Executive Summary

The College Community

Headline: Building a Remote Community
Concept Type: Mobile App
Team: Snehita Sana, Nina Zanarelli, Sarayu Namineni
School: Carnegie Mellon University

Descriptor: The College Community is an app made by college students for college students to better socialise, collaborate and study better during and after remote learning.

Problem: Anxiety is the third largest mental health problem in the world. According to the New York Times, 60% of college students have experienced "overwhelming anxiety" during their college years. Starting college is a very big transition to make and the stress of a high workload, increased responsibilities, financial and social life issues can increase anxiety among college students. And now that college is remote, anxiety in college students has risen considerably. According to the Pew Research Center, one third of Americans have displayed signs of anxiety, depression or both since the pandemic has begun. The long-term psychological effects of collective traumas, like pandemics, can last almost a decade. As colleges have been closed and remote learning is approaching its 1 year anniversary, many college students yearn for their lost college experience. Many have lost their support systems, are losing the opportunity to connect with their communities and collaborate with their classmates.

Solution: The College Community is an app made by college students for college students to more easily navigate remote learning and beyond by providing them with the tools to collaborate, socialize and study better in a remote setting, as well as making it easier for them to reach out and access mental health resources. Though we have focused our problem to these problems during remote learning, our solutions are also useful for after remote learning. Anxiety and depression affect a large number of college students, and asking for help is a large barrier for students. We have created an app for students to make friends, join study groups in their classes, take part in virtual/in-person club events, and find resources useful to them with a few clicks of a button. It bypasses the hurdle of having to actually reach out and initiate conversation which is what stops a lot of students from reaching out and getting the help they desire and need.

Unique Value Proposition:
We understand the need of college administration to take into account the expertise of mental health professionals, however this often means that students' opinions and concerns are pushed aside. And when it's the students' mental health at stake, we believe it's more important to make the concerns and ideas of students our top priority. In this way, we are much different from most mental health apps; we put students first. We did extensive user research through the entire process of our app, from ideation to production to user testing to the design of Version 2 of our app. And importantly, as college students ourselves, we are able to gain unique insights into exactly how we can help our peers during this difficult time.