

Pathify

MAGAZINE **FALL 2023**

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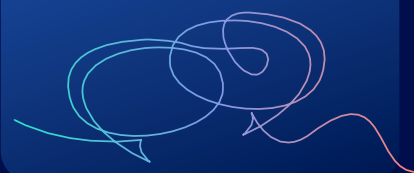


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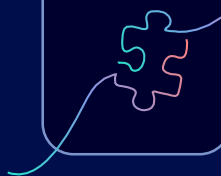
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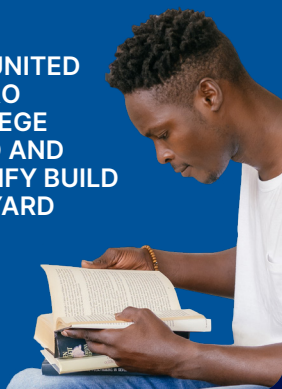
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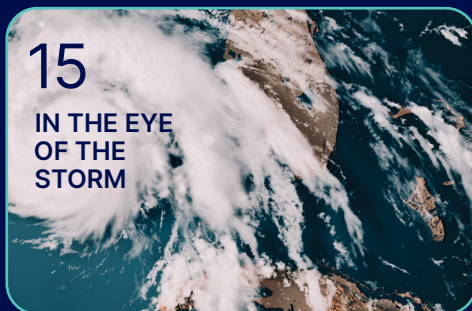
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IN THE EYE
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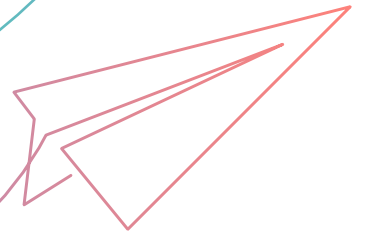
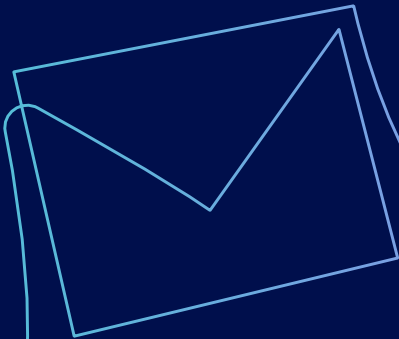
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WORD



Editor's Dispatch

Challenging the Status Quo

Whether you possess an innate knack for embracing change or fall into the category of die-hard repetition enthusiast, it's impossible to deny higher education is hurtling forward at a dizzying pace, surpassing any era in recent memory.

At a time when students perceive institutions as products, administrations are left with no choice but to adapt, pivot and revolutionize their schools in new, creative — and at times uncomfortable ways. The pressure is on, and change becomes the catalyst compelling administrators to bid farewell to antiquated processes and outdated technologies. The days of clinging to age-old practices for the sake of familiarity or sheer convenience are over...it's too costly to ignore the winds of change any longer.

Take a look at the institutional landscape from 30,000 feet. Every aspect failing to positively impact outcomes must be evaluated. Today's students place an extraordinary emphasis on extracting maximum value from education. They demand technology seamlessly supporting their day-to-day endeavors, sparing them the tiresome chore of hunting for what they need.

Easy access becomes the norm and institutions prioritizing the student experience will surge ahead, better supporting social natives venturing into the world of post-secondary education.

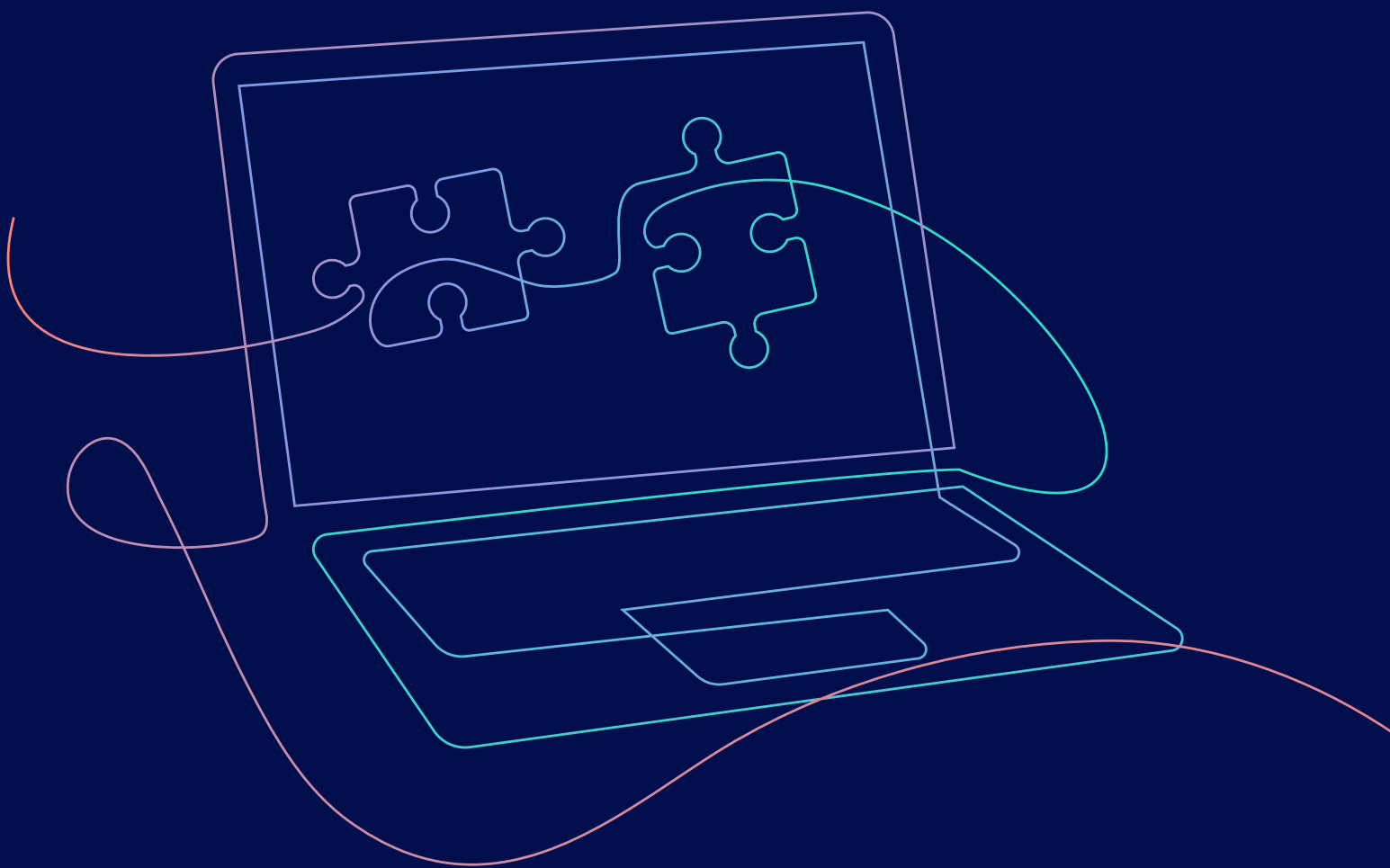
Now is the moment to let go of antiquated traditions and wholeheartedly embrace this vibrant new era. By challenging the status quo, Pathify instigates a positive cycle of questioning — from the high level to the tiniest detail — fueling performance, efficiency, and student success. The result? More students will choose to go to your school.

In this whirlwind of change, this edition of Pathify Magazine focuses on perspectives that challenge the status quo in higher ed. We acknowledge change is intimidating, but I believe those who embrace it will reap rich rewards as they tread uncharted paths, taking risks and pioneering the future of higher ed.

Best of luck!



Adam Miller
Editor, Pathify Magazine



Student Dispatch

Dear higher ed admins,

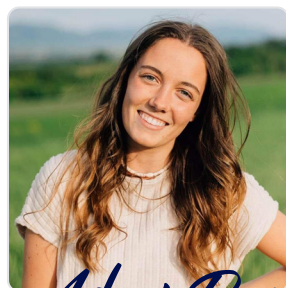
The college experience is stressful due to the number of things a student must remember on a day-to-day basis. It's especially nerve wracking for students like me who took a break from school for a few semesters. When I re-entered, my world was full of uncertainty, yet again. Fortunately, the Utah State University portal helped me get everything sorted out.

I had one place to register for my classes, view my scholarships and tuition, check my USU email and look ahead at my calendar either on my phone or laptop. It's also where I go to check Canvas for my assignments and grades. The portal saved me a lot of stress and made me feel assured I hadn't missed anything important.

It was also motivating to see all the events going on campus-wide and in my school Groups.

I started my college education in the middle of a pandemic, so knowing I get to go back to a school bustling with activities and socializing is really exciting! It prevents me from missing events because my portal keeps me updated on all the important things going on at school.

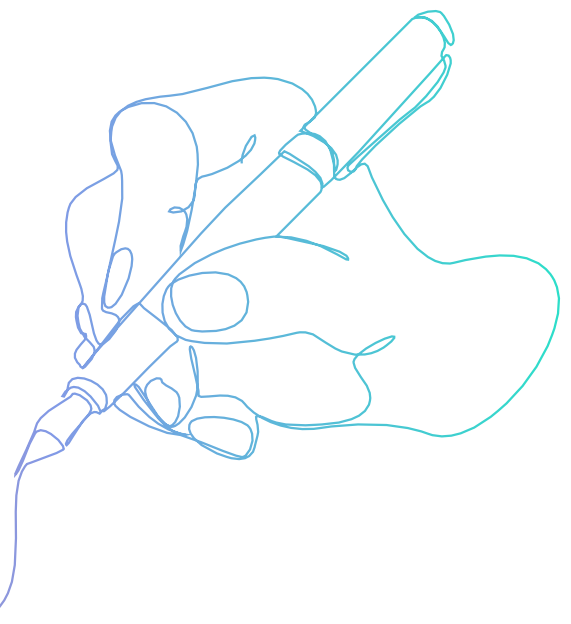
I, as well as the other students here at USU, have such a great resource at our fingertips, and it just keeps getting better with time!



Ada Daugs

Utah State University

Ada Daugs





TEAM BUILDING



FACES & PLACES OF PATHIFY



TRADE SHOWS



By the Numbers

Post-Pandemic Indicators

HIGHER ED MENTAL HEALTH

THE CONTEXT¹

50% of students rate their mental health as fair or poor



60% of students report feeling overwhelming anxiety



40% of students report experiencing depression



51% of students are less likely to withdraw if they participate in an extracurricular activity



THE IMPACT²

56%

of students experience chronic stress, defined as a consistent sense of feeling pressured and overwhelmed

33%

of these students say it negatively impacts their capacity to learn

FINDING HELP³



50% of students who rated their mental health as fair or poor haven't accessed any campus counseling services

Nearly half of students say professors are responsible for helping students struggling with their mental health, and many students also see advisors, administrators, residential life staff and peers as playing a role

THE DIFFERENTIATOR⁴



29% of prospective students say mental health support is the most important wellness factor in choosing where to go to school

Sources

1) 8 Critical Mental Health Stats: Supporting College Students – Innovative Educators:
<https://www.innovativeeducators.org/blogs/edushare-higher-ed-blog-news/8-critical-mental-health-stats-supporting-college-students>

2) Survey: stress is hurting college students:
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/05/23/survey-stress-hurting-college-students#>

DIGITAL IDS AND MOBILE PAYMENT

THE TIPPING POINT ⁵



of students think colleges without digital IDs appear antiquated



of students think it's "annoying" to take their ID everywhere



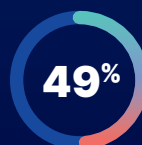
of students think the availability of digital IDs rates "important" when deciding where to attend



of students think digital IDs should be required



of students say ease of payment has a major impact on student experience



of students had no options for mobile payments to pay for food on campus, needing to rely on cash or cards

One Major student portal provider offering a full-service Digital Wallet

WHAT CAN WE DO...?

...ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

-  Teach proactive self-care
-  Foster belonging through connections
-  Affirm and validate students
-  Embed diverse curriculum throughout disciplines
-  Provide culturally relevant mental health programming
-  Evaluate if your student portal is designed with mental health at the forefront

...ABOUT DIGITAL IDS

-  Assess hardware capabilities and identify gaps
-  Develop a digital first strategic plan that invests in the necessary infrastructure to support mobile, hybrid and online student needs
-  Empower student, faculty and staff champions to drive this change management forward
-  Make Digital ID capabilities as you consider your next portal/mobile app!

3) Gaps in mental health care for college students:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/05/26/gaps-mental-health-care-college-students>

4) How prospective students value colleges' mental health services:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/06/06/how-prospective-students-value-colleges-mental>

5) Exploring Financial Habits and Technology Use Among College Students:

<https://transactcampus.com/resources/research>

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Meet the Chairman

Roy McKelvie

Pathify Board Chairman



Dustin Ramsdell

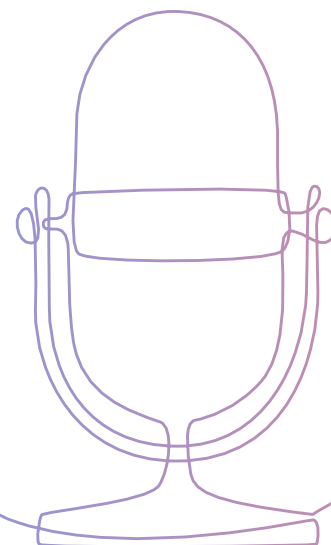
Pathify Community Engagement Lead

Pathify's journey is reflective of the platform itself — a collection of unique pieces coming together to create something greater than the sum of its parts.

With that in mind as we continue on our journey to create better student experiences for institutions all over the world, I took some time to chat with our Board Chairman, Roy McKelvie. I spoke with Roy to help us reflect on our progress and understand more about what brought him to Pathify.

Roy joined the Pathify Board of Directors in 2021 and has a rich background in the investment and private equity world. He's involved in the boards of several different organizations from all over the world, so I enjoyed hearing his perspective on Pathify and what makes it special. Roy also shared his thoughts on how relationships are core to effective partnerships especially in education.

My chat with Roy spanned a lot of different topics, and the full discussion will air on the Connected Campus podcast.



This interview transcript has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Dustin Ramsdell

I don't think I've really ever had the chance to talk to a board chairman. I've talked with a lot of CEOs and presidents of institutions, so really excited for this conversation to bring in that perspective and how it relates to the Pathify story. To start, could you introduce yourself and your professional background?

Roy McKelvie

I'm originally an engineer. I worked for a couple of industrial companies on either side of my MBA and then spent 25 years or so in private equity in the UK and continental Europe. For the last nine years I've been doing my own thing. I'm chairman for several types of software companies: education, banking software, safety and wellness, security software and wealth management software.

DR

Since you have so many different organizations you are a part of, how do you evaluate which ones you want to get involved with?

RM

Lots of people have different views about how they decide who to work with. I'm really lucky I don't have to work with anybody I don't want to, which is an enormous luxury — and a privilege. For me it always comes down to the people. The relationship between a chairman and the CEO is absolutely pivotal, and my relationship with Chase (Williams, CEO and Co-founder) is outstanding. You need to trust one another and have a relationship where you are a confidant, problem solver, all that sort of stuff rolled into one. Trust is hard to build and easy to lose and so for me I try to make a judgment call on individuals. I will say one thing to all the CEOs I've worked with: never lie to me. Tell me the worst thing that's going on, I'll work with you to fix it.

DR

That's refreshing and it's kind of like being a parent where you have that love for your kids. Just be honest with me if something's going on. Just let me know, I'll help you.

With certain individuals or organizations, I'd imagine there's a distance where it's all just sort of numbers in a spreadsheet.

RM

Businesses are people. Numbers are a way of measuring performance, allocating resources, prioritizing what you want to do... but fundamentally businesses are just people, right? You've got to be able to work together.

DR

It's a breath of fresh air to hear you're very people-centered. It allows for a malleability or a diversity where there's always going to be somebody else who works well with other people. It's not so prescriptive where you have to be only one way but every pot finds its lid. What made you decide to get involved in the education space? And what made you decide to get involved with Pathify specifically?

RM

I got introduced to the business through a chap I know here in Sydney. Chase wasn't the first person I met, it was actually Cameron Reynolds, the chairman before me. We met the Pathify team in London just before the start of the pandemic about four years ago and had a really interesting chat. The business at the time had half a dozen US colleges as clients and less than 20 employees.

The thing making me really interested was when I went to university on the day of matriculation, you went into a huge hall to take a picture and you walked around all these desks and you got various things...your reading list, your map of the campus, and you came away with this bag with all these bits of paper...up until four years ago I quite naturally assumed all this was online now...that there'd be an app for all that.

I couldn't believe it once I looked into it. How clunky a lot of universities were in terms of how they managed what is fundamentally just about communication. I was really surprised and excited by it at the same time and as I met the Pathify team, I discovered I liked the way they thought about things. I liked their attitude and how relentless they are about trying to disrupt the status quo. Chase and James (Co-founders) were fighting the good fight to try and get the word out about Pathify. And they seemed to have some traction, which was the thing attracting me to the business, and why eventually after many months of discussions, I formed the investment group to put the deal together.

It was really funny, not long after I got introduced to Pathify, Chase and James spoke about this institutional inertia thing, which I understand, but surely it can't be that bad. I called up a friend of mine who was a professor at a big university in the UK. I asked, "Is this true? Is this how universities operate?" He said "oh it's way worse than that," and he started describing two universities he spent 20 years of his postdoctoral career at, and how they operated while explaining the petty jealousies and how decisions were made (but usually not made), including the lack of incentives to do things. It kind of horrified me but it also made me recognize it was an opportunity to make a difference...and I think it's what Pathify fixes because it's all about communication in the end.

DR

Everything being people-centered and then taking it back to what you said about being a chairman or investor being relationship driven. Education is the same thing. We're all humans trying to help each other...trying to help inform strategy or how to go about things.

Let's look ahead towards the future. What are you excited about when you think about Pathify's future?


RM

We've still barely scratched the surface in terms of the size of the market — even just within the continental U.S. The opportunity for continued growth is really exciting and I'm also really excited about some of the other things that we bring into our platform in terms of its UX. It is incredibly intuitive and easy to use, which I think is a great solution for universities.


We've got a middleware solution giving us greater flexibility about how we link in with all of the other systems out there. There's a number of areas where we might bring new products and feature sets to augment the fundamental communication layer we deliver for universities and colleges.


It excites me because it's not just about us saying here's the product we've developed and let's go and sell. We're actually continually improving the product based on feedback from our users. Chase and I talk about it every week and there's some really interesting and cool ideas being worked on...hopefully we will be announcing them in the next few months! ■




Pathify PODCAST

CONNECTED CAMPUS





HOSTED BY
DUSTIN RAMSDELL






[Learn More](#)

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InSpace helps students develop the essential skills they need in an AI-powered future: critical thinking, problem-solving, flexibility, and collaboration.

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IN THE EYE OF **THE STORM**



Leveraging Emergency Communications with Communities

Chris Harvey

Executive Director, Academic Technology

SPC St. Petersburg
College

Category 5 hurricane. **161** fatalities.
Third costliest weather disaster on record.
Thousands of students desperately
 seeking guidance.

St. Petersburg College (SPC) faced this scenario in September 2022 as Hurricane Ian relentlessly tore across Florida. Amidst the chaos the entire community asked questions, sought guidance and pulled together to survive the truly terrifying state of emergency. Fortunately just weeks before the storm, SPC launched the Pathify Engagement Hub, which proved a critical focal point of support throughout the crisis.

In particular leveraging Pathify's Communities module, SPC administrators ensured vital, up-to-date information flowed seamlessly to those in need. With round the clock access to Pathify available on any device, SPC maintained a digital forum where the community came together, armed with the knowledge and guidance needed to weather the storm.

FROM FACEBOOK TO PATHIFY

SPC initially used Facebook Workplace to bring its 11 learning sites under one platform. Then in 2020, Facebook changed its pricing.

Maintaining Facebook Workplace meant a \$500,000 up-front investment — literally breaking the budget and forcing SPC to evaluate other

options. Shortly after this the pandemic reared it's ugly head, forcing Chris Harvey, Executive Director of Academic Technology to rush his team to find a replacement. His team was in the process of implementing Zoom for the entire student body, but recognized it wasn't enough.

"Our marketing and student affairs started doing social listening to get feedback from our students and they really missed Workplace," Harvey said.

In January, 2021, Dr. Jeff Borden (at the time of writing Vice Provost of Learning Experience at National University) presented at the D2L Summit, speaking about the importance of community building, including the criticality of fostering a digital community. Harvey and his team subsequently looked at options to achieve the vision Borden outlined, and over the course of the next year ultimately selected Pathify after an extremely detailed and meticulous evaluation process. Pathify proved the only solution offering a Facebook-like community that could operate as a walled garden owned and maintained by SPC, while also providing the ability to build custom widgets that surface personalized information based on a user's role.

SPC Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Academic Services Dr. Sabrina Crawford recognized the immediate need of giving students a personalized experience and had recommended Pathify's Engagement Hub to deliver what she felt students needed.

ABOUT ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE

A staple for both college-aged and adult learners in Florida, St. Petersburg College offers more than 200 degree, certificate and transfer programs. Its career-focused curriculum helps students meet the needs of today's employers while earning the highest entry wages among state community college graduates.

The average age of students enrolled at the institution is 27 years old with 44% of its 35,000 students classified as adult learners. SPC believes in engaging the full potential of the individual and deeply values providing students with a sense of belonging.

Both Harvey and Crawford believed this fell in line with SPC President Dr. Tonjua Williams's vision for the college's online services.

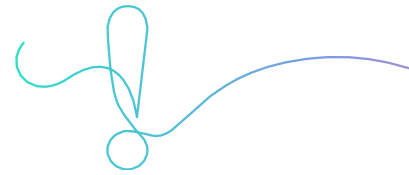
"She wanted everything integrated and we've never been that way," Harvey said. "Everything has always been separate. We'd have a page with a bunch of links, but they're not interconnected."

Given SPC's selection of Pathify in June of 2022, it required a well-coordinated effort to get the Engagement Hub implemented in time for Fall semester. Thanks to the quick work and tight collaboration between SPC and the Pathify teams, the pilot program launched in six weeks, with full implementation of what is now called "TitanHub" complete four weeks later.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH A HURRICANE

Pathify helping students navigate a hurricane was the last thing Harvey imagined during his team's implementation, yet it proved exactly what he needed to keep students up-to-date throughout the storm.

Given the completion of SPC's implementation of TitanHub just days before the hurricane, some questioned whether students felt secure using it during a state of emergency. As a result, in the early stages of Hurricane Ian, faculty from Student Services tried using email for vital communication — resulting in even more inbound questions.



SPC ultimately decided Pathify was the best available tool to post information and updates while responding to student inquiries promptly and effectively.

The institution enrolled its students in a temporary group dedicated to hurricane communications. Although faculty didn't post in the group initially, administrators quickly saw student inquiries rolling in. Once SPC staff saw students adopting the Engagement Hub, they sprung into action and provided quick responses, putting many students' minds at ease.

"The Communities functionality was a great tool for hurricane communications," Harvey said. "It was an easy way to have a single student post a comment and get a response that would help a large group of people."

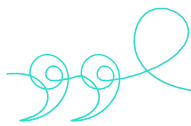
TitanHub received 19,000 unique visits during the month of September, with most of those visits concentrated around the hurricane. Of those visits, the TitanHub Updates page had the highest traffic with 2,415 visits.

"Quite a few of them were just appreciative to have a place to ask questions," Harvey said. "We had a few people thank us for getting back to them."

Harvey further elaborated how most students typically looked at other questions posted and took action based on answers they saw in the group. Thanks to Pathify's mobile/web parity, students found information easily — regardless of where they were. Even for students who passively used the group, it helped put their minds at ease throughout the hurricane.

"People were nervous, so just having a way to communicate with your students to say 'No you don't have to worry about your homework. Just be safe.' was extremely helpful," Harvey said.





***"People were nervous, so just having a way to communicate with your students to say 'no you don't have to worry about your homework. Just be safe' was extremely helpful."** - Christopher Harvey*



CREATING A SINGLE GATEWAY

Due to SPC's success communicating with its students during Hurricane Ian, the institution continues seeing steady growth in its use of the Engagement Hub. In December 2022, TitanHub finished the month with over 95% user adoption.


With Harvey and his team recognizing Pathify's effectiveness in an emergency, the institution rolled out TitanHub to its remaining campuses. Many staff members initially skeptical of the Engagement Hub's implementation now fully support it for their students.

Harvey sees the Engagement Hub as a single gateway for the college's entire student body and can't imagine an investment in any future technology incompatible with Pathify.

"My voice is going to be involved in the process going forward and my recommendation would be that any future purchase we have should tie into Pathify," Harvey said. "Otherwise, it's not going to get as much traffic because it won't be right in front of students."

SPC students now use TitanHub to access everything from courses to career services and academic advising. Its widespread adoption gives the institution confidence in expanding use cases through Pathify's Recipe Library and new strategic partnerships, including with Modern Campus.

"The more functionality we add to the Engagement Hub while saving time and adding convenience, the happier people will be," Harvey said. ■



CANVAS

BY INSTRUCTURE


Why are we the trusted partner for the top 10 institutions in the US?*

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Concurrent Users

99.9%
System Uptime

Over 90%
Best-in-Class Customer Satisfaction Score

*source: usnews.com



See what Canvas can do for you ↓







The United Negro College Fund and Pathify build **The Yard**



Dr. Valora Richardson
Director of Digital
Solutions and Innovation



Julian Thompson
Director of Strategy



Supporting a blended learning environment via technology persists as a fundamental requirement for most institutions in 2023. As a result, the absence of mainstream technology is often overshadowed by news focused on investments in tech brought on by the pandemic. Unfortunately this absence continues to be reality for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country.

The mission HBCUs support remains critical, graduating thousands of Black doctors, lawyers and STEM professionals despite often facing more significant resource constraints than institutions with predominantly white enrollment. What if the majority of students attending HBCUs could unlock their full potential through equitable access to the best technology? This reflection inspired the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to create HBCUv — a new online environment reimagining the HBCU experience in a virtual environment.

UNCF conducted extensive research, spending over 3,300 hours with HBCUs defining the key tenets and features of the proposed platform with their stakeholders. This effort recognizes the digital divide, but mitigates it with a solution intentionally and uniquely addressing the desires of HBCU institutions. Working to solve this issue, Ed Smith-Lewis, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Institutional Programs at UNCF's Institute for Capacity Building and Julian Thompson, Director of Strategy, discovered existing solutions did not cater to the specific needs of the HBCU community.

Dr. Valora Richardson, Director of Digital Solutions and Innovation at UNCF, believes this problem in part stems from a lack of HBCU participation in the product research process at the grassroots level.

"We have never asked our community, 'What do you want in an online space?'" said Richardson. "How can we capture the incredible results our HBCUs provide for our students in a virtual environment?"

UNCF identified nine development partners essential in shaping the HBCUv platform, determining the vision, mission and features of the platform.

The team knew the platform needed revolutionary educational technology to foster a high level of social engagement. UNCF tasked itself with understanding how existing tools capture what they refer to as "the secret sauce" — a unique learning and social experience prevalent at HBCU campuses. First, they wanted to create a virtual campus — a space fostering community and connection among partner institutions. Second, they needed a unified platform to bring together the various technology partners dedicated to UNCF's mission.

THE DRAWING BOARD

During the research phase of the HBCUv project, Thompson recognized the importance of digital community in the success of HBCU students. On physical campuses, students build camaraderie through events, clubs and friendships — often translating into greater academic success.

ABOUT UNCF

UNCF's foundation centers around the belief, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." For over 70 years, this principle remained at the heart of UNCF, enabling the organization to raise more than \$5 billion and help more than 500,000 students and counting thrive, graduate and become leaders through their higher ed experience. By awarding more than 10,000 students scholarships, worth more than \$100 million each year, and providing financial support to 37 HBCUs, the foundation serves as the nation's leading advocate for the importance of minority education and community engagement.

In a purely virtual environment, students may lack the social fabric necessary to reach their full potential. While tools like the LMS meet the functional requirements for learning, they often fall short in fostering meaningful community engagement.

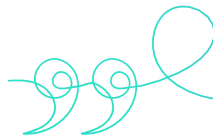
“Many of the LMSs on the market today are used by students for attending courses and accessing course materials,” Thompson explained. “But when it comes to the social and civic aspects of a higher education experience, students often turn to other platforms.”

Thompson envisioned a community-focused technology solution primarily focused on student engagement to fill this gap, while ultimately connecting the larger HBCU community together in a way never before possible. This concept was eventually named *The Yard*.

When it came time for the HBCUv Development partners to draw up requirements for *The Yard*, they realized the importance of cross-campus collaboration and drawing inspiration from students across the HBCU community.

“My daughter, who is in college, loves watching videos and following social media accounts of sororities on different campuses,” Richardson shared. “If we had a consolidated space to livestream events from various campuses, it would help build a sense of community and belonging by showcasing how students thrive in these environments.”

Finding an existing out-of-the-box solution aligning with the team’s vision proved challenging. The first option they considered was only available as a mobile app and lacked integration capabilities. Another option seemed too generic to meaningfully enhance the student experience. Richardson noted one product primarily served coders, making it unsuitable for their needs.



“What we are doing is unprecedented, and having a vendor that is willing to adapt to our needs is incredible, and we are grateful for that.” - Dr. Valora Richardson, Director of Digital Solutions and Innovation

“Some companies are not intentional about building technology for education. They may try to retrofit existing solutions, but we have found those kinds of things don’t work for us,” Richardson explained. “We need companies that are dedicated to providing robust technology for education.”

The UNCF team eventually landed on working with a strategic integration partner — Deloitte — to build *The Yard* from the ground up.

A SHIFT IN COURSE

In 2022, the entire trajectory of the project took an unexpected turn, thanks to a chance meeting at SXSW EDU.

While cruising the massive vendor hall filled with hundreds of vendors, Richardson thought the Pathify booth looked interesting and decided to listen for a few minutes. Learning about Pathify’s extensive integration capabilities and community focus, she wondered if she’d discovered the missing piece to tie *The Yard* together.

In subsequent conversations with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (funding the HBCUv project) and Deloitte, the team determined Pathify (and its middleware Flow) could serve as the foundation for *The Yard* — effectively the foundation on which the custom UI would operate.

“When we spoke with Deloitte, we realized Pathify was already doing a lot of what we wanted for *The Yard*,” Richardson explained. “We didn’t have to start from scratch because some of the framework was already in place.”

Besides finding the necessary technology to pivot from UNCF's initial plans, Richardson also appreciated Pathify's flexibility and enthusiasm for the project. Unlike other vendors she encountered, Pathify committed to pushing boundaries and adapting the platform to UNCF's specific needs.

"Their willingness to change the business model and adapt it to work with us is amazing," said Richardson. "What we are doing is unprecedented, and having a vendor that is willing to adapt to our needs is incredible, and we are grateful for that."

Currently in the development phase, Deloitte will build a custom front-end based on UNCF specs designed to provide a best-in-class experience for HBCUs. Pathify will supply the backend foundation and integration layer that powers the app. *The Yard* will then prominently display essential information and consolidate updates from various technologies into a single, centralized user experience.

Thompson looks forward to offering students a unified view of their courses, assignments and class announcements while fostering connections among students from the group of pilot institutions.

"Having a place where students can find the information they need to succeed and receive support is beneficial," Richardson emphasized. "Over time, we want *The Yard* to encompass various elements of campus life, and by developing these elements we hope to increase engagement on the platform."

Throughout the entire process, from initial conversations to gathering requirements, Richardson sensed genuine curiosity and enthusiasm in every interaction with Pathify. She found a true partner willing to bring their long-lasting vision to life.

"Despite not having all the answers, their willingness to engage, listen and work with us to make the Engagement Hub look and feel the way we want it to is exciting," Richardson concluded.

THE FUTURE

Richardson's plans for HBCUv are extremely ambitious. By Fall 2025, UNCF aims to involve all 37 member institutions before expanding nationwide to include every HBCU by 2028.

The stakes for the project are enormous. In the past, geographic barriers often prevented Black students from accessing higher education. However, UNCF's mission is to increase access to HBCUs for students worldwide.

"I'm thrilled about the opportunity for the regions where HBCUs are located, the country at large and the world to finally gain exposure and access to historically Black colleges that may have been out of reach in the past," Thompson expressed.

So far, institutions have eagerly embraced the HBCUv project. When Richardson discusses it at events across the country, HBCUs recognize its value and respond positively. The time for such an undertaking is long overdue and represents a much-needed contribution to higher education.

"As we consider the opportunity to provide this high level of innovation for our institutions and start sharing it with people, they get really excited," Richardson said.

In a country where institutions broadly grapple with declining enrollment, the concept of HBCUv fosters a more collaborative environment where students may opt to learn from a variety of institutions. While this idea may seem unorthodox compared with traditional survival strategies, Thompson believes other types of institutions will soon create similar consortiums and projects.

"Institutions will increasingly have to think about how they collaborate with each other to achieve the economics and scale needed for sustainability," said Thompson. "Collaborative endeavors, technologies and shared services — elements embodied in the HBCUv concept — will be part of the future of higher education." ■

To learn more about the HBCUv project, visit hbcuv.org

Where'd the Water Cooler Go?

Dr. Bianca Myers

Executive Dean of
Advancement



Cory Lamb

Chief Technology
Officer



INDIANHILLS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Life. Changing.

A sk higher ed professionals where they received the most benefit the past two years and they often respond with their appreciation for remote or hybrid work opportunities. Many staff working at colleges and universities had the option to work from home, creating more flexibility previously unknown for most pursuing a career in higher ed. And what's become clear — despite the convenience — remote work still has drawbacks.

With fewer in-person interactions, the opportunity to bond around the water cooler becomes far less frequent. Yet this interaction remains a crucial part of building camaraderie and community among employees. This need spurred Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) to pursue an intranet solution serving as a virtual water cooler, while centralizing documents across the school's digital universe.

SETTING THE STAGE

Prior to engaging with Pathify, IHCC faced similar challenges to other institutions employing a large workforce. Most communications involved massive group emails and a completely disjointed file sharing process. Most files "lived" on the website as PDFs — leading to deteriorating performance of the website for all users.

Dr. Bianca Myers, Executive Dean of Advancement at Indian Hills, discovered this drop in performance, in addition to a drop in organic search traffic. As a result, the site had less visibility for prospective students searching for community colleges in Iowa.

"We knew hosting so many PDFs on our site hurt us," Myers said. "We had had some outside companies analyze our dip in traffic and they kept telling us we need to get the PDFs off our site."

Aside from hurting overall web performance, storing the documents on the website made them difficult to find. Employees struggled to find what they needed quickly and often created redundant documents due to a lack of overall knowledge sharing between departments.

The website also lacked true security with a single password shared widely between departments. Given the nature of some of the documents uploaded on the website, Myers knew IHCC faced risk, leading to further conversations on a go forward plan.

"We had a pretend locked down portal because it was easy to access, and knowing most coders, anybody could figure it out based on breadcrumbs throughout our website," Myers said. "It became a bit of a concern."

ABOUT INDIAN HILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Located in Ottumwa, Iowa, Indian Hills Community College aims to provide students what they need to succeed in transitioning to either a four-year program — or straight into an exciting career. It's ranked among the top 500 community colleges in the country, and takes pride in putting students on a fast track to in-demand and high-paying jobs.

In addition to over 70 academic programs, Indian Hills draws an expansive online student population with over 250 courses available to attend asynchronously. The institution includes three campuses and several premier junior college athletic programs — with a number of alumni making it to the NBA, NFL and MLB.

In 2019, IHCC hired Cory Lamb as Chief Technology Officer, who quickly rolled up his sleeves to improve employee collaboration and security. One of Lamb's first initiatives — find a portal with dual functionality for both employees and students. In addition to plans to remove PDFs from the website and improve collaboration, IHCC also wanted technology to improve communication with students.

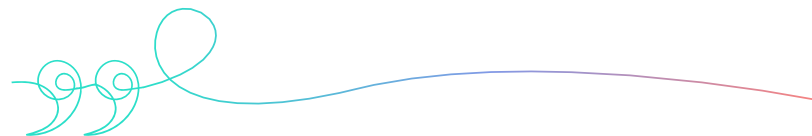
SEARCHING FOR THE WATER COOLER

IHCC engaged Pathify in the Fall of 2020 after hearing success stories from a number of CIOs on a popular IT listserv. This was followed by a formal recommendation from the CIO of Northern Iowa Community College, an early adopter of Pathify who played a strong role on the company's Product Advisory Group.

Although a social media-like experience was not originally part of the project scope, the ability to create a virtual community between employees across campus — in addition to students — intrigued Myers during the search process.

"Pathify had a social media feel that people are used to," Myers said. "It gives you everything you need to know by scrolling through the feed like many of the other apps we've become accustomed to."

Search functionality also became a key feature for IHCC for a variety of reasons. Given the institution's history with emailing PDFs back-and-forth, Myers instantly saw the potential benefit of storing every document in a single, easily searchable and secure location.



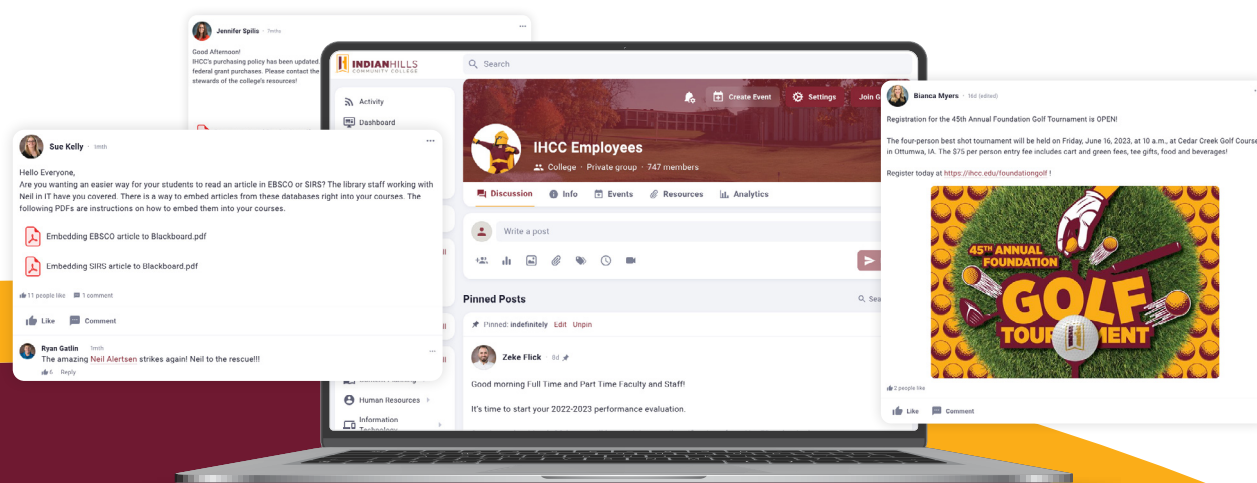
"We had a pretend locked down portal because it was easy to access, and knowing most coders, anybody could figure it out based on breadcrumbs throughout our website. It became a bit of a concern." - Dr. Bianca Myers, Executive Dean of Advancement

When Myers compared Pathify search capabilities to other student portals and mobile apps in-market, it quickly became clear this was a major differentiator.

"You can search for almost anything if you have an idea what the post is about," Myers said of the search functionality included in the Engagement Hub. "I search for everything and that's probably the best thing about Pathify. You don't have to know the document's name."

Like schools across the world in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, IHCC had adopted several point solutions to facilitate remote learning rapidly. Myers admitted technology burnout factored in her team needing a strategy to slowly implement Pathify for both staff and students in order to maximize buy-in.

Indian Hills launched the Engagement Hub for employees in Summer of 2021. This allowed Myers and her team the opportunity to troubleshoot any processes and ensure it worked smoothly by the time faculty came back to campus. By the time Fall Semester began, Myers's team aligned on messaging around the importance of the Engagement Hub, and how life would be



considerably easier if employees centralized communication and document management moving forward.

“Our staff responded better than I anticipated because people didn’t have an option to say they can’t find what they’re looking for,” Myers said. “They had a search bar that works and takes you to everything and that really sold people on it.”

In the initial rollout over 80% of IHCC staff adopted Pathify for communication — appreciating a sudden drop in emails. Rather than waking up to an inundated inbox, employees gained the ability to easily digest information when they wanted it.

As an added benefit, the virtual water cooler talk Indian Hills employees sought became a reality. Pathify provides a digital point of connection to build camaraderie — driving employee engagement past pre-pandemic levels.

LOOKING FORWARD

Based on success rolling out the Engagement Hub to employees, IHCC is now working to ramp up adoption among students.

So far, students have found it easy to navigate, enabling them to locate content that in many cases they didn’t know existed. Students have also reacted positively to the social aspect of Groups and Events, finding it easy to connect with other peers and faculty — further strengthening their sense of community.

Over the next year, Myers is also working toward greater adoption from IHCC’s athletic teams. As a top junior college athletic program, Indian Hills believes Pathify will help facilitate students feel more connected to campus.

Looking back, Myers believes much of the wait between launching for staff and launching for students came from initial hesitancy. She now advises institutions looking to make a similar decision to move quickly — iterating as time progresses.

“I think we were slow and nervous to roll it out and we probably waited longer because we wanted to get it right,” Myers said. “You’re not ever going to get it right, so don’t overthink it. Do what you think is going to work.” ■



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Toward an Integrated Student Experience

Jared Stein

Principal Consultant,
Rarebird EdTech



Over the two decades I've spent working in and with higher education institutions, I've often heard — and sometimes even remarked myself — the world has changed and higher education must adapt and change, too. And as much as I may have wanted to believe that in the past, only now do I feel that such change is real and irresistible.

This is in large part due to a combination of the social, economic and technological trends relative to higher ed. For example, institutions must grapple with enrollment changes: the pandemic seems to have focused many current and potential students on feasible alternatives to traditional higher education, causing many higher ed leaders to reevaluate their existing programs. The looming demographic cliff further threatens expected future enrollments, causing some higher ed leaders to explore non-traditional learner audiences or academic offerings. The switch to emergency remote *everything* shifted the expectations of many students and teachers toward greater flexibility, which has encouraged hybrid and remote instruction. The rise of generative AI is shaking our confidence in long-held practices of teaching, learning and assessment, causing learners and instructors to reevaluate what learning is for and how its outcomes can be best achieved.

We now see considerable effort to adapt and change the core function of higher education — teaching and learning — to be more relevant, more flexible, more engaging and more resilient. But if we learned anything during the pandemic, I think we must also recognize the best higher education is not only about courses and credentials, it is also about campuses and the co-curricular experiences that complement the core.

Shortly after the pandemic hit, I remember a university dean remarking that once the campus was emptied it suddenly became obvious that all of their students were essentially invisible to

campus staff and services because they were not physically present. This caused the dean to realize *some of their students had always been invisible on campus* — non-traditional students who would commute to attend class, students in fully online programs, or even just students who never felt the need to connect through the university campus.

It just so happened this dean and his team had recently begun mapping out the student journey, plotting various paths before, during and after academic programs. This was a means of (1) understanding their students' experience more fully, (2) identifying pain points their students might face as they move through their program and (3) opportunities for students to connect and engage with the campus community at critical points along their journey. It became apparent this work should be re-considered through a post-pandemic lens, one that recognizes many students simply won't be physically on-campus and probably every student now expects to have equal access no matter where they are via technology.

This is the kind of foundational work I believe must happen across all of higher education if we are going to transform the entire student experience to be more holistic and engaging. Transforming the student campus experience to fit the needs and expectations of this new era must begin with a clear, holistic vision for a student experience — one based on an authentic understanding of students' needs and expectations, mapped to a lifecycle that includes the before, during and after of their academic program and encompassing both curricular and co-curricular activities. The results of this work will likely look different for each institution — reflective of their mission and audience — but I expect what will look very similar is the need for institutional leaders to challenge certain aspects of their organization's *status quo*.



One way organizations and businesses have successfully challenged their organizational status quo is through *integration*. This concept of integration has been made famous by examples from the corporate world. For example Toyota, whose “lean manufacturing” approach emphasizes the importance of the overall process by ensuring communication and collaboration up and down the production line. Or Amazon, which has created a more satisfying consumer experience by creating business efficiencies by integrating their supply chain systems. A few years from now I won’t be surprised if people say similar things in relation to Pathify in the world of higher ed.

The most impactful and satisfying work in my own higher ed career came about through purposeful integration, where specialized teams who might typically work independently (or even in isolation) have come together to work cross-functionally for a shared purpose or goal.

Team integration is particularly relevant when an institution seeks to transform the student experience, as there is no one “owner”. Certainly Student Services/Affairs is likely to be central, but if you look at the entire student lifecycle you will see there are crucial stakeholders and supporters of the student experience across campus. These highly specialized staff are probably also highly independent, and may not be used to collaborating to achieve a cross-functional vision.

Transforming the student experience will require strong, empowered leadership bringing various campus teams together over an extended period of time — perhaps indefinitely. Alignment and principles of collaboration will enable these teams to make decisions about new processes and new software that may ultimately affect all of them.

Any mapping of the student journey will likely show it to be complex, multi-faceted and with many

pitfalls or points of potential failure. Expectations for seamless, no-hassle experiences will continue to rise. Institutions must connect the dots for students, simplify processes and eliminate the more cumbersome aspects of higher ed “hoop jumping.” Campuses are complex and students lead complex lives. Our students need clear paths with personalized interfaces avoiding confusion and wasted time. The goal should be to reduce students’ extraneous cognitive load so more time and energy can be spent on the enriching or engaging aspects of student life.

In addition to eliminating or reducing aspects of the student journey potentially getting in the way of their success, technology integration can also spotlight opportunities for students to interact with campus staff and communities as a way of amplifying their chances of success. Centralizing students’ access to critical services through an app enables the kind of flexible opportunities for engagement we know can help students feel connected, cared for and committed. These are values we must hold for all our students, whether they happen to be on-campus or off, traditional or non-traditional.


Much of this can be done through better technology integration, but certainly some of this will require revising established norms to ensure greater flexibility or reduced overhead. Thus *technology* integration should be done in concert with *team* integration.

During my years in higher education, I’ve been lucky to frequently encounter ideas and even opportunities for positive change and even transformation. But I’ve also learned that taking advantage of those ideas or opportunities is rarely easy. Transformation also depends on having the right teams, the right technology, and the right timing. Institutions are aware of the need to develop the right teams, and are becoming aware of the need to acquire the right technology. As for the right timing, I believe it has never been better than it is today.

In a world of ubiquitous connectivity, expectations for remote everything and advancing artificial intelligence, challenging the status quo of our teaching and learning practices may be both obvious and inevitable. Now is the time to channel those same forces and energies, challenging the status quo of the student experience. Crafting a vision and a plan to deliver a more seamless and engaging journey to all of our students, those we have today and those who may need us in the unpredictable future. ■









“Expectations for seamless, no-hassle experiences will continue to rise. Institutions must connect the dots for students, simplify processes and eliminate the more cumbersome aspects of higher ed ‘hoop jumping.’ - Jared Stein








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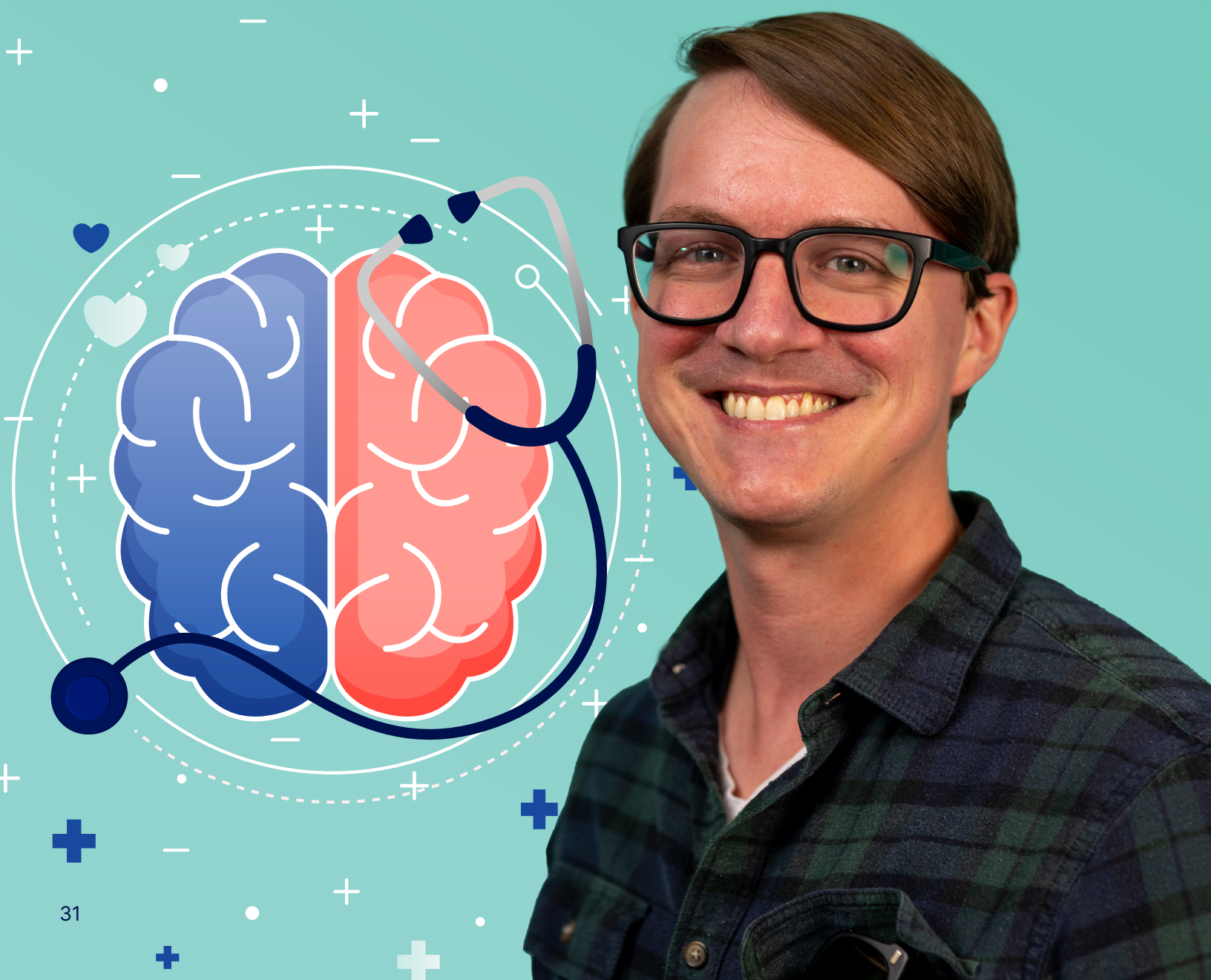




The Power of Student Well-being

Dustin Ramsdell

Community Engagement Lead, Pathify



Beneath the often tranquil surface of college campuses, a storm brews — one increasingly hindering student success. The shadow of student mental health looms large with its pervasive and intricate nature casting a shadow on retention and graduation rates. This does not have to be a tale of despair — embrace it as a call to action and an opportunity for transformation.

Across the nation, campus leaders face the stark reality that mental health issues among college students have reached unprecedented levels. The urgency of the moment demands comprehension and decisive steps forward. With every institution accountable, a vibrant and inclusive community must be forged where institutions embrace and empower students. As the student population diversifies — welcoming older learners, first-generation scholars and underrepresented individuals from around the globe — this mission grows in importance.

WORRYING STATS

It's crucial to first unravel the magnitude of this crisis. Fortunately, a rising tide of organizations now focus on quantifying the mental health woes of college students. Among the startling statistics — a staggering 60% of students admit to grappling with overwhelming anxiety, while 40% deal with depression, as evidenced by the **American College Health Association's 2022 Annual Report**¹.

Amidst this turmoil, institutions often find themselves adrift, struggling to provide adequate support. **The Center for Collegiate Mental Health's (CCMH) 2021 Annual Report**² paints a disheartening picture — overburdened campus counseling centers contend with an average ratio of more than 300 students per counselor, a stark contrast to the national standard of 120 students. A **2023 Student Voices survey**³ unearths another disheartening truth: 50% of students grappling

with mental health conditions never sought support from campus counseling services.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH

A focus on mental health is absolutely critical in maintaining the ongoing viability of student success. In a **2023 survey Inside Higher Ed**⁴ reported 37% of students with fair or poor mental health say increased stress impacts their academics. In addition, the CCMH Annual Report found 51% of students experienced decreasing academic distress during counseling, making the chances of withdrawal less likely. A **May 2023 Student Voice survey**⁵ reported prospective students choose institutions based on their investment in supporting mental health. 29% of prospective students selected this as the top wellness factor when deciding where to study.

BUILDING STUDENT BELONGING

A major component of institutional strategy addressing this issue must focus on fostering student belonging. Without this, a student likely won't engage with resources in the first place. Student belonging means each student feels comfortable and confident to be their authentic selves. In doing so, it also means they find like-minded peers *and* supportive faculty and staff mentors to create a safe space for learning and developing.

A whole host of innovative, adaptable approaches are available to institutions. This includes reflection exercises done during orientation that make students think about community, why it is important — and the roadblocks they may face before school even begins. These exercises should be delivered for both in-person and online students. This type of active thinking ahead of time helps students to anticipate challenges and begin their journey prepared.





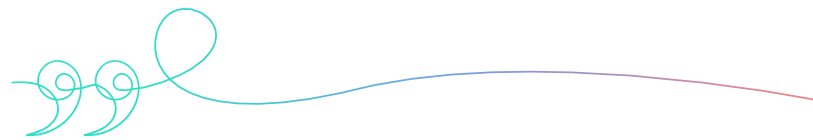
It also includes more substantive efforts like investing in physical spaces for students to come together, such as lounges, cultural centers or event venues. In addition, there needs to be a balanced approach that creates digital spaces for students to connect (like the Communities functionality in Pathify!) This supports interactions for all students, (whether they study on campus or not) as it levels the playing field for engagement. Make social opportunities available to every student. Throughout any of these projects, it's important to reflect on the diversity of your student body so every background feels seen and valued.

CREATING A WELLNESS CULTURE

Any institution seeking to better support student mental health must approach this growing need in line with its culture, its resources and the desires of its students. We've seen community colleges like Columbus State Community College taking a blended approach to supporting their students' mental health. They hired more dedicated staff on campus, recruited interns, and trained student wellness coaches to augment their capacity taking in students needing support. This also included a partnership with Uwill, expanding its reach with a high-quality virtual counseling option. (These resources are now common with the growing popularity of platforms such as BetterHelp.)

The entire New Jersey state system of higher education is working towards implementing Uwill as well as offering virtual counseling services beyond the bounds of traditional office hours. The impact of students gaining access to dedicated 24/7 mental health support at no upfront cost is profound. They (and their parents) no longer need to coordinate therapy appointments based on availability or whether or not insurance covers it. With the program announced in late May 2023, the upcoming academic year will be the first true test of this exciting initiative.

The challenge with implementing any of these projects often associates to how frequently institutions get in the way of progress.



"Student belonging means each student feels comfortable and confident to be their authentic selves. In doing so, it also means they find like-minded peers and supportive faculty and staff mentors to create a safe space for learning and developing." - Dustin Ramsdell



The College Futures Foundation highlighted this concern in a **May 2023 report**⁶, sharing the importance of leaders addressing areas of hurt on campus that impede student well-being. Often, institutions unfortunately isolate students from marginalized backgrounds and foster cultures of individualistic competition. The ways to address this includes many of the ideas offered previously — but it's also important for leaders to change ingrained paradigms around how institutions traditionally invest in counseling services. Success requires a clear vision, persistence and some creativity, all while building coalitions with all relevant stakeholders, including students.

WHAT IS OUR WHY?

Crafting an environment where every student thrives remains a difficult proposition, requiring untiring dedication, intricate planning and a profound understanding of diverse needs. This task is not merely important — it's paramount.

While it's hard and complex work to create a vibrant, dynamic sense of belonging for all students, is there anything more important today? For higher ed to maintain its current relevance, we need to provide as much help as possible managing the stressful demands of their lives while simultaneously pursuing their academic goals. Given the investment these students make to go to school, we owe it to them. ■

Sources

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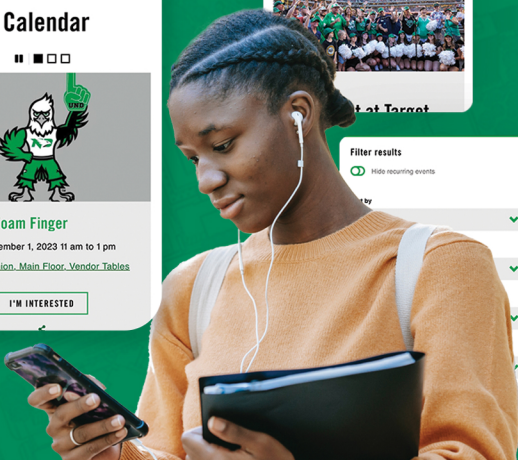


A Single Marketing Team Member Implemented a Campus Wide Calendar

Case Study on Localist Events for The University of North Dakota

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Embracing Cheating

At this point in my life there are two daily certainties — one of which I’m sure I share with you. The first — I’m just a bit more excited than I was the day before about where Pathify is headed. The second — my news feed includes plenty of content devoted to how AI will ruin/fix/revolutionize/metamorphosize/save/destroy/deflate...or elevate higher ed.

So when our magazine’s editor asked me to write an AI themed article for this edition, I cringed at the prospect of rinsing and repeating the same tired story. At its core, much of this exhausting (but critical) debate seems to revolve around cheating and the moral, ethical, practical and logical puzzle the AI revolution will force schools to solve. So that got me thinking about cheating.

Oxford Languages provides two definitions for cheating:

1. Acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain advantage, especially in a game or examination. *(Not what I’d like to write about!)*
2. Avoiding (something undesirable) by luck or skill. *(BINGO!)*

So let’s have a different type of discussion around how (cheating) AI will ruin/fix/revolutionize/metamorphosize/save/destroy/deflate...or elevate higher ed. Let’s talk about how schools will avoid all sorts of undesirable inefficiencies by skillfully leveraging technology, making early-adopting institutions more competitive in acquiring, retaining and graduating students.

THE GOOD KIND OF CHEATING

IT departments have enormous amounts of internal data available for their students. And this data makes perfect material for generative models.

Although institutions deal with ethical, moral and educational questions from an academic standpoint, these same questions simply don’t exist on the administrative side.

Administration within a teaching institution is entirely task focused. Students and staff must learn available capabilities and use them effectively. Certifications don’t exist for learning a skill, rather, it is an immediate end to performing a job more effectively. For example, although it



Chris Hagan

Chief Technology
Officer, Pathify

is necessary to understand how to interact with the scholarships department for some people to succeed in their philosophy degree, that knowledge is not part of the degree.

In fact, obtaining this information provides a win-win proposition for both institutions and students alike. While students more easily discover how to apply and receive scholarships, the AI reduces the amount of work required in answering routine questions — allowing employees to focus on more meaningful work.

Rather than hundreds of students calling the department to ask for the application deadline, they instead ask an AI and allow employees to focus their efforts on advising applicants through the required essay.

By making this scholarship easily accessible through a generative model, the institution decreases the likelihood of losing the student to summer melt. In today's competitive environment, this unprecedented ability to retain students while increasing employee efficiency creates a meaningful and impactful advantage for IT departments willing to explore the power of generative AI.

This also makes personal gain at an institution much easier. Although it is good for students to successfully interact with the administrative side of a school without creative, deeply embedded learning, they do not need to intrinsically build skills in regards to filling in a particular form.

Higher education administrations should eagerly pounce on this extraordinary chance to revolutionize student customer service and minimize the financial burden of implementing processes and instructions. It's a golden opportunity to unleash a wave of exhilarating improvements leaving students awestruck and delighted.

Administratively, a school has a lot more in common with a hardware store than it does academically. Hardware stores utilize tools such as automated call centers and chatbots to suggest common inquiries and deflect manual support tasks away from front-line employees.

This strategy is entirely appropriate to the administrative side of the school. Rather than bogging down employees with mundane questions during student appointments, generative AI has the potential to free them from meeting purgatory and perform work more meaningful to the institution by allowing a bot to exist as the frontline.

At the same time, students receive a more consumer-like experience making them more likely to trust and value institutions willing to adopt this technology.

It's time for institutions to start using their knowledge base advantageously — to help their students “cheat” where it's not a question of academic rigor, but of convenience and clarity.

24/7 IT SUPPORT

If it feels like your IT team needs a productivity boost, AI serves as the ideal antidote to helping staff work more efficiently. The biggest detriment to getting the real work done on a day-to-day basis is our students.

We value them dearly and want to do everything possible to make them successful, but it probably isn't the best use of time for employees to explain policies clearly written on the IT website or help students reset their passwords for the fifth time in a week. Although a typical institution's IT department might work 8-5, students still send frantic emails in the middle of the night about an easily resolvable “crisis.”

The good news: AI lifts a tremendous burden by offering students responses at all hours on topics you shouldn't be answering anyway. Instead of spending time compiling FAQs students will never read or allocating half the day handling the same questions over and over again, AI provides a virtual assistant perfectly capable of handling these areas.

Since a growing number of students already accept AI, transitioning them to a bot will not be nearly as problematic as it might have been just a few years ago. Plus, students don't care who answers their questions — they just want them answered quickly.

With generative AI, IT departments no longer need to provide a bot with every permutation of question and answer. The bot instead ingests

already existing content like frequently asked questions, and connects the dots to provide completely new answers it never trained on. Think back to the example of the student applying for a scholarship and now imagine they need a video interview, but the institution requires students to create passwords on Zoom for security purposes.

The student forgot to set a meeting password and asks the bot for help creating a meeting code instead of a password. Unlike previous iterations, it understands the context for the student's request and provides step-by-step instructions on creating a password, in addition to other security reminders for the student to adequately cover their bases from an IT perspective.

This change not only provides students with better customer support, but allows your department to work on more technical projects. It's not only for the betterment of the entire institution, but empowers employees to perform more meaningful work.

CREATING TECHNOLOGY RFPs

Pathify responds to our fair share of RFPs (and you probably don't need a CTO to tell you this), but the process often seems to be entirely broken at many institutions. Most problems with RFPs occur because the RFP writer struggles with incorporating all the stakeholders “must-haves” into a singular document.

Even worse, at times it's clear institutions use the same RFP template for landscaping projects, food service contracts — and of course — software purchases. I'll save my dissertation on tech purchases in higher ed for another day, but for those seeking a less painful and more streamlined process for crafting RFPs, AI is the answer.

If the RFP writer is a skilled interviewer, they only need a few conversations with key stakeholders to record all of the requirements needed for

their particular project. Most digital meeting software like Zoom and Teams are fully capable of handling detailed transcription. After feeding these transcripts into an AI, simply provide a few prompts regarding the format of the RFP, key areas of the interview to focus on and any other requirements.

With very little effort, the AI spits out relevant and succinct questions, and a truly painful process takes significantly less time to finish. Not only will AI make writing RFPs much more efficient, it will also enable the writer to spend more time on the meaningful work (gathering critical requirements), hopefully resulting in better decisions.

Take a few minutes to think about other “dirty jobs” an AI might excel at. Where could you fit a tireless, affordable, hyper-intelligent resource to help your team work better?

Administrations need not cower in complete fear of generative AI, even though its place in greater academia raises existential questions. But outside the academic context, there is undoubtedly a shimmering silver lining for institutions eager to enhance customer service while arming employees with a competitive edge.

The gains awaiting institutions are as plentiful as a well-stocked buffet. It falls upon administrations to seize the full smorgasbord of possibilities generative AI presents, or risk being outshined by cutting edge IT teams at competing schools. In this fast-paced world, staying ahead is the name of the game, and the power of AI is simply too tantalizing to ignore.

By the way, in case you’re wondering what Pathify has to do with any of the above — we’ll likely have something pretty amazing to show at this year’s EDUCAUSE Conference. We’re hoping to further revolutionize the IT department’s capabilities, while dramatically improving how students obtain personalized information at any time, in any place...and on any device. Stay tuned. ■



“It’s time for institutions to start using their knowledge base advantageously — to help their students “cheat” where it’s not a question of academic rigor, but of convenience and clarity.”


- Chris Hagan, Chief Technology Officer

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white turtleneck, is sitting on a grey couch and looking at a laptop. In the background, a child is lying on their back on the same couch, with their legs raised high in the air. The scene is set against a plain white wall. Large, semi-transparent circular graphics in shades of blue, teal, and red are overlaid on the image.

Seeking Out Non-Traditional Applicants

Converting Prospects to Students

David Glezerman | Managing Partner, The DRG Group



Every day brings another news story or opinion piece about higher education approaching the proverbial demographic or enrollment cliff — or when the supply of prospective college-aged individuals between ages 18 and 22 reduces as the result of lower birth rates. Yet, while admissions and enrollment officers saw this trend gaining momentum over the past decade, many institutions, both public and private, still struggle to reconfigure strategies and maintain enrollments, let alone prepare for a future with fewer prospects and applicants.

With federal data showing a decrease in college enrollment by about 15% in the past decade, the enrollment cliff arrived early due to the high cost of education, uneven returns from getting a degree and an appealing job market. “Why do I need to spend time and money to get a piece of paper when promising jobs with great raises are available?” is an oft-asked question in many households and communities, especially when education costs rise faster than most commodities and services.

Despite their best efforts to maximize recruiting across numerous populations, colleges and universities often find themselves fishing among the same pools of candidates to build out each year’s freshman class. This presents a set of critical decisions, especially for tuition-dependent private colleges to meet the enrollment targets needed to earn sufficient revenues to remain solvent without excessive discounting or dipping into reserves to balance budgets.

With many more institutions either closing or considering mergers and acquisitions to stay alive, the higher education community faces new pressures — locating new or under-tapped sources of students and providing a quality education. Higher education institutions must also offer a positive student experience, potentially raising institutional recognition, triggering a new flow of applicants and additional financial support from alumni.

In the post-pandemic world of higher education, colleges and universities must again reinvent themselves and their enrollment strategies to identify under-represented market segments and build pathways for non-traditional applicants to seek out degrees, certificates or other credentials for career development. It is not enough to only identify these new candidate pools. Higher ed institutions must find more creative and state-of-the-art methods to engage and enroll non-traditional applicants while also overcoming the public perception higher education no longer offers opportunities for its graduates.

WHO ARE THE NON-TRADITIONAL APPLICANTS FOR FUTURE YEARS?

As institutions move beyond the realm of the traditional 18-to-22-year-olds, many admissions and enrollment management staff find themselves scrambling to get senior leadership’s buy-in on their proposed recruitment strategies for newer and less-tapped constituencies. With competition growing among peer institutions, finding the right niche could revolve around types of potential students and/or academic programs. In addition, crafting strategies geared towards eventual student success involves multiple solutions, including a stronger online presence, shorter terms for coursework and programs leading to certificates and/or eventual degrees.

Creating other new or diverse partnerships to funnel transfer students into a career path or training program, including partnering with private sector businesses, allows institutions to compete with traditional models.

Studies show as many as 40 million Americans attended college and successfully completed some coursework without earning a degree. Though many of the aforementioned categories of prospective re-admits include people who started but never got to the finish line, even more potential candidates would consider returning to earn their degrees if circumstances warranted and enabled them to re-enter and matriculate.

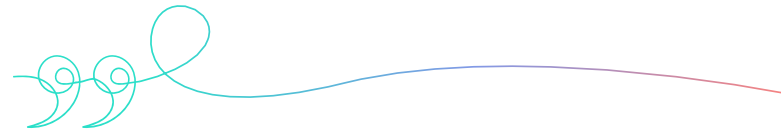
PROMOTING RE-ENGAGEMENT

Too often, institutions create numerous barriers and obstacles to re-engage former students who dropped out. Though financial reasons often are cited for stopping progress, many academic and administrative policies, procedures or requirements may hold back non-traditional prospects from re-applying for admission or even taking a class to regain comfort and confidence in their own abilities to succeed.

Colleges and universities may not provide the necessary services or resources available to these individuals who struggled in their previous matriculation attempts or did not receive direction to identify the right counseling leading to earlier successes. As the concepts of enrollment management and student success emerge into institutions' cultures, they realize intensive and focused assistance for prospective and enrolled students leads to positive outcomes and a roadmap to recruit new prospects while retaining a larger percentage of enrolled individuals.

Reviewing, simplifying or enhancing certain tasks and/or services provide more attractive entryways for non-traditional prospects and leads to increasing re-enrollments and greater student retention. In many cases, adults and other non-traditional learners withdrew from achieving their educational goals because of mental health-related concerns. Having easily accessible and confidential resources for students to share their concerns and address issues makes the ultimate difference in whether the student stays in school while changing their life for the better.

- **Ease of application.** In a world where we seek immediate feedback and gratification, having an application process that is simple, focused and not overwhelming will help attract non-traditional applicants who will invest short bursts of time and energy when they see how their efforts could pay off.



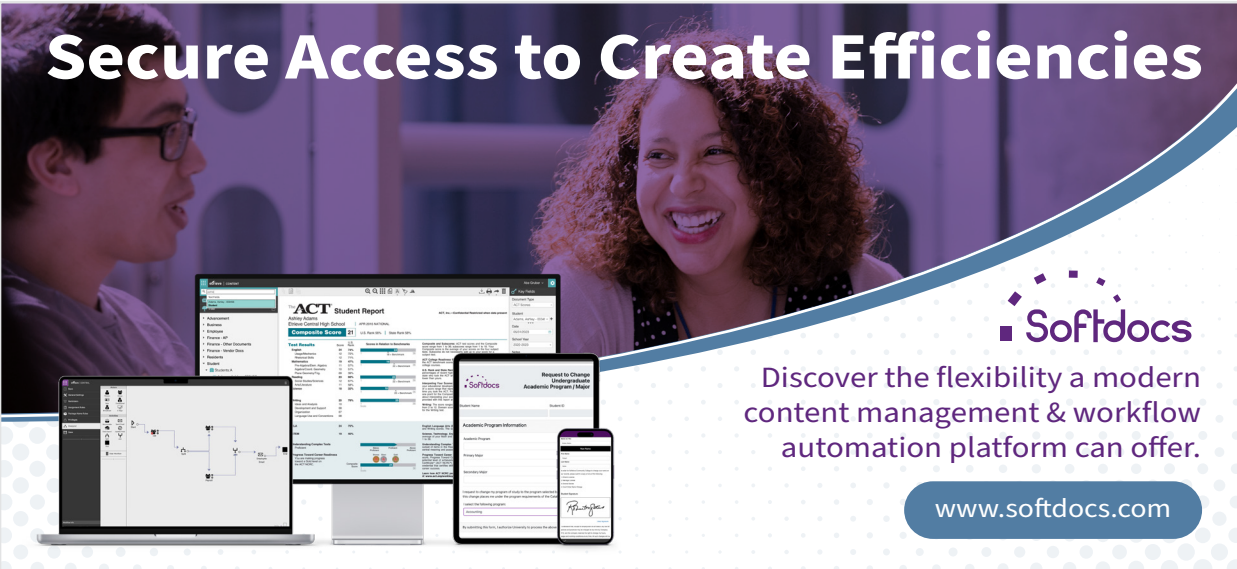
“Higher education institutions must find more creative and state-of-the-art methods and solutions to engage and enroll non-traditional applicants while also overcoming the public perception that higher education no longer offers opportunities for its graduates.”

- David Glezerman

- **Minimize or eliminate the need for standardized or placement testing.** Requiring SAT or ACT testing for non-traditional populations, many who previously took courses or have proven work experience, create sufficient stress and fear to stop a potential applicant from moving forward. Using some combination of life experience and placement testing to determine where/how to re-start one's academic career or acquired knowledge better suits adult learners and other related populations.
- **Timely admissions decisions and review of previously earned credits.** Again, today's fast-paced society demands “immediate” action and feedback. Setting expectations about when an admissions decision is forthcoming will mitigate some of the impatience and service-delivery issues coming with no knowledge or due date. There also should be a timely review and decision made by the school so new admits know their academic status (i.e., number of credits needed to earn a degree) and what previous course work is acceptable or needs to be retaken. Today's applicants want to know where they stand and specifically what else they need to achieve their goals and eventual success. Some examples include:

- **Having online options available for coursework to meet work and life schedules.** Today's non-traditional applicants want to know how much flexibility is available to start and complete their coursework while determining whether it must be done in-person or through online offerings.
- **Talking about financing one's education as part of your marketing campaigns.** Promoting financial aid and other financing options, such as short-term payment plans, must be part of the conversation since it helps students overcome their fears over the cost of their education as well as provide demonstrated solutions. Fears of the financial unknowns often create the highest obstacles to returning prospects. Thus, having access to financial literacy information not only will reduce personal stress levels, but also offer necessary knowledge and training for managing their post-academic lives.
- **Offering sufficient academic advising and career counseling services.** Asking prospects to know and understand academic requirements for a degree and placing them onto the best career path should not be a given. Tying the academic program and degree to a desired career with likely paths also provide the best solutions and guidance enabling the successful student to live with their desired lifestyle.
- **Overcoming technological literacy issues.** Higher education technology tools typically aren't part of the non-traditional prospect's knowledge base. Having real-time tech support available, not just a web-based guide or tutorial, assures the institution understands and meets the varied learning needs and models for the non-traditional population it is seeking to re-engage.
- **Creating a mental health safety net.** No age group is fully immune from the daily pressures of life, work, family and even what academia may bring to the mix. A recent study by Gallup and the Lumina Foundations identified that almost two-thirds of individuals who never enrolled for higher education cited emotional stress as a key deterrent.

In many cases, adults and other non-traditional learners have been forced to withdraw from achieving their educational goals because of mental health-related issues and concerns. Having easily accessible and confidential resources for these students to share their concerns and help address issues could make the ultimate difference not just in whether the student stays in school — it could be life-altering for the individual. ■



Secure Access to Create Efficiencies

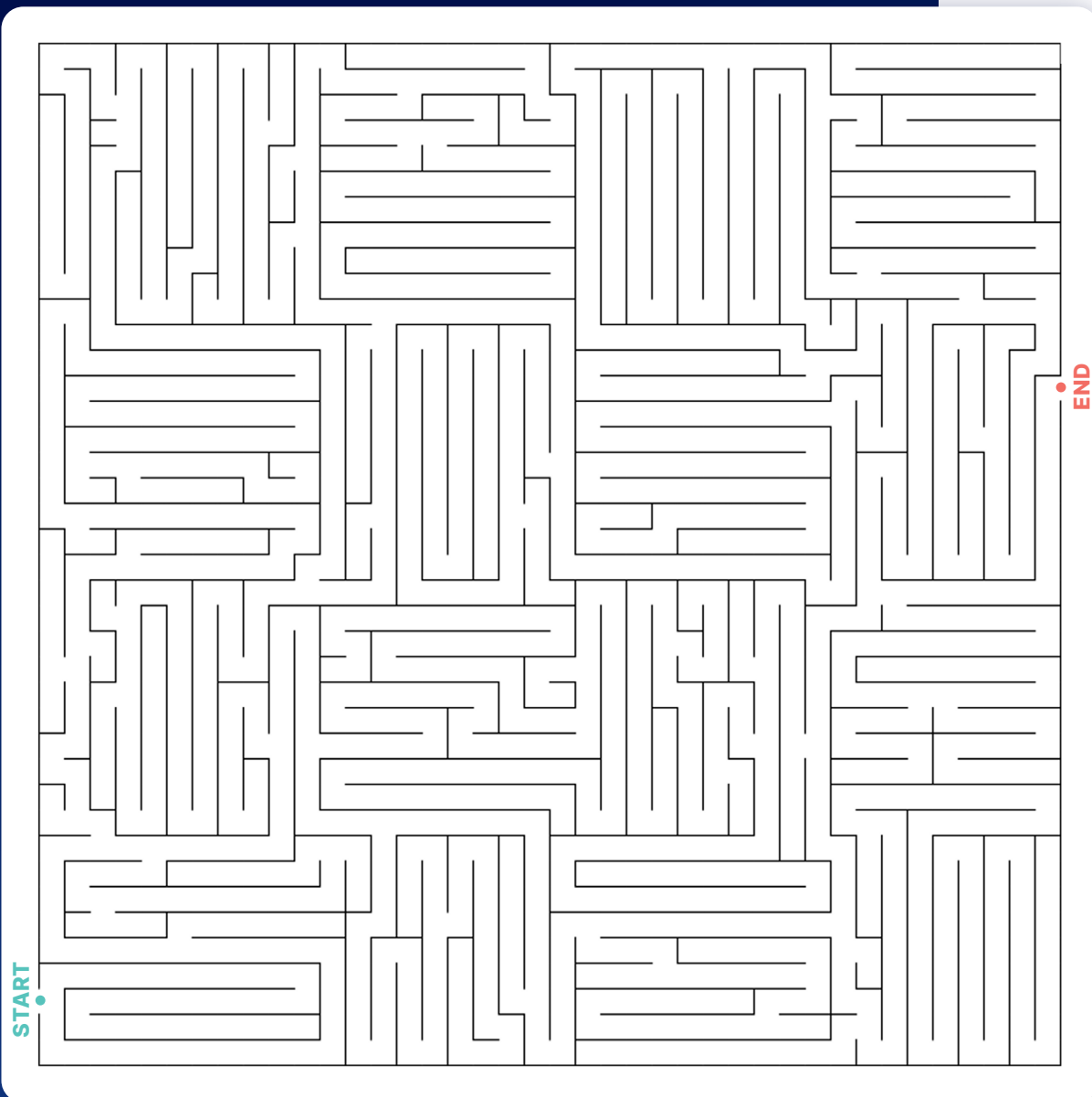
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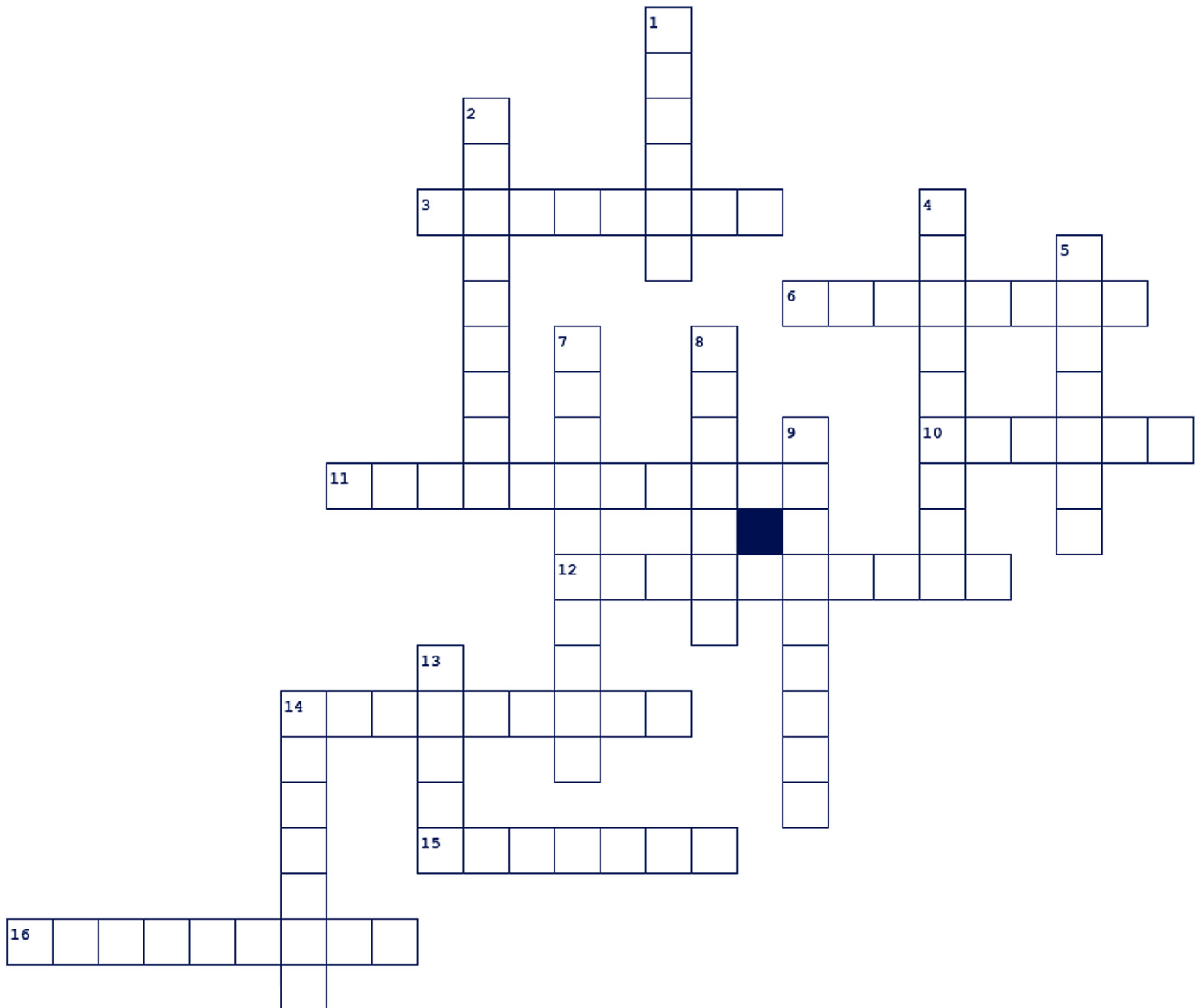
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Brain Games

Escape the Maze



[Click here for answer key](#)



Amplifying Student Support

Across

3. Another name for the status quo
6. This active personal support can happen just as effectively online
10. Something we all wish we could live without
11. Make it unique to you
12. Getting students involved
14. Fighting against the norm
15. They have an important role in student support
16. Feeling like you belong

Down

1. Blending of in-person and online
2. Measuring effectiveness and directing efforts
4. Leaving no one out
5. An existential sense of worry or dread
7. Talking it out
8. The current wave of transformation
9. Result of supporting students
13. Enrollment is about to go over this
14. A pervasive issue



COOK'S CORNER:

The LMS

(LAMB MADE ON SMOKER)



Pathify Featured Recipe

By Adam Miller

THE LMS

(Lamb Made on Smoker)

Not much excites the Pathify team more than cooking up serious widget and integration “eats” for the Recipe Library. Recipes have been an extraordinary force multiplier, enabling non-technical staff to surface personalized data, insights and resources from systems all over the higher ed ecosystem. And with over 50 Recipes (and scores more in development), we’re just getting started. So what does this have to do with lamb?

Truth is, I can’t go a day hearing about LMS integrations without thinking about my version of LMS. In fact, before starting at Pathify, my friends asked for my LMS anytime they came over for dinner. While there are a number of ways to make lamb, nothing beats smoking it.

I’m personally a loyal Traeger fanatic and love the smokey flavor it gives to basically all meats and vegetables. For this recipe, I’ll share how I add some dijon mustard and fresh herbs to a leg of lamb — perfect for celebrating the end of summer.

Enough talking. Let’s get to the recipe!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bone-in leg of lamb (7-8 pounds)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp dijon mustard
- 4 cloves of crushed garlic
- 1 tbsp chopped rosemary
- ½ tsp mint
- ½ tsp oregano
- ½ tsp thyme
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat your Traeger or smoker/pellet grill to 225 °F.
2. In a small bowl, combine dijon mustard, garlic and herbs.
3. Rub the olive oil on the lamb, creating a nice binder. Mayonnaise or Worcestershire sauce works here, too.
4. Add the mustard rub and deeply massage it into the lamb.
5. Insert the meat thermometer into the thickest part of the lamb, away from the bone if possible.
6. Place the lamb on the grill fat side up and close the lid... then get comfortable!
7. For rare, pull the lamb off the grill 130 °F (just under three hours). For medium, pull at 135 °F, and pull at 145 °F if you don’t like pink.
8. Rest the lamb for 15-20 minutes by loosely wrapping in butcher paper or aluminum foil.
9. Carve the lamb and enjoy!

SERVING RECOMMENDATIONS: Pair with a Greek style cold orzo salad or roasted potatoes and a trifle for dessert. Enjoy this treat on a hot summer day in anticipation of the start of a new semester!

DON’T HAVE A SMOKER? Set the grill to low/low-medium. Loosely wrap a handful of cooking wood chips in aluminum foil, and place in a disposable aluminum pan filled with two inches of water. Place the lamb on the grill grate, and monitor temperature to reach the desired doneness.

The Final Word

Matt Hammond | Chief Revenue Officer



In the world of higher ed, a tale I shall spin, of digital wonders — and the rad traits therein, where visionaries question the tired status quo, a whole industry changing makes this apropos.

In the growing expanse of this new online sphere, a digital oasis — connections appear, a diverse set of students from all walks of life, connecting with Pathify — on any device.

Oh say, the importance of this digital clan, on the fast evolving path of higher ed's plan, for in this novel age of technology's reign, a sense of community we all must sustain.

All over discussion boards and chat rooms galore, ideas are shared, fascinating concepts explored, from the dawn's early light, to midnight's stinging chime, community forms bonds, standing the test of time.

Professors, those orators with wisdom profound, hold forth virtual lectures, a sight to astound, they lighten the path, radiant beacon so bright, deftly leading us through realms of learning delight.

Peer interactions, surely such an advantage, teamwork on projects, now so pleasant to manage, from simply shared documents to video calls, digital collaboration conquers it all.

A series of webinars and online events, expand horizons, physical classrooms augment, multifarious speakers from lands far away, inspire us to learn — and to always seize the day.

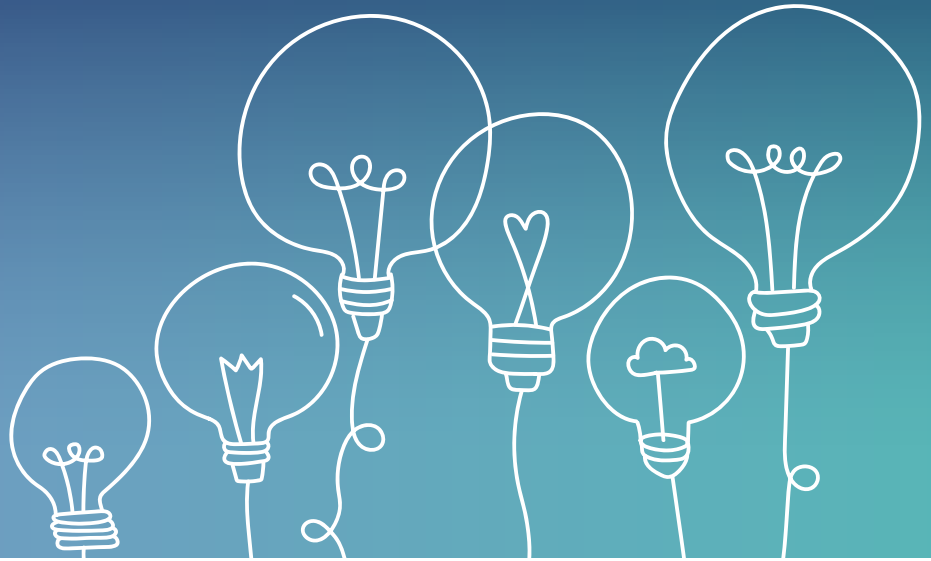
The Pathify platform, striking virtual stage, the entire community in one place engaged, from prospects, to students, alumni and parents, surely this wonder will leave no human absent.

So about halfway through this ridiculous rhyme, let's remember the adage succinct and sublime, the most important factor in student success, the one thing to remember and try to finesse:

No matter how impressive or hallowed your halls, the matter your alumni will fondly recall, is the sense of connection they felt at your school, an equation that's tough (but we consider cool).

In the world of higher ed, we cannot forget, the power of connection, a priceless duet, for when students they feel, a solid connection, success is likely — call it degree protection.





Through the Pathify Portal, connection takes flight, conversations and resources all in plain sight, in the digital community, bonds are formed, a network of acquaintance, where hearts remain warm.

A peer's encouragement, such a powerful aid, the path of adversity, together we wade, through exams, tests and papers, the progress is brisk, and without this connection — the student's at risk.

A strong sense of belonging is what we all seek, a go-forward plan making higher ed unique, when competing for students diverse and distinct, show the power of engagement, ever so linked.

For when loneliness dissolves and connection blooms, a great confidence blossoms, dispelling the gloom, and students find that for which they constantly yearn, vastly improving their capacity to learn.

As your school transitions to this digital world, Pathify's here to stay — our great duty unfurled, the entire community, together we rise, with clients and partners — we all reach for the sky.

So together we cheer this wonder of ages, where personalized dashboards outlink farm-mazes, where a school's community congregates and meets, in the pursuit of knowledge, the circle complete.

Challenge the status quo, this issue did cover, I'll leave you with this as I'm hearing the buzzer: we thank you for reading if you made it this far, your commitment to Pathify makes you a star. ■



"No matter how impressive or hallowed your halls, the matter your alumni will fondly recall, is the sense of connection they felt at your school, an equation that's tough (but we consider cool)."

- Matt Hammond



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