Designing the Future University

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Inclusion & A Sense of Belonging at Arizona State University

Recommendations for the creation and implementation of an Arizona State University virtual community-building resource for students, faculty, and staff members.

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Executive Summary

Following the completion of research and interviews with key stakeholders, the team has come to the conclusion that an ASU-centric social media platform and resource hub should be created and put into operation. At Arizona State University, the purpose of this platform is to foster a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging among students, staff, and faculty. A directory of all ASU clubs and organizations, a discussion forum, a news section, a resources section, a section for virtual events, a section for job and internship opportunities, and a feedback section are some of the features that should be included in the platform. Additionally, the platform ought to be available in a variety of languages, and it ought to receive extensive promotion across all four ASU campuses. ASU should designate resources for the platform's creation and maintenance, appoint a team of moderators, and conduct regular surveys to measure the platform's effectiveness and gather feedback for improving it in order to increase the likelihood that the platform will be successful. This platform has the potential to improve the overall experience that ASU students, staff, and faculty have at the university, as well as to foster a sense of community and provide useful resources and information.

About Designing the Future University

Designing the Future University is a multi-degree program course being offered in Spring 2023 at Arizona State University. This course is part of the Humanities Lab, which is an innovative program that ASU offers in hopes of providing a unique learning opportunity that focuses on collaboration to explore and address complex social challenges. For the purpose of the Designing the Future University course, the social challenge that is being explored is "how to design the future university in what is clearly a rapidly changing world." In order to efficiently do this, our team is working on accounting for diverse factors such as economics, social dynamics, technology, cultural expression, global environmental change, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

About Our Team

Our team is constructed of individuals from diverse academic and personal backgrounds. In an academic sense, our team contains undergraduate and graduate students with fields of study, including History, Business Management, Engineering, Innovation, and Sustainability Solutions. Knowing the background of every individual in our group will enable us to have a better understanding of the level of inclusion in all aspects of our campus community.

What is Inclusion and A Sense of Belonging?

Before beginning to tackle such a large topic as inclusion and a sense of belonging, it is imperative that we have a complete understanding of the matter to allow us to build a strong foundation to build upon. For the purpose of our team's research and this paper, we have identified and defined inclusion and a sense of belonging as follows:

Inclusion: Inclusion to us means empowering students to be involved in something bigger than themselves. It is not just being part of a club or organization, but also being able to participate seamlessly, regardless of any circumstances they may face.

Sense of Belonging: "The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group"(Cornell University, n.d.).

What is ASU's Current Stance on Inclusion?

ASU's current stance on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is that it "promotes equal opportunity through affirmative action in employment and educational programs and activities. Discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, and qualified veteran status. Equal employment opportunity includes, but is not limited to, recruitment, promotion, termination, compensation, benefits, transfers, university-sponsored training, education, tuition assistance, and social and recreational programs."

ASU is committed to providing a sense of inclusion on all four of its campuses. ASU engages in building an inclusive workspace to allow for many different perspectives, advancement opportunities, and knowledge to be implemented to develop inclusive solutions. ASU has done a lot of great things to include people from all walks of life. It is clearly seen by the accessibility for those with disabilities and its earn-to-learn scholarship, for example. ASU also has a massive international student population, making it one of the most ethnically diverse

schools in the country! All of these details align with the ASU charter and highlight the value that the university has for inclusion.

> **ASU Charter**: "ASU is a comprehensive public research university, **measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed**; advancing research and discovery of public value; and **assuming fundamental responsibility** for the **economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves**" (Arizona State University, n.d.).

Key Points and Questions

"In this changing climate, how can academic institutions both encourage qualified students to apply and foster an inclusive culture once they arrive?" (Baskin, 2021).

It is imperative that colleges and universities create a space where students are able to express themselves fully through being included and fully embracing their sense of belonging. Inclusion and a sense of belonging are essential aspects that allow individuals to become involved, which leads them to have the confidence to participate in campus events, attend club meetings, use their voice and be heard, and make a difference, so they can have a positive college experience. Though, because of many factors, this is not always the case. There are many changing components that our team is trying to get to the root cause to enable us to create a solution to fix these critical issues.

Some questions our team wanted to answer were the following:

- How might we actually be able to improve an area of a student's life on campus?
- What is something that would actually be utilized by the students?
- What is something we could propose to ASU that may draw some attention?
- What issues do students face that are most impactful?

Issues & Limitations in the Current ASU Model

As a rapidly growing higher-education institution that prides itself on whom it includes and not by whom it excludes, ASU has found itself in a complex situation regarding inclusion and a sense of belonging. ASU has taken phenomenal steps in increasing its inclusivity, as seen with general enrollment rates and with the fact that ASU was just declared a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education (Arizona State University, n.d.). With these steps, ASU is trying to create and provide anyone with an equitable chance to enroll in the university; however, the university has a habit of focusing on recruitment and not necessarily retention. As a result, while ASU tries to create a sense of belonging and inclusivity, many stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and staff) can find themselves facing numerous types of issues and challenges. Through our team's research, we have identified some of the predominant issues and challenge areas that need to be addressed by the university. (It is important to note that our team's proposed project can assist in addressing elements of these identified areas; however, additional support and resources need to be created to fully address these issues and challenges, as they are deeply rooted within the institution's practices and history.)

Some of the identified areas that need to be addressed include:

- Financial Barriers
- Mental Health & Mental Well-being
- Gaps in College Opportunity

Financial Barriers

Due to the rise in tuition over time, a financial barrier has been created, which prevents many people from being able to pursue or complete a higher education degree program. These financial barriers not only include a steadily increasing university tuition but also rapidly inflating housing expenses. As a public university, ASU does have a lower cost of attendance

compared to that of a private university; however, the increase in cost percent is actually higher with public universities such as ASU than that of a private university.

> "Tuition and fees at private National Universities have jumped 134%. Out-of-state tuition and fees at public National Universities have risen 141%. In-state tuition and fees at public National Universities have grown the most, increasing 175%" (Kerr & Wood, 2022).

This can be seen when comparing ASU tuition costs from 2002-2003 to that of 2022-2023:

2002–2003 Resident and Nonresident Tuition		
Hours	Resident*	Nonresident*
1	$ 131.00	$ 460.00
2	262.00	920.00
3	393.00	1,380.00
4	524.00	1,840.00
5	655.00	2,300.00
6	786.00	2,760.00
7	1,254.00	3,220.00
8	1,254.00	3,680.00
9	1,254.00	4,140.00
10	1,254.00	4,600.00
11	1,254.00	5,060.00
12 or more	1,254.00	5,514.00

* Tuition is subject to change. In addition to tuition, students are charged other fees (e.g., the Student Recreation Complex fee and financial aid trust fee).

ASU tuition costs vary on a number of things, the biggest being whether you are a resident or nonresident of Arizona. ASU in-state tuition costs less than ASU out-of-state tuition (roughly $10,700 per year vs. $28,000 per year for a bachelor's degree).

(Arizona State University, 2003)   (Arizona State University, 2023)

As seen when comparing the tuition costs from 2002-2003 to that of 2022-2023, there is a drastic increase for both resident and nonresident students. This drastic increase highlights the need for tuition reduction programs and further intervention from the university, as currently, students that want to enroll in the university can find themselves facing financial barriers and in immense debt. These financial barriers are even worse when we take into account housing expenses and other general fees associated with attending ASU.

2022–2023 expenses for an Arizona resident first-year student

As a first-year student, you'll pay ASU for tuition and fees, on-campus housing and meals. Books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses will vary depending on your spending choices and should be budgeted into your college expenses.

Tuition varies based on program and location. View your actual undergraduate college fee by plugging your program of study into **ASU's Tuition Estimator**.

Calculate your tuition

To get an estimate of what your out-of-pocket costs might look like after financial aid, check out **ASU's Net Price Calculator**.

Base tuition	$10,978
Undergraduate College Fee*	$1,080
Student initiated fees	$640
On-campus housing and meals	$14,718
Books and supplies	$1,320
Transportation	$1,386
Personal	$2,013
Total	**$32,135**

(Arizona State University, n.d.)

As seen in the image above, in order to attend ASU, a student needs to be prepared to spend approximately $32,135. Fortunately, many students do get some type of financial assistance; however, many students still find themselves financially insecure and struggling. This results in many students getting into immense debt and working multiple jobs throughout their tenure as students at ASU. These financial barriers and insecurities create additional burdens and challenges for students, who can find themselves food insecure, housing insecure, performing poorly academically, anxious, depressed, and facing a slew of other mental health and mental well-being issues.

Mental Health & Mental Well-being

The increasing deterioration of mental health and mental well-being are issues that need to be discussed openly in academic spaces. Following the Covid-19 outbreak, many college students found themselves suffering from many mental health problems that were exacerbated as a result of the pandemic (Leonhardt, 2022). With the exacerbation of mental

health and mental well-being issues, it is estimated that approximately 60% of college students are living with some type of mental health disorder (Leonhardt, 2022). With this growing statistic, it is prudent for schools to provide resources and opportunities for students to overcome these barriers and issues. If these resources are not provided, many students can find themselves struggling academically, socially, and personally, which impacts their overall well-being and their experience at a university.

The issues and challenges associated with mental health and mental well-being can be even seen at our own ASU. In 2019 the American College Health Association, conducted a health asseesment of ASU and they had the following findings:

- ASU students reported experiencing the following feelings at least once in the past 12 months:
  - **48.5%** felt so depressed it was difficult to function.
  - **15.4%** seriously considered attempting suicide.
  - **2.2%** reported attempting suicide.
- While many students struggled with mental health and well-being issues, it was also found that many students did not face these challenges alone or did not want to face these challenges alone:
  - **85.2%** of ASU students who noticed another student in distress helped that person get support.
  - **85.5%** of ASU students say that if they were feeling distressed, they would appreciate it if someone helped them to get the support they need.

These statistics highlight that many ASU students find themselves struggling with mental health and mental well-being issues; however, it also highlights the need for inclusivity and a sense of belonging, as many students want to help (or get help) from their fellow community members. This shows the critical value that community and support networks have in removing barriers that cause students to have limitations on their personal, academic, and social experiences.

Gaps in College Opportunity

The final pertinent area that our team chose to explore was gaps in college opportunity, as it correlates to the issues and challenges discussed in the Financial Barriers and Mental Health & Mental Well-being subsections. When it comes to the issues and challenges laid out in the previous two subsections, it is important to note that often students of color and those from historically marginalized communities are more likely to face these issues and challenges (along with many others) as a result of the disparities that faced before graduating from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). While institutions such as ASU try to address these issues and challenges by becoming more "inclusive" in regard to their admittance levels, the gap between white students attaining their bachelor's degrees is more than doubled that of Hispanic and black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

These gaps and the overall challenges that stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and staff) face need to be addressed. One of the effective ways that this has been addressed is through the collaboration and creation of several on-campus organizations, coalitions, and cohorts that focus on providing resources and support for these historically marginalized stakeholders and communities. However, these resources are limited as they primarily support their members, and if stakeholders are unaware of these resources, then they cannot participate and benefit from them. This fact is one of the driving motivators for our team to establish a resource that can help all university stakeholders get involved with these organizations, coalitions, cohorts, and like-minded peers that want to establish critically needed support networks.

Stakeholder Involvement & Perceptions

More people can contribute to creating a more inclusive environment at ASU than one may think. Stakeholders can be found in everyone on campus. Each and every staff, faculty, and staff, as well as many other outside individuals, such as alumni, donors, local community, etc., are key stakeholders and contribute greatly to a functional university. However, for the purpose of our research and project, we are focusing on students, faculty, and staff members. It is important to note that each individual plays a role that helps shape the experience that everyone gets while attending ASU. If every student, faculty, and staff member made a conscious effort to allow the people they come in contact with to feel like they belong, it would go a long way in creating a solid platform on which everyone can stand with confidence.

At Arizona State University, students make up the majority of the stakeholders on the campus. As each student progresses through their college experience, they are creating an impact on campus, and with each success they accomplish, it is reflected back on the university, showcasing that it is fostering students that excel as they work toward obtaining their degree. Students uphold the mission and objectives of the university and are passionate about attending courses that will sharpen their knowledge and allow them to grow. Students also are able to provide constructive feedback, which provides the university with information that will help it improve.

Faculty members supply their courses with valuable resources and quality education for students to learn in an environment that is collaborative and informational. Faculty members conduct research to advance their knowledge and challenge themselves in new and enriching ways. Additionally, faculty members are encouraged to assist students with challenges that arise and provide mentorship to students.

Staff members are integral parts of the success of the overall university. Staff members supply the institution with valuable components, such as resources, maintenance, operations, services, etc. Their strive in work towards planning and developing plays an important role in how the university functions and is a big part in the success of the university.

As of Fall 2022, it was projected that ASU would have a projected 79,232 enrolled in-person students (Arizona State University, 2022). In addition to the substantial number of students at ASU, as of 2022, ASU is the largest employer in the state of Arizona, with more than 5,000 faculty members and more than 14,000 staff members (Arizona State University, n.d.). In order to gain insight into each of these stakeholders' experiences, our team conducted a virtual research survey that was shared with students, faculty, and staff members.

Student, Faculty, & Staff Research Survey: Results & Key Findings

As highlighted in the previous section, in order to gather insight into the involvement and perceptions that stakeholders had on inclusivity and a sense of belonging, our team conducted a virtual research survey that was shared with students, faculty, and staff. This survey was conducted as a way to pinpoint where there may be instances of exclusion and bias and also to help to find avenues for where to focus our attention. The results from our survey assisted us in directing our attention to the solution that would provide the greatest impact and benefit for creating more inclusion and a sense of belonging.
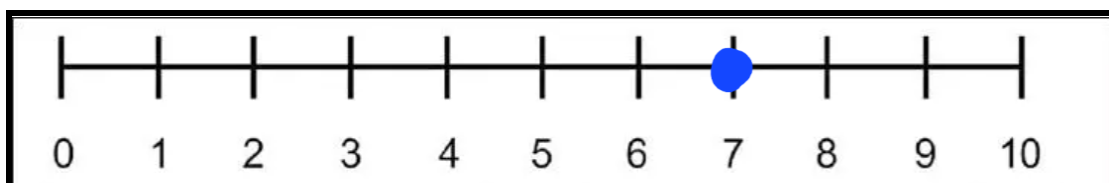
When we began analyzing our survey data, one of the statistics that were pertinent for our research and our project was that on a scale of 0-10, when asked how important inclusion is to them, the average participant response was a 7 out of 10. While this response was lower than we had originally predicted, it still indicated that for many students, faculty, and staff members, inclusion at ASU mattered.

In addition to the research survey indicating that for many stakeholders, inclusion matters through the written participant responses, our team's survey also indicated that many students, faculty, and staff members are concerned about the state of inclusion and a sense of belonging at ASU. One such response that expresses this concern was from a student:

"Ever since becoming a graduate student I have not felt included! I attend class and then go home. My time at ASU feels like a job and I miss that inclusive sense of belonging that students who live on campus have." (Anonymous, Graduate Student)

Another one of the students surveyed expressed that:

"In order to feel a sense of belonging, people have to find their own little community." (Anonymous, Undergraduate Student).

One of the biggest findings from our team's research and virtual research survey is the critical need for participation and involvement with some type of community-building opportunity that is available to stakeholders whether or not they are on campus. This is important to note as there are organization/club/coalition tabling events on campus that target students that are there, but for stakeholders that might not consistently be on campus, such as graduate students, these events are not inclusive of them. As a result, any identified and proposed solution needs to provide community-building opportunities for stakeholders both on and off campus.

Student Body

At ASU, students make up the largest stakeholder group. As of 2021, ASU had a total of 128,788 students enrolled in the university, both on-campus and online (Arizona Board of Regents, 2021). Given the substantial number of students already enrolled at ASU and given that ASU continues to expand operations and admittance numbers, it is critical to consider the perceptions of inclusivity and a sense of belonging of these stakeholders. While the research survey conducted by our team gathered critical insight into the general perceptions of

students, faculty, and staff, it was our team's belief that given the substantial size and value of the student body, additional insight had to be gathered. Therefore, our team conducted interviews with a diverse group of student body members and student leaders to gather additional insight into the student perception of inclusivity and a sense of belonging at the university. Below are some of the perceptions that student leaders and community members have regarding inclusivity and a sense of belonging here at ASU.

"As a person of mixed heritage and a member of a cultural club on campus, a sense of belonging for me means feeling wholeheartedly accepted and valued by the club and the broader community. Actively participating in club activities and building meaningful relationships with other members has aided in making me feel like I'm part of a close-knit family."

(Akilah Davitt; Board Member of PERMIAS Phoenix, Indonesian Student Association)

"Inclusivity to me is the feeling of being comfortable within a specific group. Being inclusive does not necessarily mean having every single group in one setting, but it does mean allowing and supporting for each group to coexist. In my fraternity inclusivity is at the core of what we do and guides our actions."

(Richard Sniderman; Vice President of Omega Delta Phi, Hispanic-Founded Fraternity)

"Inclusivity, along with the other JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) practices are critical to creating a sense of belonging at ASU. Students need to feel represented and safe in order to thrive not only in the classroom but in our community as a whole. When students do not feel included, we as an institution and as a student body are failing our peers and ourselves."

(School of Sustainability JEDI Graduate Student Representative)

"Inclusivity means always ensuring everyone (regardless of their gender, race, nationality, ability, or income) has equal access to opportunities and events. On a day-to-day basis, this means being welcoming to all, and creating a friendly environment. Having a sense of belonging, especially at ASU means that I can feel like I have people and resources around me that support me and my academic work."

(Eliana Burns, Graduate Student)

"Inclusivity and belonging to me means feeling safe to be myself in all respects. It means being accepted for the things that make me different, along with it being embraced. I find this feeling when I am encouraged to do things that I normally shy away from in fear of the way I am perceived, and when I am supported to ignore others perceptions of myself. While they go hand in hand, I think being inclusive also means providing a space for others to have that same feeling, providing that same support and resources as well."

(Member of Alpha Phi Gamma, Asian-Interest Sorority)

The insight and perceptions of our student body members highlight the correlation between inclusivity and performance, both in and out of the classroom. This can additionally be seen with the influence and impact that involvement with student organizations (or the lack thereof) can have on students' perceptions of inclusivity and a sense of belonging. Resources such as student organizations are critical in supporting inclusivity and a sense of belonging for individual students and for historically marginalized groups. The use of these organizations ensures that support networks can be created so that individuals can flourish academically, personally, and socially.

Faculty & Staff

One of the most significant stakeholder groups at ASU, following the students, comprises the esteemed faculty and staff members who diligently contribute to the university's growth and

development. With over 19,600 employees, ASU proudly stands as one of Arizona's largest employers, boasting a diverse workforce consisting of 5,000+ accomplished faculty members and 14,000+ dedicated staff members filling various roles (Arizona State University, n.d.). Given the sheer magnitude of this employee network, our team recognized the vital role that these stakeholders play in our research and solution formulation process.

However, as students, our team initially faced a challenge in comprehending the intricate operations and diverse perspectives of faculty and staff members. To overcome this barrier, we conducted extensive interviews with faculty and staff members from a broad range of backgrounds. These interactions proved to be incredibly valuable in gaining unique and diverse insights into university operations, which enabled us to ideate effective solutions that catered to the diverse needs of the ASU community. Our team would like to share some of the most insightful responses and takeaways we had while conducting these interviews, which helped guide our research and ultimately shape our proposed solutions:

Associate Director of Academic Services at Barrett, The Honors College; Matthew O'Brien Interview:

> Associate Director O'Brien discussed his perspective that ASU faculty and staff are committed to supporting students who seek help, despite occasional questions about aspects of inclusion. He and his team regularly assess their unit's needs to promote diversity and representation in areas such as hiring practices, admissions, goals, and problem-solving. However, change isn't always embraced by ASU students, faculty, and staff, but there is always an effort to improve upon current practices. It is his belief that ASU remains committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff members and is constantly striving to make progress in this area.

Assistant Professor for the School for the Future of Innovation in Society; Jennifer Richter Interview:

Professor Ritcher discussed the historical legacy of the university system in the United States. She highlighted that the system was created by and for the wealthy and elite, which still influences the makeup of university leadership today. Professor Richter also pointed out that if one were to survey the presidents and higher-ups in American universities, they would likely skew toward wealthy white men. This reality means that some people will never occupy those attributes, and this can perpetuate a lack of inclusivity and diversity within the university system. By acknowledging and addressing this issue, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive university system for all. In addition to this discussion, Professor Ritcher shared some insight into organizations that faculty and staff members can be involved with, such as the "Women of Color Faculty Caucus," which she is a member of. When discussing her involvement with the caucus, she stated how groups like this are effective in creating inclusivity and connecting the university's women of color. She stated that in order for these groups to be more effective, it would be beneficial for some type of resource to be created so that groups and their correlating events/information could be shared with other peers and colleagues.

Professor for the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts; Christopher Burrel Interview:

Professor Burrel discussed one of the biggest challenges he sees facing higher education, which is the misconception that college is too expensive, leading many to make choices that harm their ability to attend in the future. Only 19% of 9th graders pursue higher education, and cultural barriers, such as the provider mindset among young men, exacerbate the issue. ASU, located in Maricopa County, faces a unique challenge as it continues to expand and must improve inclusion and a sense of

belonging for students. Professor Burel's shadowing experience showed that the scale of ASU can hinder students' ability to form close relationships. Additionally, Professor Burrel discussed the challenges and issues associated with ASU tuition and correlating fees that has implications for inclusivity and diversity as financial assistance opportunities such as FAFSA are not actually inclusive and just for middle-class stakeholders.

Financial Aid Processor with the Finacial Aid and Scholarship Services Department; Anonymous Interview:

During their interview this staff member discussed their perceptions of inclusivity at ASU and the value that it has for all stakeholders (students, faculty, and staff members). This staff member had the following message to share: "I think inclusivity is important in any role because it maximizes the employee's connection to their position. That being said, it is important for the university because our role as university staff is to push the university's narrative/goals, which is educating students. As an aspect of a business, students are the customers, and education is the commodity they are in search of. Staff's commitment to their role and the students helps ensure the employee feels empowered, responsible, and encouraged to do everything they can to benefit the student (i.e., customer)."

Through conducting shadowing sessions with various stakeholders at ASU, our group has gained invaluable insights into the complex issue of inclusion and a sense of belonging. This experience has enabled us to more accurately and effectively identify the areas where our proposed solution can have the greatest impact. Moreover, our shadowing sessions have uncovered realities that were previously overlooked, such as the scale of Arizona State University, which has a significant impact on the lack of inclusion and sense of belonging. This newfound understanding allowed us to make more informed decisions and devise solutions that are better suited to addressing the unique challenges faced by all of the ASU community.

Identified Solution

SUN DEVIL CONNECT: *An ASU centric social media platform and resource hub*

We, as the Sun Devil community, need to understand that even though we are all different and have unique lives, the need to have a sense of belonging and to feel included binds us together and that there are so many more things that make us the same than that differentiate us. As our research has shown, a majority of ASU students, faculty, and staff find inclusivity to be critically important both in and out of the classroom. Through our interviews with students, faculty, and staff, our team found that one of the most effective ways to generate a sense of inclusivity (and a sense of belonging) is through the joining and involvement of different organizations. However, finding and joining an organization that aligns with an individual's values has its own limitations. Primarily the fact that currently, this process of finding and joining an organization is done in person and on campus. While in-person and on-campus informational events can be great, they can also alienate stakeholders that are not on campus and those that simply were unaware that the event was happening. As a result, our team has identified a critical need for a virtual community-building resource that can be accessed by students, faculty, and staff members at any given time.

In today's digitally run society, a majority of our society has access to a smartphone and could therefore access a virtual community-buidliding resource such as an app. This statement can be supported by the following study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2021:

- 96% of U.S. adults 18-29 have a smartphone
- 95% of U.S. adults 30-49 have a smartphone
- 83% of U.S. adults 50-64 have a smartphone
- 61% of U.S. adults 65+ have a smartphone

As these statistics indicate, a majority of U.S. adults have phones, with a majority of all young adults aged 18-29 having a smartphone. This is important to note when discussing ASU, as a majority of the full-time enrolled students (on campus and online) are between the ages of 18-19, approximately 75,500 students (Arizona Board of Regents, 2021). Additionally, these statistics are important to take into account in regard to ASU faculty and staff members, as a majority of these stakeholders would additionally have access to a smartphone that is capable of downloading apps.

Overall, the potential creation and use of a virtual community-building resource, such as an app, that can be accessed by students, faculty, and staff members at any given time is practical. However, not only is this type of resource practical, but it would be more inclusive in helping generate a sense of belonging for all stakeholders as it could be accessed at any time and at any place. Therefore creating an app that can provide resources and information regarding ASU organizations and events is critically needed.

SUN DEVIL CONNECT: *Design & Mockups*

After having identified the practicality and effectiveness of creating an app to serve as a virtual community-building resource, our team began designing and creating mockups of the app. Our team determined that the main facution of the app would be to facilitate connections between current and incoming students, faculty, and staff to ASU organizations, events, and peers that correlate with their selected profile setting (i.e. student account or faculty/staff account). Upon the creation of their account, the stakeholders would be able to create a profile that highlights their interests and passions.

Upon completing their profile and having selected several interests and passions, the app would generate different organizations or events (depending if the stakeholder chooses to search for organizations or events) that are believed to align with the stakeholder's interests and passions. Once these organizations or events are generated, the stakeholders are able to engage with them by reading the "Details" section. It is important to note that this "Details"

section would be created and updated by the organization's board members and/or the event sponsors.

Upon engaging with the organization or event, stakeholders have the opportunity to swipe left if it is not of any interest to them or to swipe right and match with the organization or event. If a stakeholder chooses to swipe right, the following will happen:

> If a stakeholder chooses to match with an organization, the organization would be notified of the individual's interest, and the messaging system would connect the two parties so that they can communicate about meeting dates, upcoming events, and so on.

> If a stakeholder chooses to match with an event, they will be rsvpd to the event (via their ASURITE User ID), and they will be sent a confirmation with the event details via the messaging portal.

The messaging portal is an essential feature of the app, as it allows stakeholders to interact with organizations or events on their own schedule. This supports a sense of inclusivity as it ensures all stakeholders can learn about organizations or events that might be of interest to them. Additionally, the messaging portal is a great resource in allowing stakeholders to learn and expose themselves to an organization in a less vulnerable environment compared to showing up to an organization's social event. We see this as a pivotal opportunity for supporting mental health and mental well-being, as it can be quite stressful and nerve-racking to throw oneself into a social situation they are unfamiliar with.

In regard to the actual design and look of the app, our team has created a mockup that showcases the app layout, the organization matching page, and the messaging portal. This mockup can be seen on the following page:
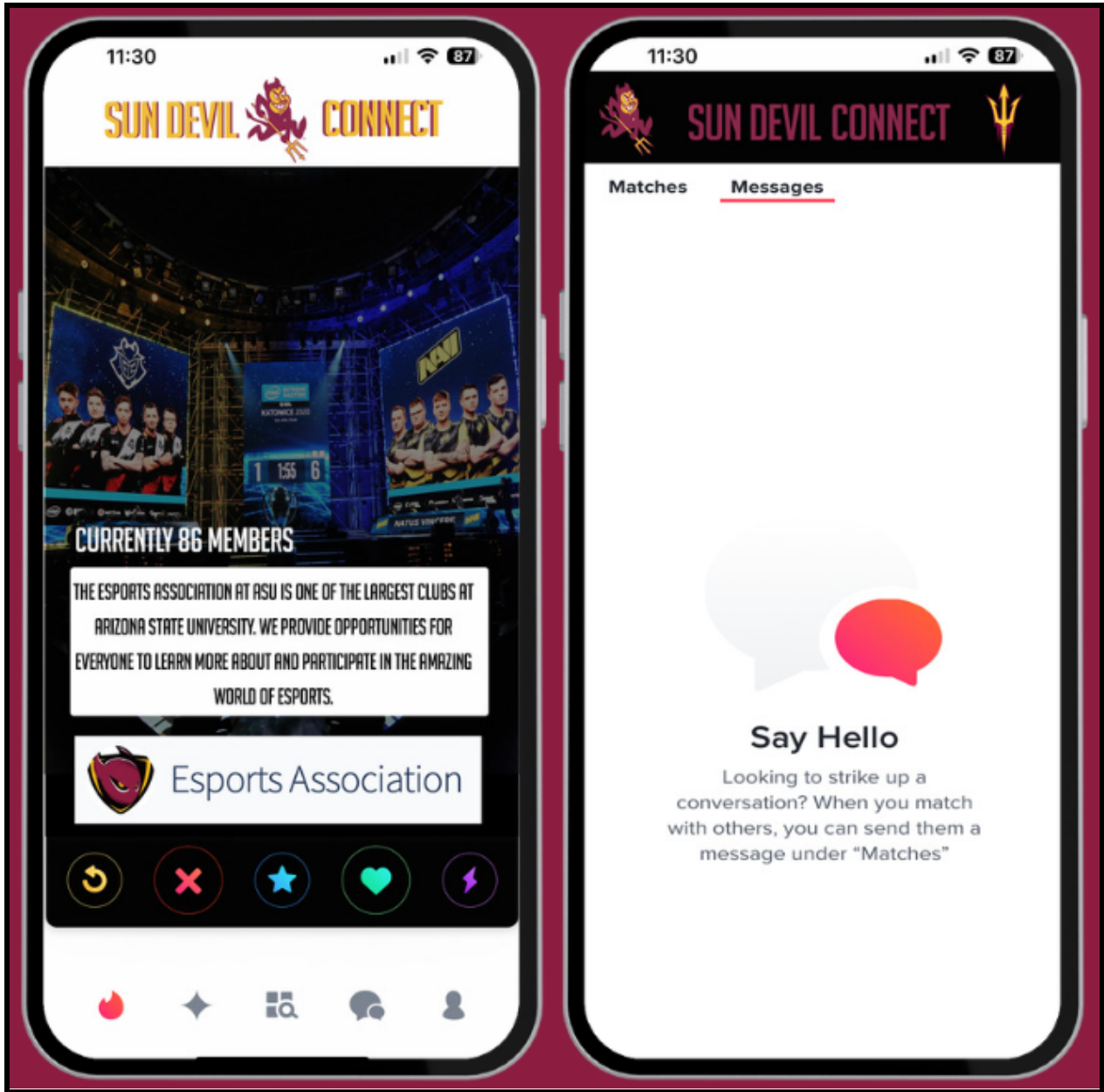
Conclusion

Being able to research and question those who bring unique lives, viewpoints, and circumstances to our project has been monumental in allowing us to pursue how to improve inclusion and a sense of belonging for all. The research that has been conducted in our project has been pivotal in allowing us to identify the critical need for a virtual community-building resource, which inspired us to design the SUN DEVIL CONNECT app. If it is able to be created, this app would be practical and effective in addressing the needs of stakeholders to find a community and, in doing so, a sense of belonging. Having an app that can be integrated into the ASU community will also assist the future university to be more inclusive for all stakeholders, including incoming stakeholders that can engage with organizations or events before their tentative start date. Additionally, the creation of this resource will assist in establishing communities that help in mitigating the challenges and impacts associated with deteriorating mental health and wellbeing, college opportunity gaps, and even financial barriers.

Inclusion and a sense of belonging at Arizona State University is a fundamental issue that needs to be constantly addressed and improved upon. Our proposed project is a method to do this, but it is not the only option. ASU has options that it needs to consider to ensure that all stakeholders have a just and equitable opportunity for success academically, professionally, and socially. As an institution and as stakeholders, we can not afford to become complacent, and it is imperative that we focus on increasing the intuition we feel inside our hearts to reflect the dignity of others.

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