

Collegium

A PATHIFY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2024

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Letter from the Editor

Leadership Meeting the Moment

Over the past year, I've had the privilege of speaking with numerous higher ed CIOs, ed tech partners and other knowledgeable leaders about the waves of digital transformation sweeping across campuses nationwide. Institutions are interfacing with the needs of this moment in different ways and are always looking for methods to best manage limited resources. These conversations highlight the many challenges facing institutions but also the many opportunities for innovation.

I'm excited to leverage this experience as I step into editing our magazine. I've seen how our community responds to past editions, praising it as relevant and engaging content they can browse and easily share with colleagues. Furthermore, I'm honored to ring in a new era for the magazine by rebranding it as Collegium, aligning with our customer community.

Throughout this edition, you'll find stories highlighting how higher ed IT professionals drive positive change on their campuses through intentional investments in powerful digital tools.

Students, staff and faculty alike expect personalized and flexible digital experiences allowing them to do what they need to do, when they want, where they want and how they want. At Pathify, we help institutions achieve this goal every day and feel it is important to show our work.

This moment calls for focused leadership, adeptly managing disruptions with resilience and determination, while challenging the status quo. I hope you find inspiration from the stories we've highlighted here and keep the conversation going with the leaders included in each article.

This work isn't easy, but it's essential. We owe it to our students to facilitate experiences fostering belonging, learning and lifelong success. We look forward to continuous partnership with higher education in creating these experiences.

Dustin Ramsdell

Dustin Ramsdell

Editor, Pathify Magazine

By the Numbers

A Year of Milestones

2023 ENGAGEMENT METRICS

1,174,405

Total Active Users



6,417

Groups



9,982,966 searches



MOST FREQUENTLY SEARCHED TERMS

Term	Count	Term	Count	Term	Count
Canvas	133,942	Banner	96,228	housing	58,074
email	101,334	transcript	75,425	add	50,488
degree	97,896	schedule	72,496	bookstore	43,337
		library	70,460		



~10,000,000

Average total visits
per month in 2023



68

Customer Net
Promoter Score



1,196,195

Log Ins/Unique
Sessions

2023 EVENTS

46

Events

20

Virtual

26

In-person



576

Light-Up Leis



453

Hawaiian Shirts

200

Oysters

10

Hand-Delivered
Pizzas

5

Pathify Pedicabs

2

Neon Signs

1

Heck of a Year

2024 EVENTS PREVIEW

**CISOA 2024
Technology
Summit**

March 18 - 21

Riverside, CA

**Tambellini
Future Campus™
Summit**

June 26 - 27

New York, NY

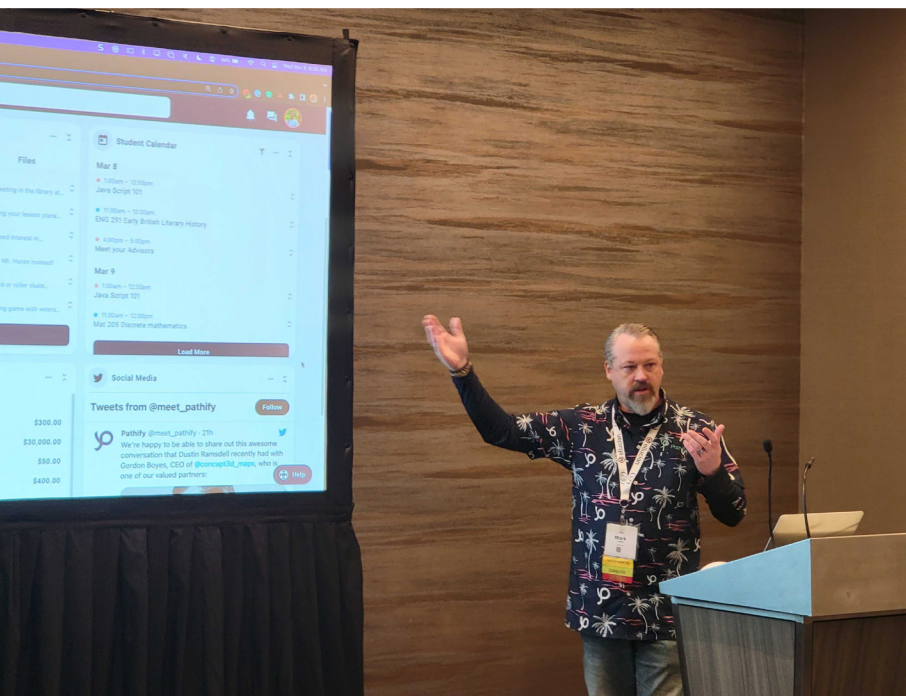
**EDUCAUSE
Annual
Conference
2024**

October 21 - 24

San Antonio, TX

**RTM Higher
Education CIO
Congress**

Spring, Summer & Fall



FACES & PLACES OF PATHIFY



What does a Connected Campus look or feel like to you?

The ability to deliver accessible, safe and reliable learning experiences.

Rene Eborn, Deputy of Digital Transformation & Associate Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at Utah State University

I think the biggest thing is providing flexibility for students and all stakeholders having resources available.

David Glezerman, Managing Partner at The DRG Group

Putting procedures and communication and strategies and toolsets in place and eliminating silos. We must model the way in which people interact with the world and make sure that we fit into that really well.

Andy Gould, VP of Sales at Modern Campus

It feels like a place where people can be themselves and can develop strong relationships across the ecosystem. Where a diverse range of folks with shared and different interests can connect. And where they can learn to be active contributors in today's world.

Dr. Kris Lee, Lead Faculty in Behavioral Science at Northeastern University

From the operations and a learning perspective, I think friction should be as small as possible.

Joe Sabado, Deputy CIO at UC - Santa Barbara

The next generation college is one that connects things that used to be disparate.

Elliot Felix, Founder at Brightspot Strategy

It's that students can get to the right resources at the right time, for the right reasons and when they need it. It's safe but connected and easy for people to navigate.

Kimberly Biddings, former VP of Product at BIO-Key

It's identifying the connection points and the connective tissue points that allow you to better plug in those tools to serve your constituency.

Rick Shaw, Retired Higher Ed CIO

Using our digital tools to translate a caring experience that students feel on campus to wherever else they are.

Eric Hazen, Director of Digital Marketing at Ferris State University

It's a community first. It's about the people and putting the people first and making them feel human again online.

Nicole Baldassarre, former Head of Sales at InSpace

It's that human connection that can be facilitated by tech but really has to be rooted in the leadership that empowers team members on the ground to develop relationships with people from all corners of campus.

Stephanie Geyer, Director of Digital Strategy and Innovation at University of Montana

It's a collective of people bound by data and inspired by it.

Phil Kormany, Chief Innovation Officer at Maryville University

A foundation that helps us to have really authentic relationships and helps our students feel that sense of belonging and that sense of connection where we are, we are people first and processes second.

Jessica James, Assistant Director of Orientation & Student Activities at Concordia University Irvine

Getting teams to communicate with each other. Being clear on what they need and what they're experiencing. Sometimes we have to get communication out of the way.

Alan Schomaker, CIO at Loyola University New Orleans

That we continue to push the way we offer services to our students so they know that we are totally customer-focused.

Sasi Pillay, Vice President and CIO at University of Nevada, Reno

Engaged, both internally and externally, helping us see where we are as a part of the broader community.

Todd Norris, CIO at Saint Mary's College

Where students feel that they have access to the information and the support that they need to be successful and then on top of that, having a space on campus where students feel that they have a sense of belonging and that they're understood and embraced.

Ian Wolf, Assistant Dean for Student Engagement at Passaic County Community College

Creating Connected Campuses: A Conversation with Elliot Felix

Elliot Felix

Founder of Brightspot Strategy



Dustin Ramsdell

Pathify Community Engagement Lead

There are certain people I collaborate with where I always say they just “get it.” Their perspective on the higher education space is clear, consistent and compelling, and I find myself constantly seeking out their ideas. They fully embody the idea of leadership and are role models for the field due to their keen insights.

One of these people is Elliot Felix. Elliot and I often work together on content, and it always fuels me up to pick his brain about the current challenges in the higher education space. His work centers around creating physical and digital spaces supporting student success at institutions across the country. With a background in public speaking, consulting and writing, I knew he would add great insights to this magazine. Specifically, into how organizations like Pathify are leaders for higher education and support institutions toward more connected, supportive and impactful campuses.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Dustin Ramsdell: How have you seen higher ed tech implemented and utilized at institutions?

Elliot Felix: What I love about higher ed is the culture of helping and supporting students. The downside is higher ed is almost always additive.

People are attached to their tools and their programs. They don’t want to let them go. This means there can be redundancy and there can be inefficiency. It can create more costs.

Even worse, there are too many tools. Students don’t know what’s out there. Study after study keeps showing one of the biggest barriers for students is just awareness about all the great resources out there for them at their institution.

DR: Redundancy and underutilization would be the death of any good higher ed tech.

That's why we're obsessed with two things here at Pathify — amplify and streamline.

How do you see platforms like Pathify supporting innovation at institutions through the way we integrate with higher ed tech tools?

EF: We're oftentimes having a conversation about technology which catalyzes broader efforts within a university to understand the student experience. What are the pain points? Are they getting the runaround between people and platforms?

Anything getting people to clarify what it is they're trying to do, understanding their students and thinking about how to better anticipate and meet the needs of the students is a good thing.

DR: Something I want to keep emphasizing is the idea of creating a digital-first strategic plan.

You might be creating a strategy with implications for your digital student experience in your infrastructure and ecosystem. But explicitly saying, 'This is where we are. This is where we want to go.' What I've always appreciated about Pathify is it's a nexus point. It plugs into the middle to bring all your existing tools together.

When it comes to a digital-first strategic plan, is that something you've seen often?

EF: There are a lot of institutions who are modality-agnostic meaning they are not trying to treat an online, an on-campus or a hybrid student differently in terms of the tools they offer and the ways they support them.

The people behind the curve are the ones with separate systems. So you know, you've got your online unit, or maybe you're working with an OPM with a totally separate tech stack from the way the LMS and the other tools you're using to serve your on-campus students.

It's already complicated enough. The more separate systems, the harder you make it for students, and the harder it is for you to support everything.

DR: The theme of the magazine is leadership and how institutions are leading in this moment. From your perspective, how is Pathify empowering institutions to challenge the status quo?

EF: I wrote an article in the EDUCAUSE Review not too long ago about the role technology plays in student success.

Staff members are using technology for coordinating care and support as well as rethinking communications. We've all seen students who get the runaround from place to place and platform to platform. They may even give up before they get the help they need. Creating a hub bringing those things together in one place digitally is so beneficial.

Also, every university sends its students too many emails and students don't open them. And then they act as if students not only opened it, but read it and committed it to memory. We know only about a quarter of emails are opened. So the idea of an engagement hub bringing together these services and giving you better ways to communicate with students and meet them where they are, those are huge wins.

Pathify works quite well in coordination, prompting collaboration and rethinking those communications to be more effective.

DR: I've been in some spaces recently where people are scratching their heads and are at a loss of how to communicate with students.

You can invest in all these amazing resources for students to get involved in. But if the delivery isn't there, they just don't know about it. There's a lot of noise and students would love to take advantage of these opportunities, but they don't know about them.

EF: I talked to a client recently and we're working on this project where we're doing an inventory of their tech stack to support student success. So like, what are all the platforms they're using, what data is coming off those platforms and how are they analyzing it?

The data on how you're meeting students' needs is almost as important as meeting the needs themselves because if you don't know *how* you're doing, then you don't know *what* you're doing. It's just another reason for having everything in one place or as few places as possible.

Not only is it more efficient to support and more effective for the student but you can get better data about what's going on.

DR: This is exactly what a lot of institutional leaders are grappling with in terms of their digital transformation.

What do you think is necessary for how higher ed leverages digital tools moving forward?

EF: You must start by understanding student experience as it is, and its potential. It can't be a one-off thing either. It's crucial to get in a regular rhythm of understanding what's happening with your students.

Secondly, get as good at subtraction as you are at addition so you can focus and be more effective instead of spreading yourself too thin. You'll control costs at the same time.

Third, I think this only works if there is a culture of collaboration, of working across units to better coordinate the care and support, removing the redundancies, and improving the student experience.

Lastly, do this in a way where you're focusing on things with concrete ROI and real value for the student and the institution. Whether it's active

learning, student belonging, mentoring or career connections, tie the tech to things with proven value, then make the case for it and measure your progress against it.

DR: We've seen some of our partners talk about how they need a good portal that integrates with their tools but then realize they can get rid of other systems because Pathify is a great communication tool. So there are cost savings there — if you're not spread so thin, there is more time to achieve success by optimizing the use of your remaining tools.

We need to scrutinize where we're putting our resources. The digital ecosystem is no different from underperforming academic programs. You want to make sure you're investing in tools with a lot of ROI.

EF: I think the reckoning around the cost of technology is coming. We just keep adding more and more. What are we getting for this investment? Focus is a beautiful thing. You can better support students and not be spread too thin, and you can save money in the process.

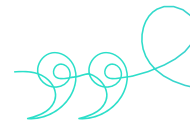
DR: To wrap up, any final thoughts you would give to higher ed leaders when thinking about their evolving tech stacks?

EF: The thing I'll say in closing is really just to emphasize this point about digital sprawl and the proliferation of tools. You can feel suburban sprawl. You can feel those downsides in a tangible way, people endure long commutes, or there is a dead city center at night.

Digital sprawl is just as real, but it's maybe harder to see. So staff should be getting as good at subtraction as they are at addition.

DR: Digital sprawl is such a great way to put it. Think about how you can curtail and organize it better, make it more easily searched, tailored and personalized. These are all the action words hopefully ringing in folks' heads right now.

EF: I think building these as organizational habits is really healthy. It's great there are tools like Pathify to do this unification, make it seamless and bring things together allowing you to connect what you've got, and maybe take away some of the things you don't need. So I'm hopeful about higher ed, and the role tech can play in student success in particular. ■



"The data on how you're meeting students' needs is almost as important as the meeting of the needs themselves because if you don't know how you're doing, then you don't know what you're doing."

- Elliot Felix, Founder of Brightspot Strategy

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Digital Symphony

Orchestrating Transformation
with Pathify



Natalie Shrader
Director of Digital Media

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Winston-Salem, North Carolina is a natural home for the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) — it's a vibrant hub colloquially known as the City of Arts and Innovation — where the university shines as a beacon of artistic excellence and creativity. Deeply rooted in community, collaboration and the belief in unlimited student potential, UNCSA school leaders rely on the institution's values to guide their actions, inform decision-making and shape future initiatives. As the Director of Digital Media at UNCSA, Natalie Shrader leans into the mission of transforming how the university approaches campus culture and community.

MOTIVATED BY MOBILE

The UNCSA Pathify story starts in early 2020 when the student government association began advocating for a centralized information hub. The initiative quickly spread campus-wide. "We're a small university, so if there are pain points in one area, it becomes painful for everybody," Shrader said. "Students came forward saying they needed something like Pathify to make their lives easier. They were done searching for information in six different places."

The narrative feels all too familiar — with the 2020 pandemic interruption, the initiative took a backseat to COVID-19-related priorities. The push for a centralized information hub resurfaced a few years later when UNCSA explored mobile solutions to promote announcements, engagement and community. "We knew traditional email wasn't the most effective way to reach students," explained

Shrader. "They want information to be accessible and mobile-first." With mobile capabilities top-of-mind, UNCSA thoroughly reviewed several leading engagement hubs. After significant research, they found Pathify offered a digital experience that made the most sense for their community.

FOCUSED FORWARD THINKING

In rolling out the app to campus, Shrader and her team carefully focused on the big picture and end goals. While the original plan involved launching a simultaneous campus-wide mobile experience across students, faculty, staff and alumni, Shrader stepped up with a different perspective. "The plan was to launch everything at once, but realistically, I knew if we launched too large we would run the risk of a negative user experience," she recalled. "We pivoted and said 'Let's start with the students first, let's make this a great experience for them when they step back on campus.'"

FROM STUDENT INITIATIVES TO STRATEGIC TRIUMPHS

Students played a major role in developing and adopting the mobile app experience. "I wanted to make sure students felt like we heard what they said," Shrader reflected. To promote awareness, her team launched digital and print campaigns and released a special endorsement email from Vice Provost of Student Affairs, Laurel Donley. However, the most successful avenue met students where they were most active — on Instagram. "Using Instagram Stories, we linked straight out to information about downloading Pathify," Shrader explained. "We were intentional about reaching students where they lived."

ABOUT UNCSA

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) is a top-ranked performing arts conservatory and America's first state-supported arts school. The nation's only public university of five arts conservatories on one campus, UNCSA trains emerging artists for careers in dance, design and production, drama, filmmaking and music at the undergraduate, graduate and high school levels. UNCSA provides industry-leading training in an inclusive environment where students are encouraged to leverage the arts as a mechanism for change. Established by the N.C. General Assembly in 1963, the School of the Arts opened in Winston-Salem ("The City of Arts and Innovation") in 1965 and became part of the University of North Carolina System when it was formed in 1972. For more information, visit www.uncsa.edu.

The college officially launched UNCSA Campus, its Pathify mobile app, in August 2023. The methodical rollout saw success — with nearly 800 unique logins since August 1, more than half the student population has accessed the platform — and it's been a night and day difference between other technology launches. "We usually don't see any adoption whatsoever with new tech," admitted Shrader. "Our success is tied to being incredibly intentional with the audiences we speak with." Up next for UNCSA is launching a portal experience for faculty and staff, and this time around, the team will use a different avenue to promote adoption. "Our faculty are active on LinkedIn, on email and are involved in campus grassroots efforts, so we'll promote Pathify to them via those methods," Shrader said.

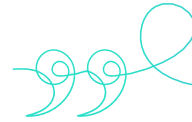
The UNCSA Campus app also ushered in a new era with Pathify's Roles feature, allowing detailed and personalized communication. With high school, undergraduate and graduate students across five conservatories, ironing out communication complexities was paramount. "That was something students, faculty and staff had issues with before Pathify," Shrader reflected. "They could find information, but it was within a bunch of other information that wasn't important or didn't matter to them. With Pathify, we're able to customize their experience. Whether you're a high school or a first-year student, you can quickly find what you need." Beyond personalization, Pathify helps instill a sense of responsibility. "Tasks are different based on Roles," said Shrader. "The ability to make sure tasks get done or announcements are acknowledged helps us create an experience that also drives accountability."

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

The concept of community and collaboration runs deeply into the college's strategic initiatives. "We're really focused on interdisciplinary collaboration amongst the arts," Shrader shared. This unwavering conviction fuels UNCSA, inspiring both staff and students to embrace innovation. "Pathify helps us execute our digital campus experience. Now, students communicate in Groups and share information and knowledge. It allows students, faculty and staff to lead and take initiative."



The core values of UNCSA — community, collaboration, imagination, integrity and grit — are the driving forces behind implementing solutions like Pathify. “Community is huge for us,” Shrader remarked. “It’s something our leadership and administration emphasize. Pathify’s ability to deliver on that aspect is incredible.” At UNCSA, a nurturing community and a sense of belonging form the bedrock where creativity and innovation thrive. The college exemplifies the power of community and a focused commitment to end goals, paving the way for a truly unified and connected campus. ■



“Pathify is an empowerment tool helping us meet our strategic initiatives.”

- Natalie Shrader, Director of Digital Media, University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA)



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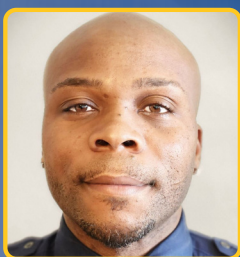


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Leading with **VISION** at San Jacinto College



Tim Moss
Senior Project
Manager



Yvette Ledesma
Student Communications
Coordinator

Ashighereducationcontinueschanging rapidly, many leaders remain stuck in a “here and now” mindset — reacting to change instead of anticipating and embracing it. These leaders build their organizations gradually, carefully adhering to existing rules. In contrast, visionary leaders project their organization’s potential, questioning the status quo and mobilizing resources to execute their vision. Under the visionary leadership of Tim Moss, Senior Project Manager, and Yvette Ledesma, Student Communications Coordinator, the Title V grant team collaborated with Pathify to redefine student engagement, marking a transformative partnership in pursuit of educational excellence for San Jacinto College.

SETTING NEW EXPECTATIONS

San Jac’s portal genesis dates back to 2019 when — after being awarded a Title V grant by the Department of Education — the College embarked on finding a comprehensive student engagement solution. At the time, San Jac didn’t have a centralized communication hub, instead, their virtual college environment resembled a confusing maze with scarce interaction and elusive resources. “Students were running in circles trying to find information,” Moss recalled. The College envisioned a platform where all students accessed information within a single interface. For Moss and Ledesma, defining the primary non-negotiables was easy: best-in-class integration with Ellucian Banner, single sign-on capability, full web-mobile parity and personalized, effective communication with students.

A more challenging task involved a forward-thinking solution with the ability to set new expectations around student experience. “It was never about simply implementing something new, but ensuring that we bring on a solution that’s

better than anything we’ve had before,” Moss said. “I’m big on ensuring my team understands where we are in the status quo,” he added. “Then, we identify what’s wrong with the status quo — at that point, it’s easy to turn those pain points into resolutions.”

A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

After vetting several solutions, selecting Pathify proved natural — meeting San Jac’s requirement checklist while aligning with the visionary approach of transforming student engagement. San Jac also had other projects on the horizon and saw Pathify as a vendor-agnostic resource impacting student communication well into the future. “My goal is to always *transcend* the College,” Moss said, “We don’t want to just transform but transcend.” Ledesma agreed, adding, “The past philosophy was always ‘just give students a link and let them figure it out,’ but we wanted to completely shift that mindset.”

San Jac’s decision wasn’t completely top-down, however. “Students were a big part of the decision to choose Pathify,” said Moss, “Pathify has the social media interface feel and that stood out to them. They can see everything from the palm of their hand.” As a Student Services representative, Ledesma relied on feedback and honesty in managing student adoption and the portal itself. “We wanted to make sure students had a resource that was helpful,” she explained, adding she put herself in their shoes when developing and organizing portal content. “Without students, we couldn’t make the experience better. We wanted to hear from students, to know how they’d use the portal, what they wanted out of it.”

EXECUTING THE VISION

San Jac’s portal launched in February 2023, a crucial first step in executing the goals of the Title V grant vision.

The College's diverse student populations require tailored information and resources, so Pathify Widgets surface important information from the onset of enrollment with an admissions checklist, financial aid details and student email — providing accessible and crucial college tools. This personalized communication is essential in building a sense of community at San Jac and meeting students where they are to help address their needs.

Ledesma referenced the Promise @ SanJac scholarship program as an early positive portal experience. The Fall 2023 Promise Scholars cohort kicked off with a Pathify-hosted virtual orientation. "The first week, we had nearly 1,500 students attend virtual orientation ... the engagement piece was huge, and that orientation had much to do with it. It grabbed their attention from the beginning and they've remained engaged," she said proudly. The proof resides in the Fall 2023 good academic standing and Spring registration numbers. With Pathify, the days of simply handing out links and letting students comb through vast content are over. "Now, there's less pressure and fewer anxieties, instead, our students feel confident and empowered to succeed," explained Ledesma.

BEYOND A PORTAL

San Jac's reimagined student experience extends far beyond the traditional portal experience. Next on the roadmap is launching the Prospects Portal,

a digital experience for incoming students, as well as phasing in a portal for faculty and staff. The College is also implementing a CRM (TargetX) — the "back end" piece truly completing the digital student experience. Where Pathify provides front-end excellence, the CRM addresses back-end efficiencies — a powerful, one-two punch both Moss and Ledesma believe puts them ahead of most peer institutions. "I believe it gives us a distinct advantage in terms of the digital experience we're able to provide," said Moss. In a time where uncertainties dot the higher education landscape, providing high-value awareness and experiences is key to empowering students, guiding them through complexities, as well as ensuring success and satisfaction.

San Jacinto's partnership with Pathify hinges on embracing solutions that challenge the current student digital experience. And with leaders like Tim Moss and Yvette Ledesma, it's not just about leading the way but boldly forging paths others are inspired to follow. "I consider myself a change management leader," laughed Ledesma, acknowledging that San Jac's rapid adoption of Pathify and TargetX CRM have shifted departmental timelines forward in establishing systems and processes. "Pathify allows us to look ahead and figure out insightful and innovative ways to make it our own," she said. Added Moss, "It's always about improving the status quo." ■

ABOUT SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Surrounded by monuments of history, evolving industries, maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has served the people of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. The College is one of the top ten community colleges in the nation as designated by the Aspen Institute and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. As a Hispanic-serving institution spanning five campuses and serving approximately 41,000 students annually, San Jacinto offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce.

For more information about San Jacinto College visit sanjac.edu.



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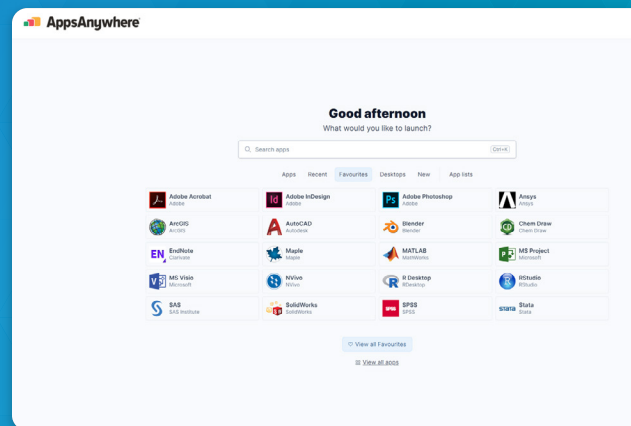
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Transformation Requires Change, but Who Wants That?



Written by:
Jared Stein
Principal Consultant,
Rarebird Ed Tech



Featuring Interview of:
Eric Hazen
Executive Director of Digital
Experience & Marketing,
Ferris State University

In higher ed circles, “transformation” is often heard as a rallying cry, signaling a readiness to embrace the future. Yet, for many within our institutions, the reality of enacting substantial change evokes a negative, visceral reaction — even resistance. How, then, can institutional leaders drive positive transformation, implementing change that is not merely tolerated but embraced by the communities most affected by it?

I recently spoke to Eric Hazen, Executive Director of Digital Experiences and Marketing at Ferris State University in Michigan, about how they approached managing the change to Pathify as their new student portal and campus community. Alongside some generally accepted change management tactics, Hazen shared some very specific methods for centering stakeholder engagement on the user, aligned with a vision.

At Ferris State, what initially motivated the change to Pathify was the university’s decade old portal that no longer met the campus’s needs. But escaping from legacy technology wasn’t the sole focus of the decision to change. Ambitious leaders had a clear vision of wanting a better, more engaging experience for their diverse student population in a connected world. The resulting vision: **Help students merge on-campus and digital into a single community experience.**

In order to do this, the Ferris State team thought deeply about the problems they wanted to solve as well as opportunities in providing a personalized experience to students via technology.

“We know that for different groups of students we need to communicate in different ways,” Hazen noted. “Older, non-traditional, or first-gen students may need a different approach. Pathify makes that possible in a way that has not been possible before.”

Ferris State’s focus on engaging non-traditional students is particularly noteworthy. On the one hand, it’s practical: non-traditional students are a target audience for Ferris State as they seek to address the changing needs of Michigan’s workforce. On the other hand, I

think it represents a shift in higher education’s attitudes in general: whereas non-traditional students were once overlooked, today many institutions are eschewing the “sink or swim” approach of years past, acknowledging that each student arrives with unique situations or needs that may affect their ability to succeed. Today, higher education is committing to every student and providing the help they need.

The Ferris State team also rolled out a strong communication plan. They prepared as many resources ahead of time as possible to help stakeholders feel supported in the transition.

“We began giving demonstrations of the platform as soon as we got hold of it,” Hazen said. “I’m a big fan of building in the open so people can see what’s happening and give feedback.”

This openness alerted people of the coming change, gave them an opportunity to feel included, and, most importantly, provided formative feedback allowing the team to make small course corrections. In addition to taking feedback during demos and testing, Ferris State embedded feedback forms customized to each of the three major user roles to gather input as Pathify was used.

What I like most about the Ferris State approach is the emphasis on being truly user-centered. “It’s important to remember that you are not the user,” Hazen said. “How do you separate yourself from your work and look at this like the user might?”

“The ability to place ourselves in the roles of users in Pathify and experience it like those users would was so helpful,” Hazen said, describing a role-play usability testing process spanning more than two months. Starting with their internal team of five (a number which usability expert Jakob Nielsen cites as curiously powerful in identifying most potential UX problems¹), Ferris State soon expanded user testing to a group of 90 individuals from across campus.

“We tried having a very representative group of testers, younger, older, as diverse as we could get,” Hazen described. “We devised tasks based on their roles that we’d expect them to complete.

[In timed scenarios], if a task takes longer than 20 seconds, we have some work to do.”

The careful attention to change management ahead of Ferris State’s go-live date appears to have paid off. While any major change of technology will be a little jarring to some, Hazen and team are largely hearing positive responses. “A lot of voices who were upset about change started saying, ‘Hang on, this is a lot better!’”

And, true to Ferris State’s original vision for Pathify, Hazen said, “The most exciting feedback is from students: ‘This has made my life easier.’” Even small, incremental improvements are cumulative and make a positive impact on students. This is especially true for first-generation or non-traditional students who may struggle navigating the complicated and esoteric internal workings of a university.

Ferris State University’s Pathify partnership exemplifies effective change management principles. Hazen and his team leaned on four tactics to facilitate this transformation.

1. A clear vision leads to a common purpose — creating urgency. It’s powerful for everyone involved to understand why change is necessary, and why now. Only then will people feel compelled to imagine a world where change leads to a better experience or better outcomes. A clear vision for any change initiative is the North Star, continuously reminding people of what they will gain from the change.

2. Two-way communication with stakeholders from start to finish. Those involved in or affected by change initiatives will want to know about the change (starting with the vision) as soon as possible so it doesn’t take them by surprise. This is also important on a practical level, since preparing for change in advance reduces the odds of disruption. Communication should be two-way so stakeholders feel heard, but also because their feedback throughout the process identifies problems, anticipates failures and improves the overall impact.

3. Active stakeholder participation leads to buy-in and social diffusion. Embedding stakeholders early in the process not only increases your chances of identifying overlooked problems or potential opportunities early, it also creates a group of trusted influencers who can socialize the change amongst their peers and colleagues.

4. Outcomes are evaluated and advertised. Change shouldn’t happen for no reason, but we often fail to measure the impact of change initiatives. Perhaps we assume making it over the finish line — going live with a new technology or launching and completing a new program — is all we must aim for. But doing so risks abandoning the original vision for change, reducing the initiative to change for change’s sake. Carrying through a plan to measure the desired outcomes of a change initiative helps keep efforts aligned to the vision, and serves as a powerful motivator to stakeholders for future change.

We cannot expect everyone to happily accept change for change’s sake, but we should all remember, **while different isn’t always better, better is always different.** And better is the goal of any intentional transformation. Adhering to a deliberate change management strategy facilitates transitions that reduce anxiety, increase buy-in and lead to greater adoption — and better results.

Famed science explainer Carl Sagan once noted, “Our evolutionary lineage is marked by mastery of change. In our time, the pace is quickening.” Whereas once humankind adapted primarily to survive in response to natural environments, today humankind must continuously adapt to the changes we continuously invent. Understanding how rapid change permeates our daily lives should help leaders empathize with the people we serve — and better manage the productive changes we believe are critical to helping our students and our institutions thrive in the modern world. ■








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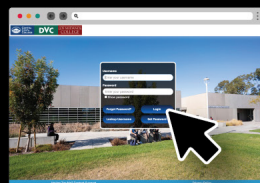
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Harnessing Digital Transformation

Partner Selection Stories

This year, Pathify began releasing stories from campus partners, colloquially called “Selection Stories.” These shorter case studies focus on how and why newer partners chose to implement Pathify. The stories go into detail about the context of their decision-making process and what they’re hoping to achieve. While typical case studies highlight the impact of the platform once implemented, these stories showcase why institutions decided to begin this journey in the first place.

Three of these stories are presented here, each from a different institution bringing a unique lens to the digital transformation challenges faced before selecting Pathify. The issues range from simplifying the user experience at Grand Valley State University, creating more personalized messaging

at Saint Mary’s College and achieving full web-mobile parity at University of Northwestern.

These challenges aren't new. These are problems higher education institutions across the country grapple with every day as the waves of digital transformation wash over their campuses. The highlighted stories emphasize how focus, willpower and effective partnership help higher education reach new heights.

Pathify is proud of the work partners do and appreciates any opportunity to uplift their stories. May these brief narratives inspire more higher education leaders across the country to challenge the status quo and achieve a connected campus experience allowing all students to succeed.



**University of
Northwestern Delivers
Full Web-Mobile Parity
to Students with Pathify**

**Saint Mary’s Taps
Pathify to Improve
Personalization**

**Pathify Ignites
Digital Transformation
at GVSU**



University of Northwestern Delivers Full Web-Mobile Parity to Students with Pathify



John Day

Director of Student
Services at University of
Northwestern - St. Paul



**UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHWESTERN**
ST. PAUL



When news dropped that Ellucian would sunset the legacy Luminis portal, John Day, Director of Student Services at University of Northwestern - St. Paul (UNW), felt serious urgency to find an upgrade. At the top of the feature list was an enterprise solution offering complete, synchronized web-mobile parity.

During feedback sessions, students consistently voiced their desire for a modern mobile app with full feature symmetry with the portal's web version.

"The portal we had was not meeting the target," Day said. "Our students said they wanted a mobile-first experience because we lacked a mobile app and what they experienced on desktop was not cutting it."

THE QUEST TO END THE TREASURE HUNT

One of the critical pieces UNW sought in a new solution included an improved search experience. Luminis hampered students' interaction with the portal by offering results misaligned with simple search inputs. To compensate, UNW staff developed intricate breadcrumb trails to guide students through convoluted navigation.

"It got to the point where search was completely useless," Day said. "Nobody used it as we passed students to different places on our portal."

AND THE WINNER IS!

Day and his team engaged in an exhaustive evaluation process — with the vendor list including Modo Labs, CampusM, OneCampus and Pathify. Although each offered a mobile

application, Pathify proved the only solution delivering true web-mobile parity combined with a hyper-personalized, modern interface out-of-the-box.

"Pathify looked at what our unique needs were and delivered us a solution while other vendors gave us something out of the box and expected us to develop on our own," Day said.

As a faith-based institution, UNW possesses unique student requirements, including mandatory chapel attendance credits. The team sought a way to display a progress bar for chapel credit completion, but the other vendors rejected his request.

"When we talked to other companies, it sounded more of like a hassle," Day said.

Where other vendors said no, Pathify collaborated. During implementation, UNW created the widget for chapel credit completion in a given semester using Pathify's middleware, Flow. The implementation team's enthusiasm to innovate gave Day confidence Pathify would deliver an outstanding student experience.

"Everything I've experienced with Pathify felt more like a partnership," Day said. "The responses to our IT tickets are always so understanding and friendly. There's just a good sense of camaraderie not normal in the software space."

UNW is planning a Phase 2 launch with Pathify Communities in Spring 2024 to amplify student engagement. ■

ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF NORTHWESTERN - ST. PAUL

University of Northwestern is a Christian university located in the heart of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Since 1902, students enroll at Northwestern to learn and develop as leaders through academically excellent, Christian education.



Saint Mary's Taps Pathify to Improve Personalization



Todd Norris
Chief Information Officer
at Saint Mary's College



**Saint Mary's
College**
NOTRE DAME, IN

The HESS Consortium recognizes Todd Norris, Chief Information Officer at Saint Mary's College, as a trailblazer in higher education for his willingness to bring the most modern technology to campus driving a first-class student experience. As a result, he takes student feedback extremely seriously.

While charting new territory as an early adopter of Oracle Cloud SIS, Norris heard a strong desire from students to access their student portal (Luminis) from mobile devices. The absence of a mobile app prevented students from staying on top of the latest tasks and information. After consistently hearing these requests, Norris rallied his team to find a solution.

"We mostly used Luminis as a website so when students visited the portal on mobile, the responsiveness was just not there," Norris said.

ANSWERING THE (MOBILE) CALL

A key priority in Saint Mary's list of requirements included complete web-mobile parity so users could access the app on any device. While the desktop version of Luminis traditionally sufficed by linking out to Ellucian front-end systems students used daily, Norris saw the Oracle migration and 2024 Luminis sunset as an opportunity to meet students where they were.

"As the mobile experience became more of an industry standard, we felt like it became an item we needed to look for in a new solution," Norris said.

NO CONTEST

After an exhaustive search for an enterprise user experience hub, Pathify was the hands-down favorite — capable of delivering the web-mobile parity and personalization Saint Mary's desired. Centered around Pathify, Saint Mary's now offers a best-in-class, unified student experience by tying together Oracle Cloud's suite with the College's 70 other disparate systems in a widget-based, single pane of glass.

"With the way data passes between our core systems and our portal, widgets became very attractive to us," Norris said. "Pathify was the only vendor to check all the boxes."

Saint Mary's leveraged Pathify's unique capabilities to serve the entire student lifecycle while also engaging faculty and staff. This eliminated the need for generalized emails, enabling the College to target messages to a diverse range of constituents.

"We wanted a way to create consistent messaging across various groups," Norris said.

Finally, what sealed the deal for Norris and his team was providing hyper-personalized dashboards using Roles.

"It's really easy to create nuanced roles within Pathify to deliver targeted information rather than using a shotgun approach," Norris said.

Saint Mary's plans to fully launch in Spring 2024 and hopes to serve as a model for other institutions considering a migration to Oracle Cloud. ■

ABOUT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

Founded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1844, Saint Mary's College promotes a life of intellectual vigor, aesthetic appreciation, religious sensibility, and social responsibility. Saint Mary's is a Catholic, residential, liberal arts college offering undergraduate degrees and co-educational graduate programs. As a women's college, it offers an inclusive, academic community for students to discover and develop their talents.



Pathify Ignites Digital Transformation at GVSU



Nick Nelson

Director of Enterprise
Applications at Grand
Valley State University



Nick Nelson, Director of Enterprise Applications at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), cares deeply about the student experience. As a result, he spends serious time gathering feedback from students on how technology impacts their day-to-day. What was the single biggest issue identified recently?

Students were completely overwhelmed by the multitude of systems, content and resources existing across the school's tech stack. This situation adversely affected GVSU students' capacity to learn — and Nelson and his team sprung into action.

"We heard a lot of feedback from students and faculty about the different systems people need to log in to, which they need to access on a day-to-day basis," Nelson said. "There wasn't a central way for us to get information out to students."

FINDING THE GOLDBLOCKS SOLUTION

The first component in solving this problem was identifying a system that would tie together GVSU's existing digital investments, including Banner, Blackboard, Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace. The second factor was providing access and feature parity *on any device*. Additionally, Nelson identified challenges in student engagement with traditional forms of communication. For that reason, multi-channel and multi-device messaging was top of mind.

"We looked for something giving us some communication abilities we don't currently have," Nelson said. "We wanted the ability to push notifications and alerts both on the desktop and the mobile app."

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FIT

Nelson and his team considered the top three solutions on the market — CampusM, Modo Labs and Pathify. After a lengthy evaluation process,

Pathify proved the only solution capable of delivering a powerful hub providing a singular access point with true web-mobile parity.

"We found there's a lot of really great mobile apps out there, but we wanted something that really worked across all devices ... Pathify stood out to us as something we thought was better," Nelson said. "The other solutions we looked at seemed to focus on one or the other and didn't really have that full experience as much as Pathify did."

Integrations also proved a huge differentiator, with Pathify's Recipe Library as another powerful component. And Nelson wasn't interested in being a test case for critical source system integrations, including Modo Labs' recently launched Banner connector.

"We were looking for something already there and built, which other institutions use," Nelson said. "We didn't want to be the first ones using a Banner integration."

Finally, GVSU's decision went beyond the nuts and bolts. The team valued a collaborative relationship, responsiveness to feedback and continuous improvement. Between strong customer references and demonstrable proof throughout the sales process, Nelson and the team were confident in how Pathify truly partners with customers.

"When we did reference calls, every single person said without prompting that Pathify is a great partner," Nelson said. "They're always listening, they're always great at getting feedback and they always build new stuff we asked for, so it was evident to me a relationship was there for everyone who's currently a customer."

GVSU plans to fully launch in Spring 2024. ■

ABOUT GVSU

Grand Valley State University empowers learners in their pursuits, professions and purposes. The university prides itself on enriching society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, advancement of equity and public service.

Harnessing Digital Complexity

Insights from Higher Ed CIOs

Dustin Ramsdell

Community Engagement Lead



The challenge of grappling with digital transformation in higher education falls heavily on the shoulders of institutional IT leaders and CIOs. While not facing this moment entirely alone, IT teams are primarily tasked with evaluating and implementing a variety of ed tech tools in an effort to create cohesive digital ecosystems for all stakeholders. Leaders must have a clear vision and strong commitment to see this effort through.

I've had the pleasure of speaking with several higher ed CIOs this past year through the Connected Campus² podcast. Their institutions survived and thrived in a difficult period caused by the pandemic, but now have the potential to become digital transformation leaders. I wanted to share insights from some of my conversations with these individuals. Their invaluable point

of view guides the entire higher education landscape as it reckons with the demands of this moment.

I synthesized insights from these conversations into three key takeaways. These takeaways inform the digital transformation strategy at institutions as they seek to better serve students, faculty and staff. This investment cannot be neglected. The impact of successfully harnessing digital complexity on the institution is a fundamental one — **frictionless digital experiences for students equates to higher retention.**

FLEXIBILITY

With the continued rise of online education, adult learners and working students at institutions, demand has increased for flexibility when it comes to higher education. This includes both the modality of courses and the accessibility

of support resources. The summary of my conversations with CIOs highlights the vital importance of applications adapting delivery, becoming more digital and optimized for mobile. We cannot continue accepting the status quo of limited options for these student experiences.

In practice, this means making all student support resources easily available online, so any student has the ability to access anything they need to do in a simple and user-friendly environment. In addition, students use a modern, robust mobile campus app allowing access to these resources without using a web browser. Lastly, institutions must create opportunities for students to connect digitally through groups, events and other communication platforms. Students often look to their institution for communication opportunities and these offerings accelerate student engagement by enabling it to take place elsewhere.

The concept of flexibility cements ascendant trends from over the past several years. The original iPhone dates back to 2007 with the advent of the commercial Internet far preceding it. Institutions who aren't investing adequately in mobile and digital experiences have fallen far behind. Tools supporting flexible offerings for students are readily available now more than ever. CIOs must evaluate which tools enable the experiences they want to offer. Continually evaluating and improving upon these experiences cannot be overlooked. The rapid pace of change means equal importance needs to be placed on maintaining existing digital spaces as creating new ones.

PERSONALIZATION

With the diversity of learners attending institutions, higher ed CIOs must create unique and personalized experiences for these students. Years ago, digital transformation looked much more rigid and uniform. Now, students expect relevant information contoured to their interests and needs.

CIOs must now look for tools with role-based permissions enabling them to curate content for particular audiences. For example, online students don't need to know about the menu in the dining hall, and residential students may not need to know about available parking on campus — but commuter students definitely do. This approach creates digital environments where students are presented with pertinent information in the manner they prefer.

We need to cut down on the noise. Students are completely overwhelmed by mass emails and spam calls. It holds particular significance for adult learners who are managing multiple demands and seeking to maximize their limited time.

DYNAMIC INTEGRATION

Higher ed CIOs aim to bring together the wide array of tools their institution uses. Achieving this goal creates simplified, streamlined student experiences. In order to do this, the culture must shift toward a digital infrastructure with a nexus point at its core unifying the plethora of tools. An institution cannot keep bringing on different disjointed platforms.

This requires moving on from old tools and working diligently to integrate the LMS, SIS, event calendar and any other piece of technology necessary to bring together. These tools shouldn't be neglected by students due to a lack of awareness. This also means doing more than creating a collection of links. It means serving up dynamic dashboards displaying current, relevant information and allowing users to take action.

Doing this work means higher ed CIOs must provide clear leadership to their teams. It also demands they learn from their counterparts at other institutions to continue evolving and thriving. I'm hoping these insights support the efforts of higher ed CIOs as they work to lead higher education forward. The future livelihood of these institutions depends on it. ■



COOK'S CORNER

By Loui Atchison

Imagine Pathify as the maverick leader of the higher ed tech kitchen, whipping up solutions for colleges and universities with excellence ... and some well-timed humor. It's reminiscent of baking a homemade pretzel — unconventional, a bit cheeky and oh-so-satisfying. Pathify (like the soft pretzel, both comforting and exciting) offers a delightful experience, satisfying the craving for innovation in higher ed tech.

Like Pathify, a soft pretzel needs partners. So how about some homemade beer cheese and homemade beer mustard? These complimentary flavors (like our add-on modules) add a zesty twist to the whole experience. The next time you're craving an afternoon (or midnight) snack — think Pathify — where the customer experience is as satisfying and novel as the homemade beer cheese and beer mustard on your pretzel.

MOZZARELLA PARMESAN TOPPED ROSEMARY SOFT PRETZELS

Prep Time: 45 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Inactive Time: 1 hour *(do our brain games on pages 41 and 42 while you wait!)*

Total Time: About 2 hours

Servings: 8 Delectably Soft Pathify Pretzels



INGREDIENTS

For the Dough:

- 1 and 1/2 cups warm water (between 110-115° F)
- 1 package Rapid Rise yeast
- 1 and 1/2 tbsp sugar
- 1 and 3/4 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
- 4 and 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter, very soft

Cooking Liquid:

- 10 cups water
- 3/4 cup baking soda

Topping:

- 2 tbsp melted butter
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- 1/2 tbsp fresh rosemary
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- Pinch of salt

Egg wash:

- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tbsp water

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Dough:

1. Combine water, yeast, sugar and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment. Let stand for 10 minutes, or until mixture begins to foam.
2. Add the rosemary, flour and butter and knead on medium speed for 12 minutes.
3. Cover dough with a warm, damp cloth and place in a warm area to rise for 1 hour, or until dough doubles in size.

Assembly and Cooking:

1. Preheat oven to 425° F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Add water and baking soda to a large pot and bring to a boil.
3. In the meantime ... Divide dough into 8 equal rounds. Roll each round into an 18" rope.
4. Swirl the dough into a Pathify "P" shape, pinching the crossover point of the dough to keep it secured.
5. Using a slotted spoon or spatula, carefully lower pretzels — one at a time — into the boiling cooking liquid. Cook for 30 seconds each. Remove pretzels with the slotted utensil, allowing excess water to drip back into the pot before transferring to the prepared baking sheet.
6. Once all pretzels have been boiled, brush the tops of each with egg wash.
7. Place baking sheets in the oven and bake for 16-18 minutes, or until golden brown.
8. In the meantime, make your topping. In a small bowl, combine the cheese, rosemary, garlic powder, pepper, and salt.
9. When the pretzels are done baking, brush the top of each with melted butter, then sprinkle on your topping. Allow pretzels to cool before serving.
10. Email a picture of your completed masterpiece to marketing@pathify.com — we want to see your beautiful creation!



STOUT BEER MUSTARD

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes


Yield: about 1 1/2 cups

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup stout beer
- 2 tbsp dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup yellow mustard
- 1/2 cup dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS




1. Bring the stout to a simmer in a saucepan and cook until reduced by half.
2. (Optional) Enjoy the remainder of the stout in a frosted glass as a nice treat while you cook!
3. Stir in the brown sugar. When fully melted, remove the saucepan from the heat.
4. Allow to cool, then mix in the mustards and cinnamon until well incorporated.



Better Together

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GERMAN BEER CHEESE

Cook Time: 6 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Yield: about 2 cups

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup whole milk or half-and-half
- 2/3 cup German-style beer or a local lager
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 and 1/2 cups freshly shredded sharp cheddar cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk together for 1 minute, or until a paste forms.
2. Slowly add the milk, whisking until the mixture thickens, about 1 minute.
3. One at a time, whisk in the remaining ingredients.
4. (Optional) Pour the leftover beer in a glass and enjoy! You deserve it!
5. Remove the cheese dip from heat and pour into a serving dish. Sprinkle with extra cheese, if desired. The dip will thicken after a few minutes and is delicious warm or at room temperature.
6. Cover and store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Heat before serving again.
7. Lick the bowl. Trust us!

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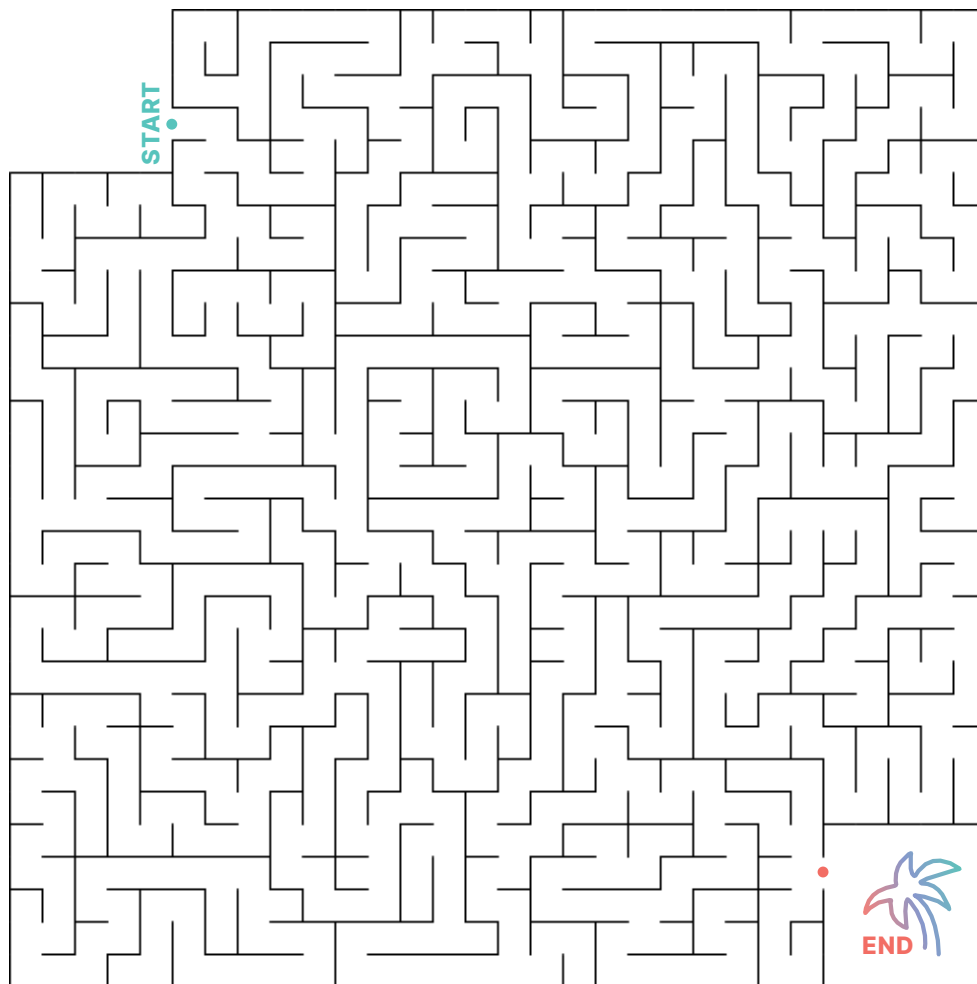
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Brain Games

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Spot the Palm Trees

There are 7 palm trees hidden throughout this magazine, can you find them all?

	-	1	-	3	2
x		-		x	
	x		+		44
+		x		-	
	+		÷		4
32	-55	23			

Fill in the Missing Numbers

The missing values are the whole numbers between 1 and 9.

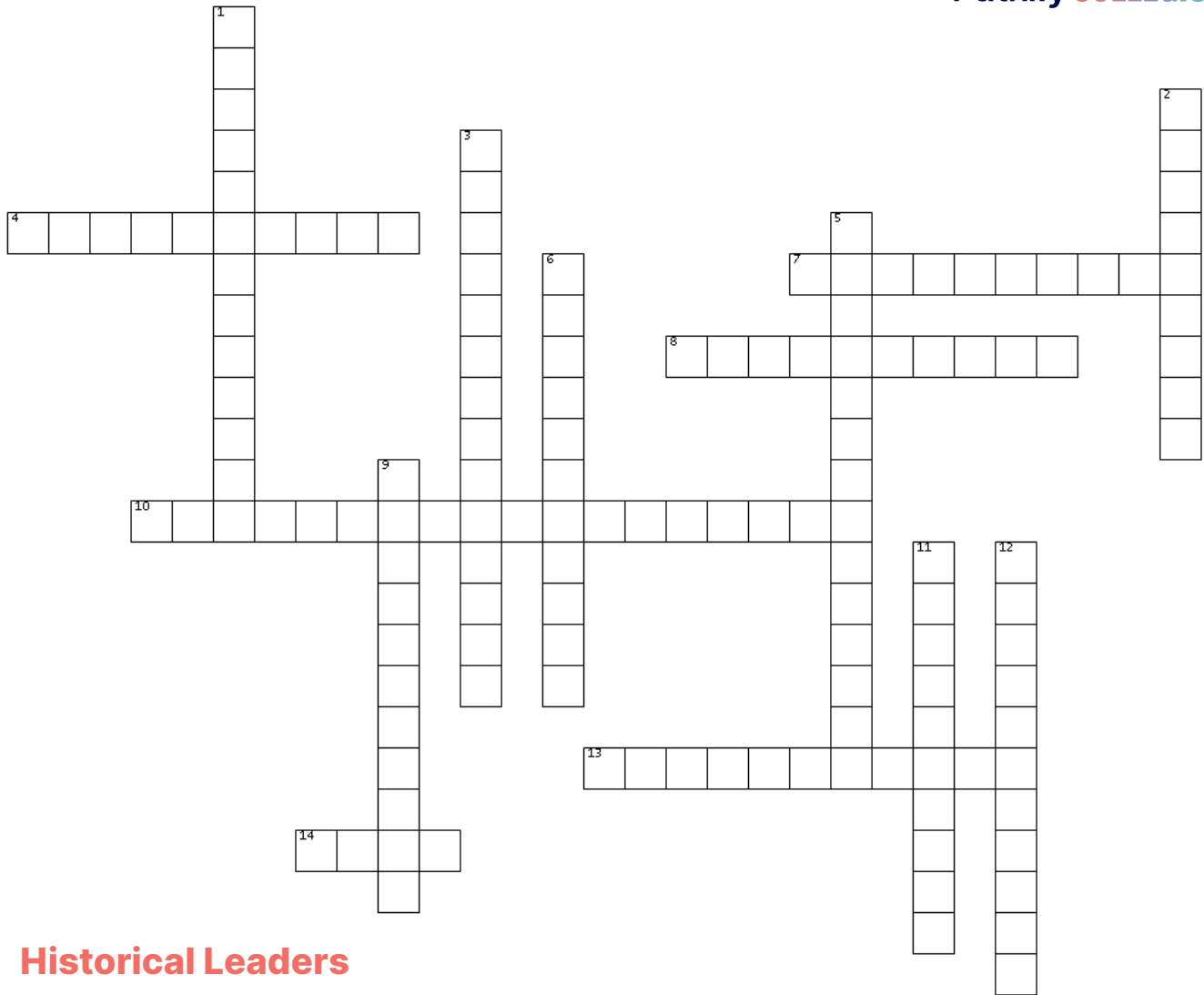
Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

Remember multiplication and division are performed before addition and subtraction.

[Click here for answer key](#)



Historical Leaders

ACROSS

4. The first woman to win a Nobel Prize, the first person to win a Nobel Prize twice, and the only person to win a Nobel Prize in two scientific fields.
7. Born David Robert Jones, regarded as one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century.
8. Canadian-American best known for hosting a beloved game show for 37 seasons, now hosted by a former 74-game winner, Ken Jennings.
10. The Chief International Anchor for CNN and host of multiple television shows bearing her name.
13. The first computer programmer, daughter of Lord and Lady Byron.
14. Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, he's best known by this nickname. He's also one of the highest ranked footballers (or soccer players) of all time.

DOWN

1. Recorded as the first female self-made millionaire in America, developed a line of cosmetics and hair care products for Black women.
2. 1961 Pulitzer Prize winning author who wrote "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy ... but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."
3. The "Queen of Soul", Rolling Stone named her as the greatest singer of all time, twice.
5. Often cited as "the most trusted man in America", he served as anchorman for the CBS Evening News from 1962 to 1981.
6. One of the most-honored female country performers of all time, and while generally charitable, she focuses on literacy programs. It's not just her 9 to 5.
9. Serbian-American inventor, engineer and futurist. Best-known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system.
11. Austro-Hungarian-born American actress and technology inventor. She's dubbed "the mother of Wi-Fi".
12. The "King of Horror", born in Portland, Maine. "The Shining" answer is there, think you know "It"?



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Letter from the CEO

No Plan Survives Contact with the Enemy

Pussian strategist Helmuth von Moltke the Elder famously said, “No plan survives contact with the enemy.” Our Chairman often reminds me of this philosophy and while I share his perspective, it’s worth noting Pathify surprisingly aligned perfectly with our 2023 plan, achieving many major milestones as a company. While others might attribute going according to plan to luck rather than skill, I see it as a testament to our team’s competence and our strategy’s effectiveness. A few highlights ...

In a year when many companies stagnated, Pathify grew by over 60% in 2023, brought on its 100th customer and is well on its way to 200 global customers. Along the way, we logged our millionth unique user, with monthly active users (MAUs) growing significantly in both absolute and per-customer terms across the year. This growth helped Pathify finish #579 in Inc. 5000’s annual ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in the US and #12 in the Education category.

In addition to this impressive growth, Pathify’s already world-class Customer Net Promoter Score (NPS) increased from 60 to 68, indicating our customers are consistently satisfied with our products and services.

This is especially notable considering the new features and integrations we rolled out in 2023. Notably, the launch of our Recipe Library gives institutions the power to craft personalized experiences for their students.

These accomplishments are a reflection of our team’s hard work and dedication, and we are grateful to our customers for their continued trust and support.

In 2024, we’re committed to continuing to challenge the status quo in higher education. We’re also determined to advance the Digital Experience (DX) category and remain a trusted leader in the higher ed space. We believe our platform has a special role in enhancing student success, satisfaction, retention and completion.

In that vein, we’ve centered this magazine around the concept of leadership. We hope our customers and partners not only enjoy it but find it thought-provoking and inspiring, adding valuable insights to their Pathify experience.

Chase Williams

Chase Williams
CEO of Pathify

Note: As a homage to 2023, Generative AI mostly wrote this article. In 2024, we’re gearing up for some exciting developments integrating AI into our platform during our customer beta phase — stay tuned for the latest updates!

The Last Word

Matt Hammond | Chief Revenue Officer



Silly Idiom or Strategic Polestar?

One of the more difficult (and rewarding) parts of my job will always be synthesizing the thousands of conversations we have with schools, thought leaders, higher ed pundits, and students down into a digestible theme our company focuses on for the spring and fall semesters. Theming is incredibly important for any company, and for a student portal/engagement hub/digital experience platform/overall badass Swiss army knife (SPEHDEPOBSAK) of a brand like Pathify, the temptation to cast the widest net possible in terms of themes remains a slippery slope.

Pathify got a lot of mileage out of last year's primary theme — *challenge the status quo* — and we believed throughout the year our disruptive start-up's identity was perfectly described in those four words. People always ask me, "what's your ideal customer profile ... what type of school does Pathify fit best in?" My response as we march toward the 200 customer milestone really hasn't changed the past few years. It has very little to do with the type of school, and a heck of a lot more to do with the type of people working there. Schools with individuals or small groups willing to expend some political capital while embracing change *challenge the status quo* when they implement Pathify. And hopefully we've illustrated what that means in practice twice a year in this magazine.

So why the shift from *challenge the status quo* to the broader and far more ethereal theme of *leadership* in 2024? As always — it started with our customers.

I try to spend as much time as possible with Pathify's ever growing customer base. Whether through our Customer Advisory Board, our Customer Advocacy Program, our digital customer user group Collegium, or frequently dropping in on sales and customer

success meetings, I work to make significant time for this each week. It's honestly what keeps me sane as we continue to grow and scale.

These forums also provide the bulk of the raw material we distill down into what to tell the world about who we are as a business. This distillation process typically requires incredible resources and time — and remember — boiling it all down into a single compelling theme as a SPEHDEPOBSAK requires tough decisions, focus ... and perhaps the occasional cocktail.

So what amazed me in the second half of last year was walking away from most customer meetings with a pretty consistent outcome. If I had to smash it down into a single quote that described the general sentiment, I'd say it like this:

"You all just think about this differently. You solve problems from new and novel angles, and you obviously try to have fun along the way. It is not an apples to apples comparison with other mobile apps and SIS self-service portals. Pathify is the orange in a sea of apples."

OK that last line may be a bit much, and the imagery of centering our 2024 messaging around a nice, bright, pleasingly fragrant member of the citrus family contrasted by a sea of bruised, semi-rotten worm conveyances — although visceral — might actually be a bridge too far in terms of a strategic theme. So how best to highlight Pathify as the orange in a sea of apples?

It actually dawned on me while reading an issue of my alma mater's magazine last fall. (Saint Michael's College in Winooski, Vermont produces incredible content ... even if they're not yet a Pathify customer ...) The magazine centered around ethical leadership, and one of the stories was a profile of another (slightly more important)

alumnus, Major General Greg Gagnon of the United States Space Force. Gagnon said, “those who know *why* will always lead those who know *how*.”

Simple. Beautiful. Bingo.

The way we translate being the orange in a sea of apples is through the lens of leadership, and the reason we believe this lens is appropriate is we come at problems unlike any other vendor in the industry — and we work every day to have as much fun as possible.

If like others we focused on the *how*, we’d wear dark blue suits in our dark blue booth at conferences, and we’d probably give out a dark blue \$50 Amazon gift card as part of a drawing where we gather business cards — hopefully from CIOs and institutional executives.

Don’t get me wrong — we need those business cards just like any other vendor — but in focusing on the *why* we instead give away lobster sandals, an annual subscription to the Jelly of the Month Club (thank you Clark Griswold), and a \$500 travel gift card. The *why* is our future customers also like having fun ... and maybe even getting a bit weird from time to time.

If we focused on the *how*, we’d likely get extremely excited to announce one or two big new integrations each year. The *why* dictates a true engagement hub needs to connect the entire tech stack, so we’re excited we have over 100 tried and true integrations with over 300 in some stage of planning or development.

A *how* focus would result in stagnant growth and an unhappy customer base who struggle to have their voices heard in terms of product direction, or to even get a response from support. A *why* focus results in Pathify actually improving customer satisfaction (60 to 68 year over year NPS score gain,) while growing revenue by 65% in 2023. These two metrics often operate at odds (more customers equals a reduction in overall support and delight), but by focusing on the *why* Pathify manages to make them symbiotic.

I could go on and on (and those that work with me know that sometimes when I start talking I forget to stop) so that’s probably good for now. With that said if you dig our content, like what we’re doing, and agree the *why* eclipses the *how* — schedule some time with us. We’ll be criss-crossing North America throughout the year at conferences and events, and we’re excited to announce the debut of our own internal media house — *Collegium* — which will continue as higher ed’s best digital user group forum, but will also be the source of orange within a sea of apples content — now and into the future.

The best source to understand how we’re really different? Talk to our customers. They’re the real leaders forging a new standard of success, challenging the status quo every day to improve the student experience. And last I checked they’re not too hard to find — they’re the ones wearing Hawaiian shirts, Gilligan hats, flashing leis ... and of course ... lobster sandals. ■

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*"Those that know why,
will always lead those that
know how."*

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- Major General Greg Gagnon,
United States Space Force

