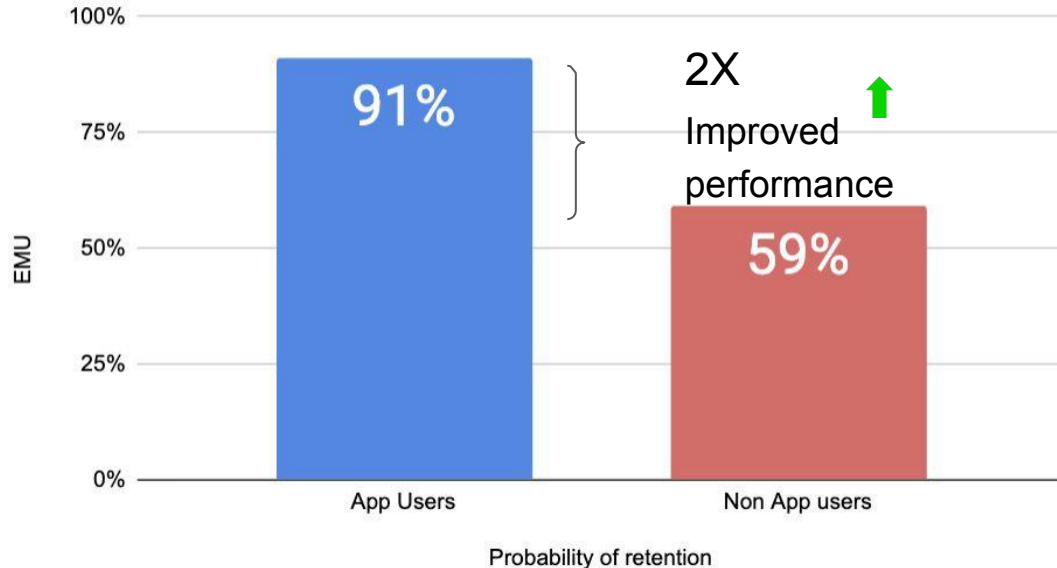- Academically and/or economically "at-risk"

- 58% first-generation

Building a Campus Community

Making Friends

Freshman Asking Help

Interests

Summer Engagement Improves Retention

Before Terms Starts

2X
Improved
performance

Actionable Data:

- Day 1 of classroom, identify **disengaged** students

- Students **form social connections**

- Students **get familiar** with campus resources

How important is creating a **sense of belonging** among students at Post University? What are some of the ways having **an institution-wide app help** you do that?

Jeffrey Olsen
VP of Student Experience

READY Education

Post
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EST. 1890

Could you speak a little bit about **APU's Student Ambassador** program and its **impact** on **student engagement** and **sense of belonging**?

Kow Samman
Product Manager

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What is the Ambassador Program?

✓ A **group of student volunteers** who are passionate about making **APU Now** a **positive** and **engaging community**.

✓ Help with **providing feedback** and helping with **building interest** with the app.

✓ Creating **engaging content** in the community that encourage **student engagement** within the app.

✓ In return **student ambassadors** are rewarded with a **verified profile** - blue check.

✓ **Ambassadors** tend to also **receive campus-wide recognition**

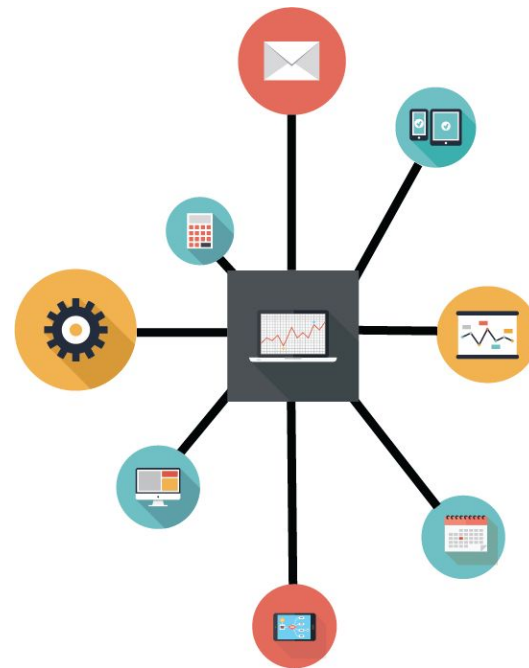✓ Being part of this team gives them a **sense of ownership**
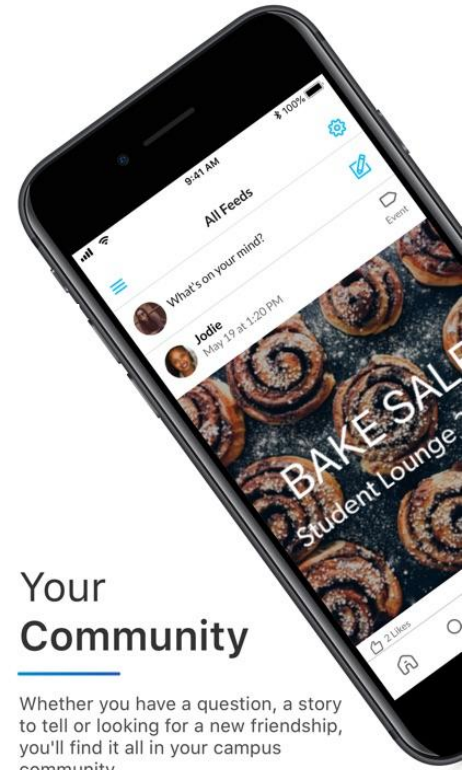
Your
Community

Whether you have a question, a story to tell or looking for a new friendship, you'll find it all in your campus community.

4 **Proactive student communication** & automated content workflow **intervention**

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Taking Student **Communication** from **Reactive** **to Proactive**

Our goal is to help first-gen students to engage with material that is relevant to them in a **non-threatening way**, allowing us to intervene much earlier in the cycle where we have an opportunity to actually make a difference in their outcome.

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First-gen students are often embarrassed or intimated to ask questions...

But it doesn't mean they don't have them.

How do I pay my bill?

How do I register for classes?

What does "R" mean on my schedule?

I'm **stressed** and I don't know what to do.

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Proactive communication & intervention

→ Build a form

→ Promote your form

→ Students get notified about the form

→ Students see the post

→ Students take the quiz

→ Students self-identify

→ Push resources to self-identified students

→ Students get notified about resources

→ Students engage with resources

Closing
the loop

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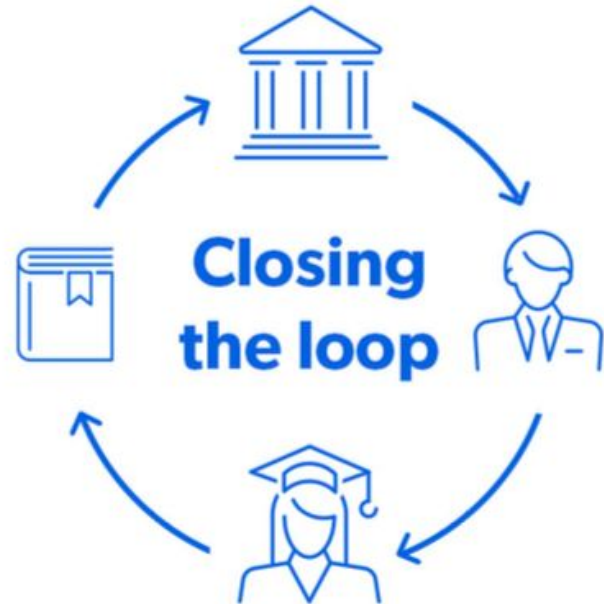
A quick look at **Interventions+**

Edit Form

Let's Check in on Your Mood

Form Info

Form Builder

Share

Results

Name

Let's Check in on Your Mood

Category

Health and Wellness

Host

⚡ Scheduled

Start Date   📅 Nov 16, 2022 4:27 pm ✕

Repeats   None

📋 Post in Channel

Host   Counseling and Psychological Services... ▾

Channel   Student Feed ▾

Mid-terms are over and the holidays are approaching. It's a good time to do a menta Take the survey for tips on how you can manage your stress.

▦ Let's Check in on Your Mood

🖼 Add image   ⊕ Add campus content

4:54

← Let's Check in on Your Mood

In a typical week, I feel:

○ Generally happy. I get upset or frustrated sometimes, but I can usually shake it off.

○ Blank or empty—almost like I can't feel anything.

● Pretty down and sad.

○ Content

○ Irritable

Next

4:35

☰   Student Feed   ⓘ

🔍 Search

👤✓ What's on Your Mind?

🏛 **Counseling and Psychological Servic...**
Today @ 4:27pm

Mid-terms are over and the holidays are approaching. It's a good time to do a mental health check. Take the survey for tips on how you can manage your stress.
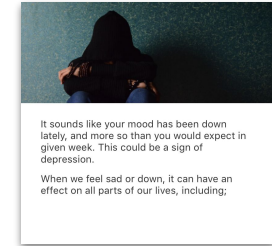
▦ Let's Check in on Your Mood

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ⋮

🆘 **24-hour Crisis Line**
Yesterday @ 1:33pm

Finals are next week. But that doesn't mean you should pull an all-nighter. Test yourself to see if you're getting enough sleep.

▦ Are you getting enough sleep?

👍 Like   💬 Comment

🏠   🏛   💬   🔔¹   👤

It sounds like your mood has been down lately, and more so than you would expect in given week. This could be a sign of depression.

When we feel sad or down, it can have an effect on all parts of our lives, including;

4:59

←   Resource Details

7 Things To Know About Therapy

1. **Explore your options.** How do you find a therapist? Our Counseling and Psychological Services is a great place to start.

🏛 **About CAPS**
Hours and Contact information

- Here are some other potential resources:

a. Professional organizations offer listings of therapists who have specialized training. ABCT.org and ADAA.org are two excellent resources.

b. Your insurance company can provide a list of therapists in your area who are considered "in network." Seeing an in-network provider usually means that you will pay only a co-pay to see your therapist.

2. **Do your research.** Check out the website of a therapist you are considering. You can learn a lot about the therapist's areas of expertise, approach to therapy, and other important information by looking at his/her website. Look for someone who

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⬢ **READY** Education

Interventions+

Taking communications
from reactive to proactive

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Supporting First-Gen Students

MOBILE ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES
Meet first-gen students where they are—on their phones

TARGETED COMMUNICATION AT THE RIGHT TIME
Helps first-gen students navigate being a student & hit important deadlines

PRIVATE DIGITAL SPACES TO CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING
Research shows sense of belonging helps students succeed and can have an even bigger impact on first-gen student populations

PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION & RESOURCE INTERVENTION
Sharing resources & information first-gen students need to succeed but are too embarrassed to ask about and/or admit they need help with

Quick Poll

Questions?

For more information please contact

Carrie Dionne

Carrie.Dionne@readyeducation.com

Dr. Christine Deacons

christistine.deacons@readyeducation.com

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Thank you

Have a **wonderful** day.

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Closing the Gap

CREATE A **SENSE** OF **BELONGING**

✓ Help students **build relationships** in a familiar way

✓ Open channels of 2-way **communication**

✓ Enable faculty + staff to communicate, engage, and see the **pulse of the campus**

✓ Create a **personalized experience**
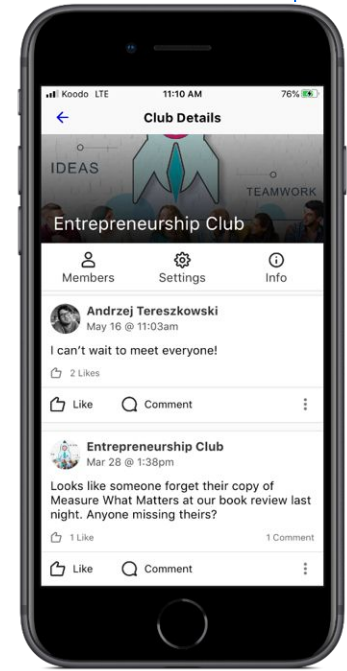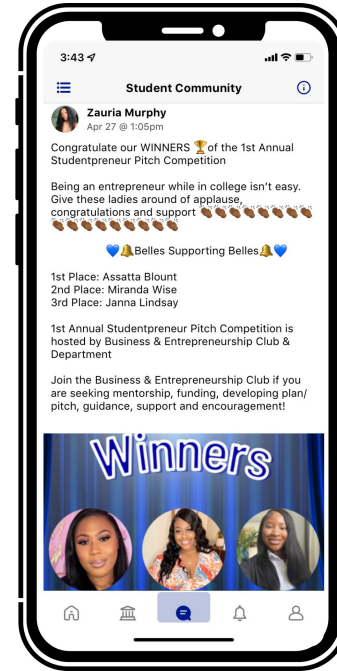
Supporting Students

- TRiO SSS

- Cohort programs

  Mentoring - older first-generation students

  Structure - academic support

  Financial guidance - dedicated financial specialist

- Programs specifically designed for first-generation transfer students

THE **NUMBERS**

33% of U.S students are considered first-generation

(firstgen.NASPA.org, 2018)

50% are pell grant recipients

(NCES, 2015)

16% less likely to graduate than their counterparts

27% of first-generation students finish college within four years.

(firstgen.NASPA.org, 2018)

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Fostering Sense of Belonging

- Connect students with one another

  Common interests

  Mentoring

  Program of study

- Network development

  Teach networking skills

Increased app engagement significantly **reduced Summer Melt**

EASTERN
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

√ Eastern Michigan University was struggling to find a cost-effective method of capturing at-risk student participation at various service points.

✓ Help students **build relationships** in a familiar way

✓ Open channels of 2-way **communication**

✓ Enable faculty + staff to communicate, engage, and see the **pulse of the campus**

✓ Create a **personalized experienc**

EMU Engage App
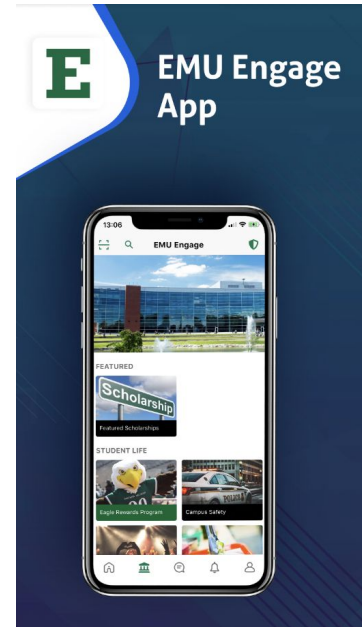
Panelist Questions

Post - what do you guys see happening in the Feed?
APU - Talk about the Ambassador program

Improving Accessibility

- Examine utilization rates of key resources

  Financial Aid/Disability Resources, Self-Serve Resources (content, portals, etc.,), People Resources (advisors, tutors, counselors)

- Breakdown potential blockers

  Centralize resources and extend hours when possible

- Track satisfaction rates for services

- Make targeted improvements

Communication

- Communicate key dates and deadlines

- Targeted messaging

  Relevance

- Think outside of the box - students don't read email!

  Text messaging

  Announcements on website

  Utilize social platform to meet students where they live
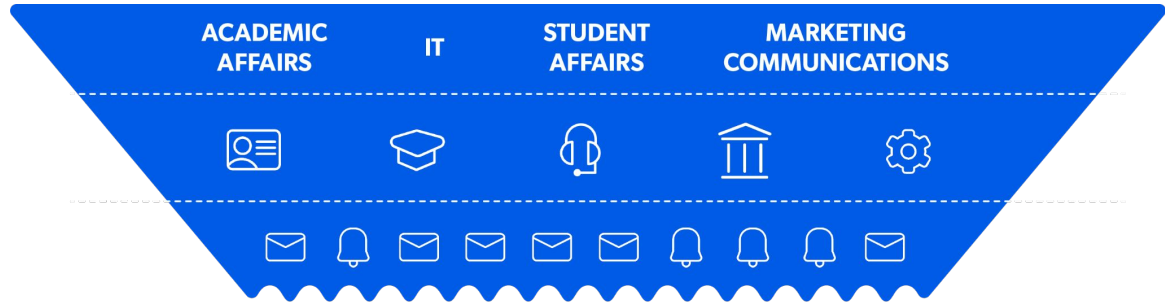
Closing the Gap with Mobile Technology

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Differences in Challenges

	First-Generation	Continuing-Generation
Age 30 or above	28%	16%
Attended Full-time	40%	48%
Had Dependents	30%	16%
Hours Worked	20	12

(firstgen.naspa.org)

Differences in Help-Seeking

	First-Generation	Continuing-Generation
Financial Aid	65%	49%
Health Services	14%	29%
Academic Advising	55%	72%
Academic Support	30%	37%
Career Services	16%	17%

(firstgen.naspa.org)

GWC

Talk about push notifications going out for specific deadlines that these students need to know about but it's a lot / too much for them to keep track of.

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EASTERN
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

EMU Engage App

✓ Before working with Ready Education, Eastern Michigan University was struggling to find a **cost-effective method of capturing at-risk student participation at various service points**.

✓ Increased app engagement **significantly reduced Summer Melt**; impact size was even greater among First-Gen students

READY Education

HOW DO YOU KEEP STUDENTS INFORMED ABOUT EVENTS?

Katey Provence
Director, Student Engagement
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro

Students **Don't** Read **Email**

 READY Education

HOW DO YOU FOSTER BELONGING IN YOUR STUDENTS?

Katey Provence
Director, Student Engagement
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro

READY Education
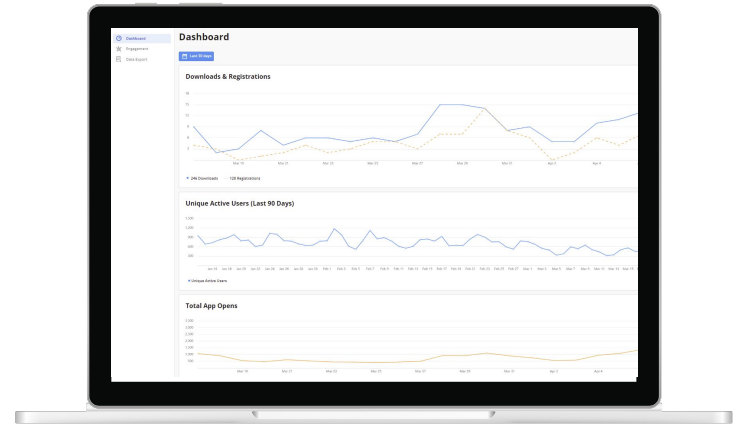
Students without reliable internet access have struggled to complete course-work, watch or participate in online lectures, and take tests.

INSIGHTS REPORT

Failed Connection

The broadband gap

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

READY Education

97%

The share of college students who said having access to a stable, high-speed internet connection was important for them to succeed academically.

Source: New America and Third Way survey, 2020

INSIGHTS REPORT

Failed Connection

The broadband gap

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

READY Education

SPCC

South Piedmont Community College

They don't have access to laptops or wifi. Can get all the information they need from their phones

Citations

Cahoon, S. (2021, June 10). *Email open rates by industry (& other top email benchmarks)*. HubSpot Blog. Retrieved from
https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/average-email-open-rate-benchmark#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20average%20email%20open%20rate%20for%20education%20companies,the%20education%20category%20is%2025%25.

Ha, L., Youngnyo Joa, C., Gabay, I., & Kim, K. (2016). ITERA 14th Annual Conference on Telecommunications and Information Techonology. In *Does U.S. College Students' Social Media Use Affect School E-Mail Avoidance and Campus Involvement?* Bowling Green, Ohio; Bowling Green State University.

Roberts, J., Yaya, L., & Manolis, C. (2014). The invisible addiction: Cell-phone activities and addiction among male and Female College students. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, *3*(4), 254–265. https://doi.org/10.1556/jba.3.2014.015

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/8-18-census-integrated-report-final-web_0.pdf

2 Have a Social Component

✓ Keeps **students engaged and coming back**

✓ **Find their community** within the institution

✓ Fosters community and **sense of belonging**

✓ Organic **peer-to-peer sourcing of answers and information** (saves staff time)
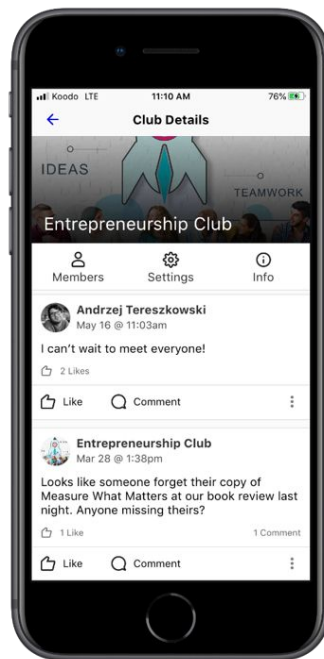
✓ Helps students **build relationships** in a familiar way

✓ Creates a **personalized experience**

✓ Enables faculty + staff to communicate, engage, and see the **pulse of the campus**

1 True Enterprise Solution

✓ Your app needs to **integrate across ALL university departments** (no silos)

✓ **Centralize information** so students can access everything from course material, to housing, to financial aid, and career support **all in one place** .
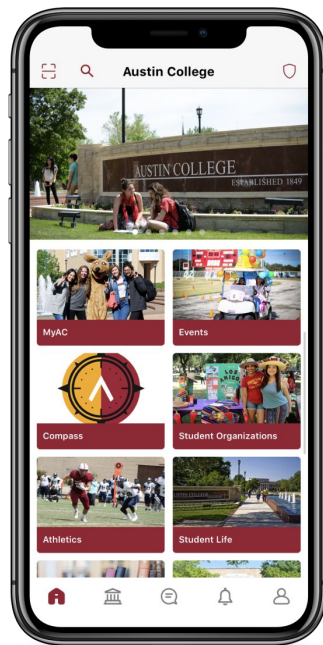
✓ Supported by **leadership**

✓ **Integrated** with your SIS/ERP, CRM, LMS and other key systems

✓ Support **new student orientation** and student workflows

READY Education

What We Know About **Supporting Students**

- **Students** don't necessarily know when or how to seek support in college.

- **First generation students** struggle to navigate the bureaucracy experienced during transition

- **Pell eligible students** often have to work one or two jobs while in school to make ends meet

- **Academically at-risk students** often lack the skills, strategies, and discipline needed to successfully complete college level coursework

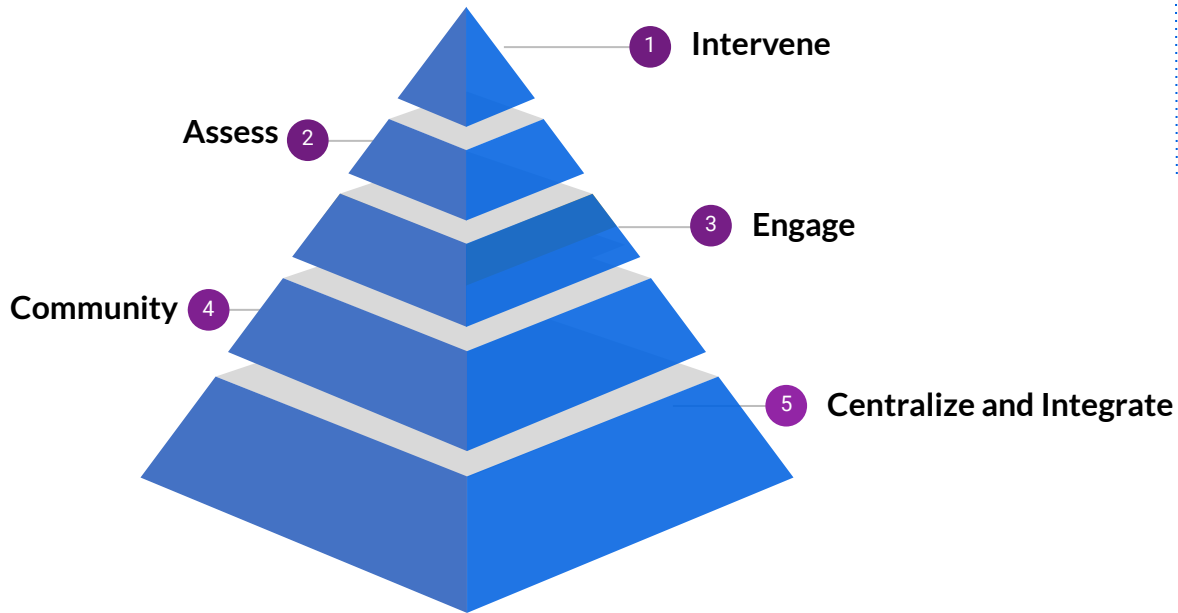- **Many students resist** / are afraid of asking for help

Removing Barriers

✓ **Easily** accessible **resources** & **answers**

✓ Quick **on-the-go** access to **LMS**, **event calendars**, and student **orgs**

✓ At-risk students need to be identified early (**not just academic risk**)

3 **Targeted Communication**

✓ Send **Push Notifications** to **specific segments and groups**

✓ Alerts, reminders, and notifications.

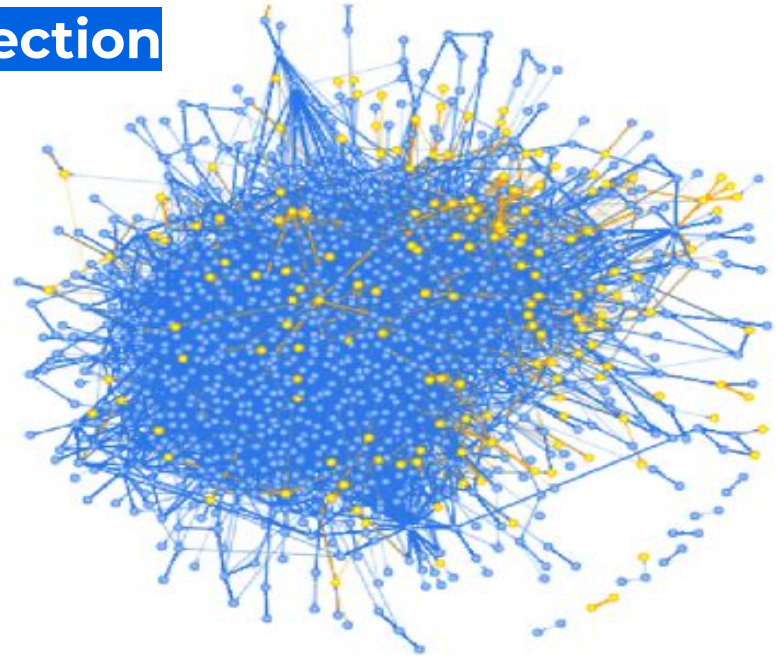✓ Reach the **right student** with the **right information** at the **right time**

READY Education

Student-to-STUDENT Connection

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs

- Belongingness with Peers

- Centrality

Blue dots = students who persisted

Yellow dots = students who dropped out

Lines = digital connections

Eastern Michigan University was struggling to find a cost-effective method of capturing students at-risk across multiple service points.

{
100% at-risk student adoption and over 49,000 check-ins into study tables

" **Top 5 Predictors** "

Usage of the app ranked in the top 5 Predictors of At-Risk Student Persistence

88% felt a sense of belonging to the campus community
}
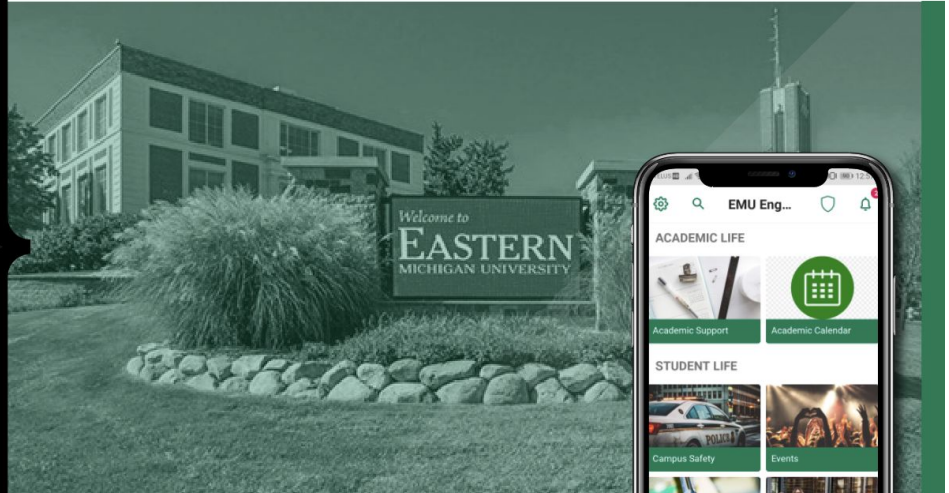
Students aren't reading or responding to email.

READY Education

Transform: Communication

Reach the Right Student with the Right Message at the Right Time

- Students spend X amount of time on their phones
- Students don't read emails
- Apps provide flexible on-the-go access
- Centralizes important information
- Brings the digital campus experience to All Students
    - SPCC Study
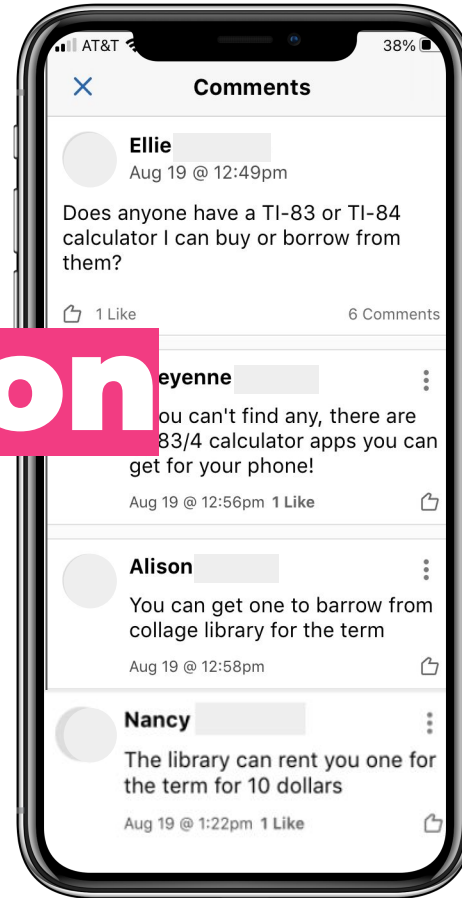
Implications

- **Students** who are **connected** to their **peers** are more likely to **persist**

- **Institutions need** to **meet students** where they live - in a **digital space**

- This space is particularly **important** for **first-generation** and Pell eligible students

Orientation and Onboarding

- First impression for incoming students
  - Tech enabled environment that is easy to use
  - Reduces information overload via email
  - Facilitates student connections
  - Replaces clunky third-party spot solutions
    - Onboarding students into a platform with longevity
      - Something they will use beyond orientation
    - Orientation tile includes
      - Schedule of events and locations
      - Communication hub
      - Easy check-in with assessment

CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

READY Education