

Case Study

South Piedmont Community College

Background - about the college

South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) traces its roots back to 1962. Since then, it has continually expanded its operations and the communities it serves in Union and Anson Counties of North Carolina. Even as the institution continues to grow; extensive hands-on experience and one-on-one instruction remain hallmarks of SPCC's approach to teaching

and learning, as they have been throughout the college's history. And South Piedmont's status as an "up-and-comer" among North Carolina's 58 community colleges is good news for everyone who lives and works in the communities it serves as well as the companies that do business in Union and Anson Counties.

The problems the college wanted to solve

The college was hearing feedback from students who were expressing frustration at not being able to access information and get consistent answers. They were struggling to find information on the college's public facing website as they

weren't sure which keyword terms to search for. Even the basics like accessing their college Office 365 email, their Moodle LMS or who to go to for help and advice was proving difficult without a single place to access everything.

How Ready helped

Dr. Malinda Daniel, Executive Director of Learning Innovations was tasked with finding a solution to help students find information and ease the burden of information correlation for the college. Malinda and a committee of stakeholders selected the Ready Education app as the solution to house all the information users would require.

"An app made sense" Malinda says "as the college could then find students where they are - on their smartphones.

The college identified that students were not only on their phones for social purposes but also accessing classes there. An app would help the college become a truly student-centered institution."

During the activation process, Malinda says "the support received from Ready was exceptional." In particular she singled out Carrie Dionne, Campus Success Consultant at Ready Education. Malinda told us that "Carrie was integral to the process due to being willing to virtually meet with each

stakeholder involved in the app. She empowered each of these departments and areas within the college to become app experts and able to maintain their area of the app, therefore ensuring its overall success and easing the lift by spreading it out over all the stakeholders."

The benefits they are realizing

The result of this individualized, bespoke approach is that communication and information finding have been streamlined. Subject matter experts are empowered and they are able to help the learning community through the app as a tool and provide continuity and consistency in the information shared.

Some of the types of information found on the app include:

- **Office 365 Email**
- **Moodle**
- **QLess - Queue scheduling software. This technology allows students to access help with a service such as financial aid, admissions or the registrar's office for example.**
- **Compass - A campus wayfinding solution which helps new students as well as community members find their way around campus.**

Building upon the continuous improvement of the information and answers available in the Navi chat bot, the college is pleased with the analytics and data available in the Ready app for administrators to view. Having this data available allows the college to make informed data-driven decisions and helps them identify patterns - which areas of the app students are accessing most for example and how can they optimize the app.

The college has titled their app SPCC Navigate and it has three versions. There are versions for staff and students which require authentication but also an outward community-facing app which doesn't require a login. The communities feature was unique to the Ready app and set it apart from other apps available.

SPCC serves two counties in North Carolina, both encompass rural areas which have limited access to broadband. Students in these rural areas rely on their phones for access to the internet and thus their courses. SPCC students can use their phones to attend classes synchronously via a virtual option or asynchronously and equity in access to the LMS, to their email, and to course materials is vital. SPCC Navigate increased equity in access for these students by removing the barrier of finding all the online resources that are needed to help students be successful.



Clearly having all the information they need contained in the app has been hugely beneficial for students as shown in the downloads of the app. In the first 4 months, there were over 1600 downloads representing over 50% of full-time students. This fantastic result was thanks to an intensive launch campaign. The college was very deliberate with their launch as it coincided with students being welcomed back on-campus for the first time since the pandemic. The app was also in and amongst a rebirth of the college as it took place at the same time as the launch of the previously mentioned technologies to help with wayfinding, queueing/appointment scheduling, and the opening of a new college building all of

which happened alongside welcoming students, faculty, and staff back to campus following remote only learning associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the assistance of a third party marketing and advertising agency, there was a whole host of launch activities. There was online promotion including a scavenger hunt and videos as well as a physical on-campus campaign with t-shirt giveaway incentives, sidewalk graffiti as well as QR codes for download on all posters and signs across campus. The app was then the perfect place to share success and talk and celebrate what's been happening on the college campus.

Future plans

The college has exciting future plans for their apps. There are plans to allow mobile credentials with access control via, for example, the Apple Wallet. This will enable users to access physical buildings using their phone as the key. What the college likes is that all improvements to their app are welcomed for discussion by Ready Education. Malinda loves the collaborative approach with Ready Education and feels like their needs and wants can shape the overall product roadmap and solutions can be identified together: "I truly feel that Ready Education is vested in the college and the app's success."

Excitingly, the college has recently received wider recognition of the success of SPCC Navigate by becoming a top 10 finalist in the Planning, Governance and Finance category of the Bellwether Award. They will compete for this prestigious award at the end of February at the 2022 Community College Futures Assembly in San Antonio, Texas. We can't wait to see how they get on!