RESEARCH PROJECT

The Digital College Experience

Envisioning the future of education

AN INTERESTING QUOTE FROM OUR INTERVIEWEE

"When you shut your laptop your classmates disappear. In-person there's a sense of community, and I find myself talking to others after class."

THE PROBLEM

Impact of covid-19

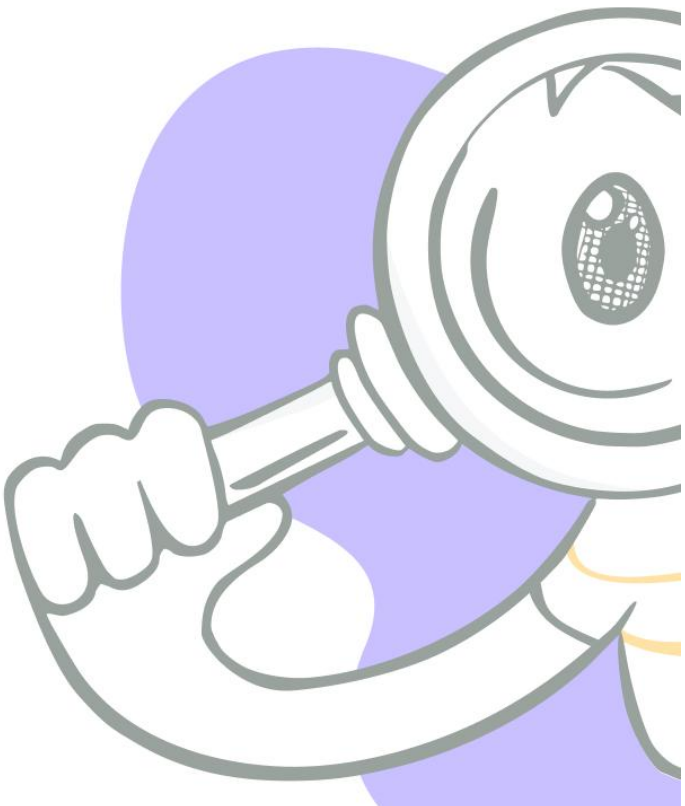
Education has changed drastically due to the pandemic. The way students receive education, the tools they are using, and the entire landscape has evolved.

Fear of change

One of the biggest changes is the shift to online learning. While it's been around for a couple years now, only recently have entire programs and degrees shifted to being available in hybrid format.

OUR AIM

Our research aims to demystify these changes, and figure out what students have gained and/or lost through their experiences.



THE HYPOTHESIS

Prior to the research we realized relationships would be an important aspect in our study

Haven taken remote classes ourselves we felt like something was missing during our zoom meetings.

On the flip side, there are of course lots of benefits we've enjoyed along the way, like having a more flexible schedule.

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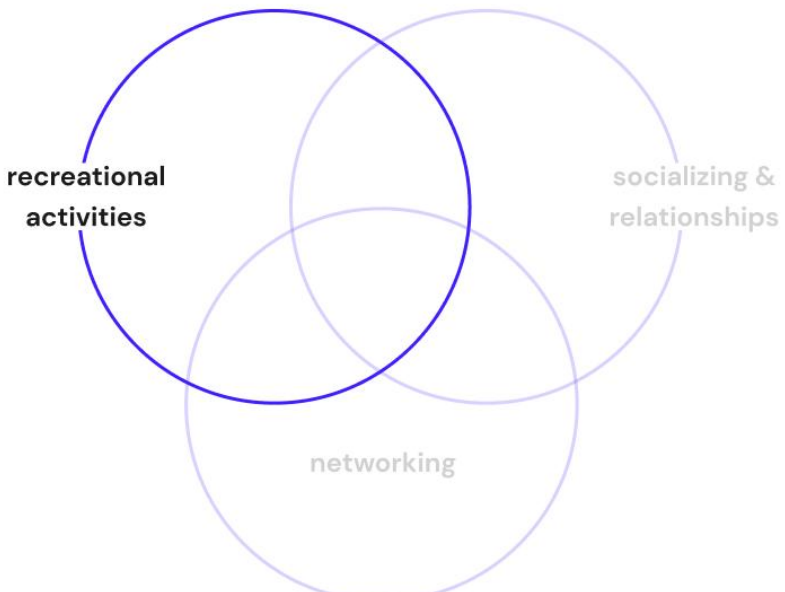
OUR OBJECTIVES

The research was conducted around three primary sections



recreational activities

Do they participate in extra curricular activities apart from their academics?

socializing & relationships

How do students bond with their classmates and foster new friendships?

networking

How do they build their network amongst students, faculty and professionals?

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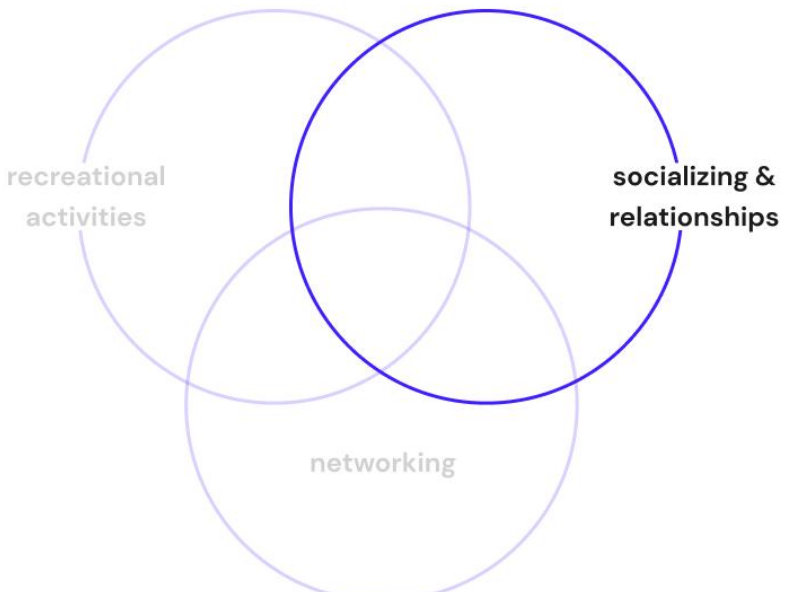

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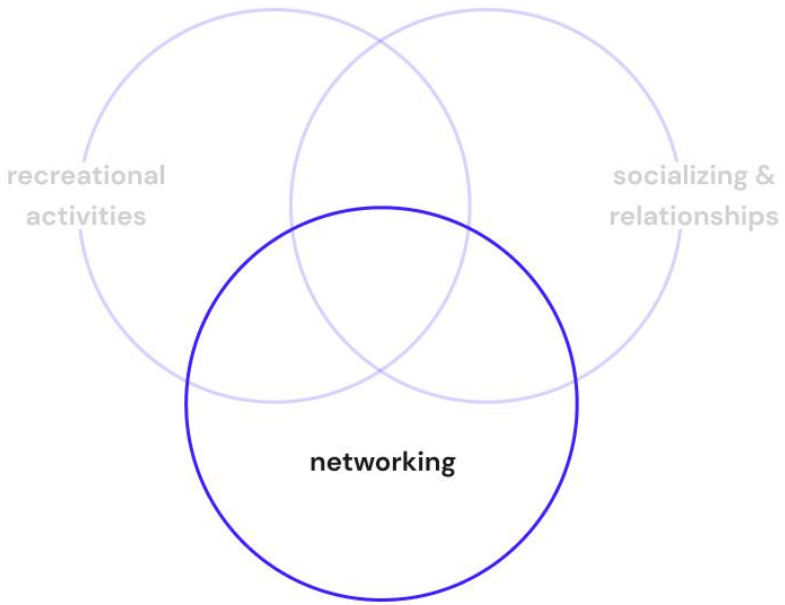

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THE AUDIENCE

Our target audience for the research would be anyone in-charge of designing remote or hybrid educational programs

- **program chairman**
- **university dean**
- **program coordinators**
- **faculty members**

STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Undergraduates

Graduates

Faculty

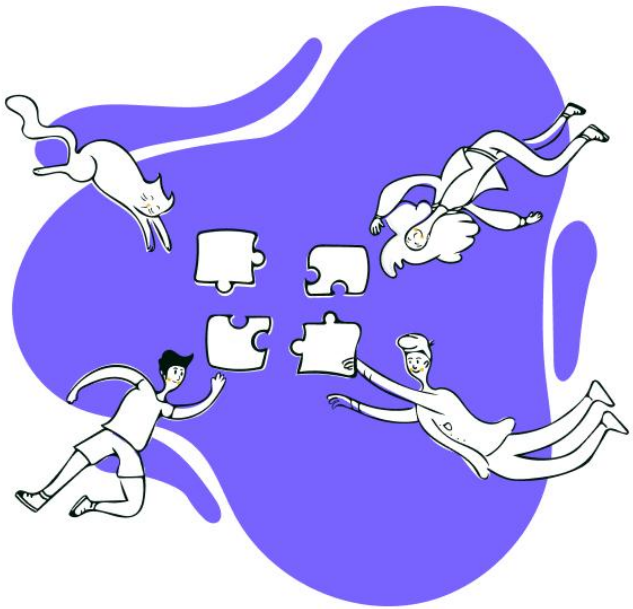
KEY ASPECTS ADDRESSED VIA INTERVIEWS

Day to day tasks

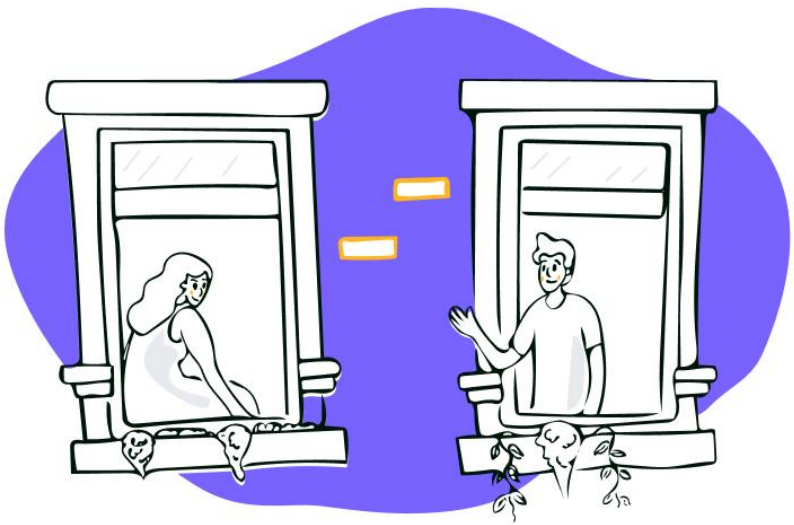
Co-curricular Activities

Relationships

KEY ASPECTS ADDRESSED VIA INTERVIEWS



Communication &
Collaboration



Remote vs In-person
Experiences

RESEARCH FORMAT

In-person Interview

45 mins duration

INTERVIEWEES | Names changed for anonymity

Martha Jones
United States

Karthik Agarwal
United States

Sarah O'conner
United States

Hui Yen
China

Rebecca Hyuang
United States

ANALYZING THE INTERVIEWS

Typical day

- Very busy, hectic schedule
- No free time
- Most participants prefer morning routine
- Weekdays are usually reserved for schoolwork and classes, weekends are personal time
- Sometimes part-time work
- Online vs in person schedules are very different
- Online classes allow for a more flexible/easy schedule
- During pandemic, new challenges came up when shifting to fully remote learning
- Before pandemic there were lots of group meetings
- Interaction with people changes weekday vs weekend

Experiences & Relationships

- Developed friendships out of school activities
- Developed friendships through meeting people in person in cohort
- Very difficult forming relationships remotely
- Easier to get your point across in person
- When in person you can pick up non-verbal cues
- Feeling left out if unable to meet with cohort in informal settings
- In-person relationships are super important for networking (stronger connections)

Communication & Collaboration

- In-person is much easier to communicate, can read body language and other non verbal cues
- Remote meetings are easier to schedule
- Remote meetings generally take longer and more difficult to get point across. Tech challenges, and no non-verbal cues etc.
- Instant messaging preferred versus email
- Common tools include Figma, zoom, slack, and sometimes whatsapp
- Too much screen time can be overwhelming/tiring

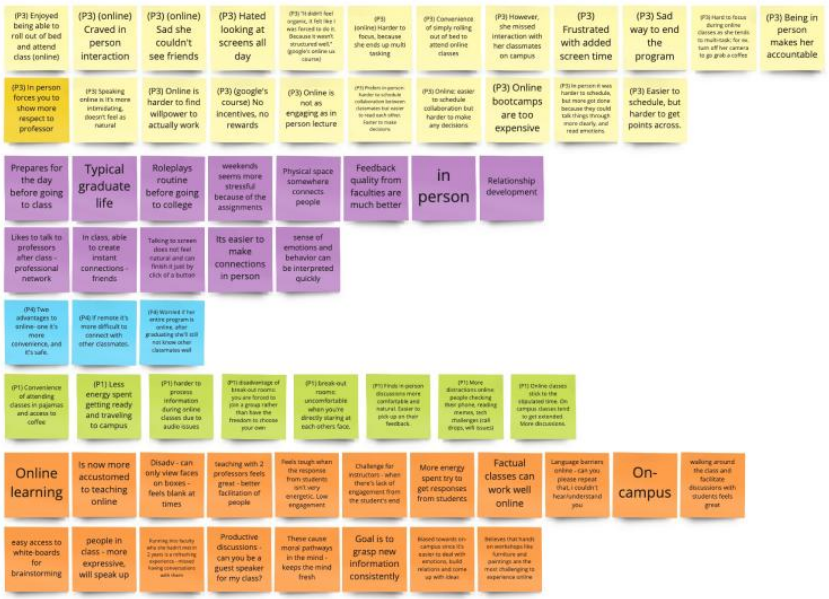
miro

ANALYZING THE INTERVIEWS

Recreational Activities

- Weekdays are spent with people in cohort
- Weekends are generally spent with friends
- Concern for physical health, when there's time some participants go to gym, or want to
- Sharpie Sessions are a great way to bond with people in cohort
- Since program has started not enough personal time
- Those new to city enjoy exploring and getting used to the area

Comparing Online vs In-person



- Remote classes offer flexibility with your schedule (rolling out of bed before class, scheduling is easier..)
- Easier to make connections in person
- In person leads to a sense of community and contentment
- Remote classes can be very distracting. Concern over looks, browsing other sites, etc.
- Engagement levels are different online vs offline. (More self-conscious online, online feels like like you're in the spotlight. One said she feels like you have to respect teacher more in person.)
- Harder to process and retain information online
- Time saved with remote classes (traveling, getting ready etc)
- In person conversations leads to deeper understanding

INTERVIEW OUTCOMES

Typical Day

In-person

Busy & hectic schedule

No-Free Time

Able to meet for group projects

Morning schedule planning

Remote

Flexible Schedule

Challenges of shift to remote

Able to work part time

Experiences & Relationships

In-person

School activities turns to friendships

Friendships through meeting

Easier to get your point across

Easier to pick verbal cues

Stronger network opportunities

Remote

Difficult forming relationships

Feeling left out

Recreational Activities

In-person

Easier to meet & bond

Wants to look after health

In city exploration

Not enough personal time

Remote

Activities are in-accessible

Communication & Collaboration

In-person

Much easier to communicate

Remote

Easier to schedule

Meetings takes longer

Too much screen time

Difficult to get point across

Technical challenges

Remote vs In-person

In-person

Easier to make connections

Deeper understanding

Sense of community & contentment

More interactive classes

Remote

Hard to concentrate

Harder to retain info

Self concious on zoom

Saves time

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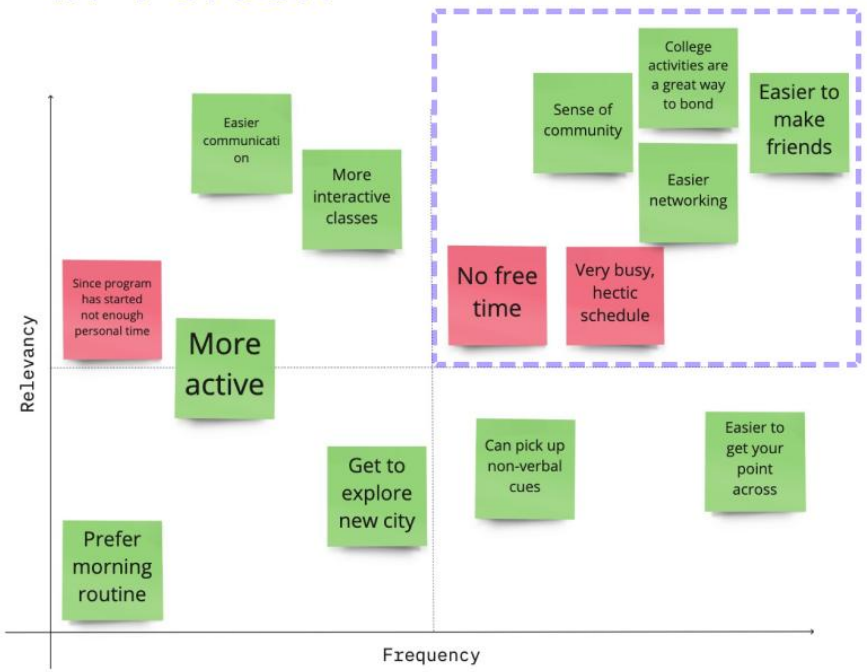
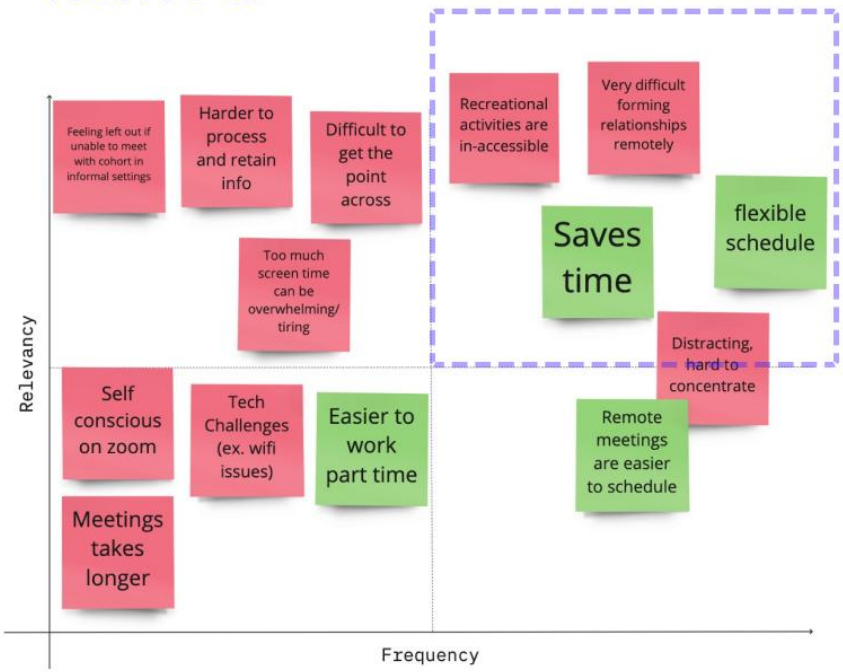
BEGINNING TO NOTICE PATTERNS

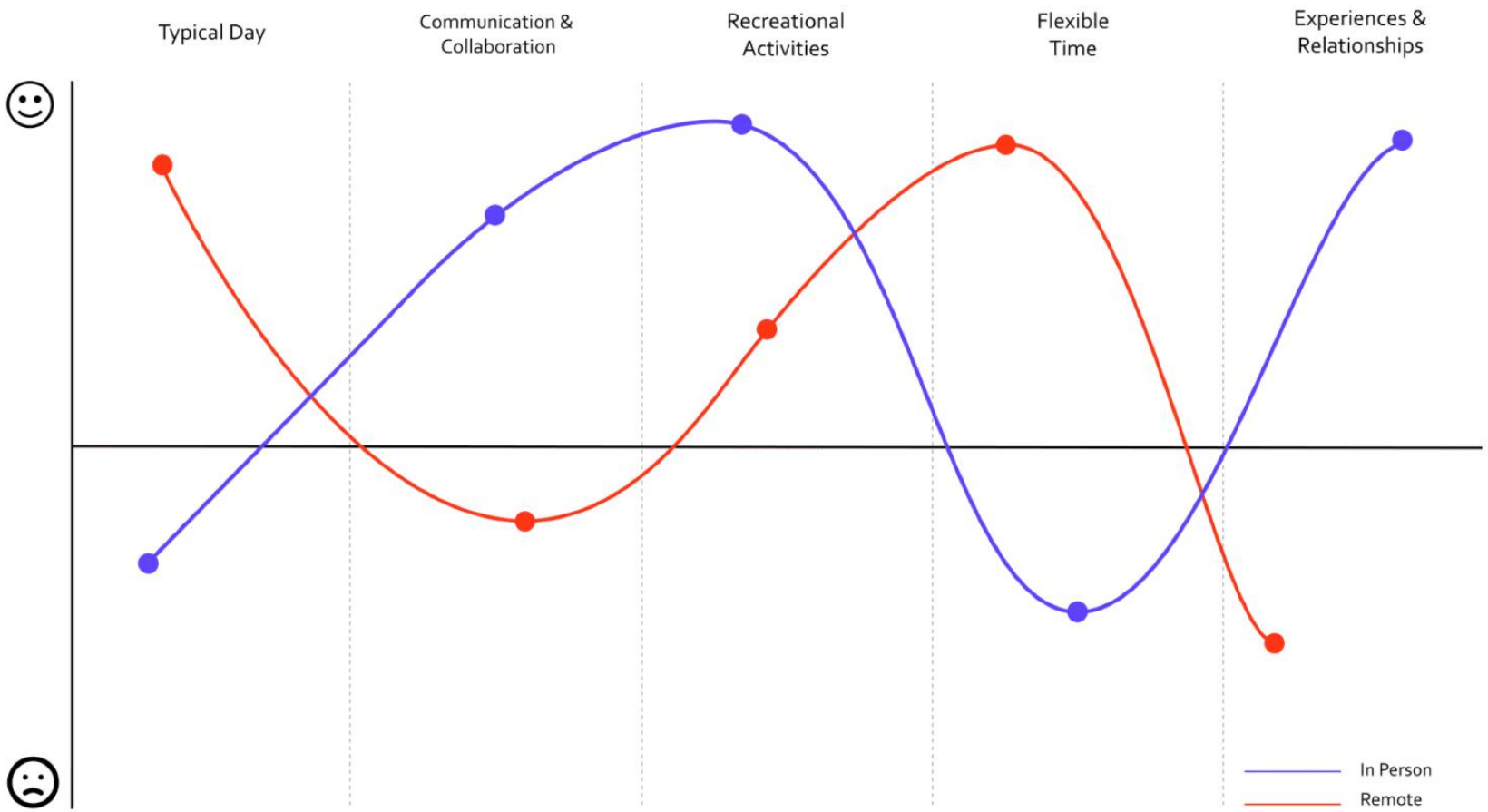
In-Person



Remote



EMOTIONS MAPPING



THE OUTCOME

In Person

Pros

Easier to make friends
Easier to network
Can get point across faster
Activities encourages meeting new people
Sense of community
Deeper understanding of material

Cons

Leads to a super packed schedule
Not much free time

Remote

Pros

Flexible schedule
Easier to work part-time
Meetings are easier to schedule

Cons

Difficult forming friendships
Difficult to network
Feeling left out if you can't meet with other students
Meetings take longer
Screen time burn out
Technical challenges
Easy to get distracted
Difficult getting point across
Harder to process and retain information

KEY FINDINGS

Relationships with other students are important

Networking should be built into the curriculum

Students want some flexibility

The professor & student relationship is difficult to develop remotely

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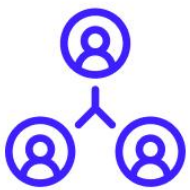

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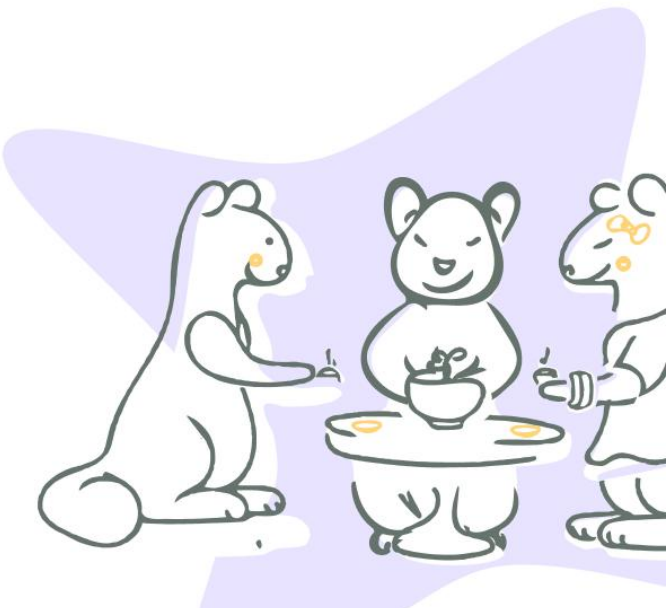
SOLUTION 1

Integrate relationship building into the course structure

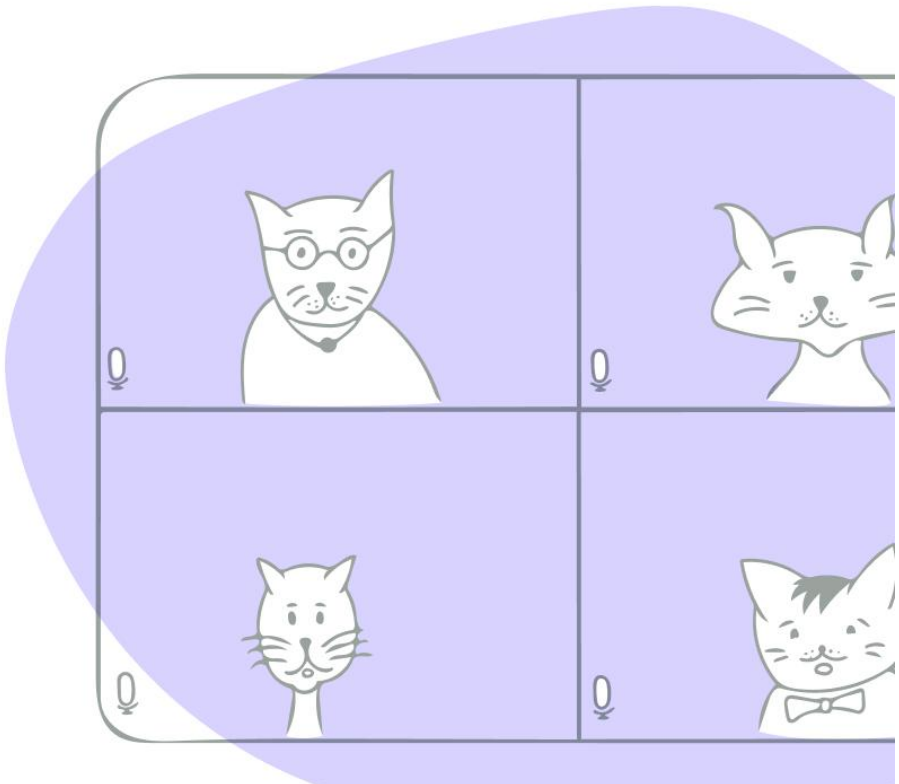
- More group projects
- Required social events for students
- A class dedicated to learning from others



SOLUTION 2

Retain remote learning, but most classes should be in-person

- Majority of courses should be in person with 1 or 2 remote courses to allow students flexibility in their schedule
- Fewer “video on” rquirements to reduce zoom fatigue



SOLUTION 3

Networking as a part of the curriculum

- Each class has at least one visiting guest lecturer that can influence and connect with students
- Job fairs are only in person and more frequent
- Students encouraged to meet/collaborate with those in other departments

SOLUTION 4

Develop and maintain teacher and student relationships

- Required ongoing 1:1s with professor
- Proactively make sure students are on track and progressing well

LASTLY...

When trying something that's never been done before there is no "right way"

We must keep iterating and improving...