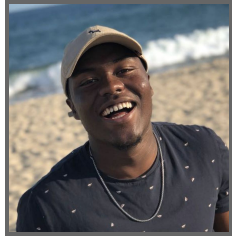


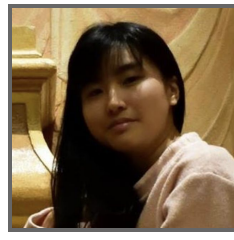
Introduction



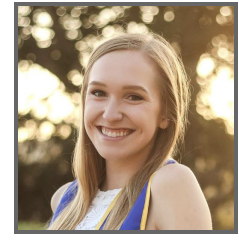
Mamadou D.



Pao T.



Gray W.



Kate W.

Studio theme: Education Technology

Problem domain: College equity/scaffolding

Connecting students to the information they need for the college application process. In considering this, we asked questions about how the experiences of students from high-income communities differ from those of low-income and underrepresented communities, and what resources allow students of the former category to thrive that the underrepresented communities lack.

Initial POV

We developed three Point of View statements from our first round of needfinding based on what insights were provided and stood out to us from the interviews.

Lourdes

We met Lourdes, who is first-generation low-income (FLI), and the Director of Equity and Inclusion in the School of Engineering Student Affairs. We were amazed to realize how difficult and important it is to have a mentor that you can see yourself in so as to better conceptualize the college application process. It would be game-changing to be able to provide and connect all students with a mentor that can understand and help guide them through the college process.

Jacob

We met Jacob, a FLI freshman at Stanford. We were amazed to realize that he felt strongly that he did the college process all by himself. It would be game-changing to make others feel as in control and confident in themselves as Joseph throughout the college process, like they can do it all by themselves too.

Sarah

We met Sarah, a senior at Palo Alto High School who is in the midst of the college application process. We were amazed to realize she struggled to find a starting point for her college search because she had a narrow idea of what college was, and she didn't feel like any of the colleges she was aware of were a good fit for her. It would be game-changing to enable students to broaden their idea of what college can be so they're better able to find schools that are in line with their preferences.

Additional Needfinding

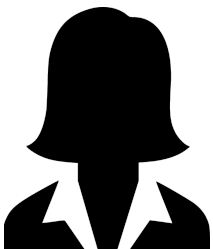
Based on reflections from our first round of interviews, we interviewed four new people. We identified that we wanted to target a more generalized student population, especially those who identified as FLI, in order to learn about their received guidance in the college application process in hopes of making it more accessible to everyone.

We talked to Elizabeth, who recently graduated from UCLA. Elizabeth explained how the college process can be an emotional rollercoaster as she wasn't able to get into her dream college.



We talked to Ali, a first-generation and low-income (FLI) immigrant student who recently graduated from the University of Michigan. Ali mentioned that she forged her own path towards getting a college education along with the help of a mentor and a connection she made with the financial aid office.

We talked to Rebecca, a FLI sophomore at Stanford, who shared how important human relationships and support is throughout the college process.



We talked to Jane, a high school teacher at a very diverse college prep charter school in San Francisco. Jane shared how important it is to support a student's belief that they can go to college. She also shared sentiments of her feeling accountable for getting students outstanding recommendation in time and doing informal SAT study sessions.

*Note: Jane chose not to have her picture taken

Revised POVs

Rebecca

We met Rebecca, a FLI Stanford Sophomore who felt pressured to attend college in order to move her life forward. We were amazed to realize she valued and utilized her relationship with upperclassmen from similar background more than other resources for the college process, even resources that could have provided her money for the application process. It would be game-changing to prioritize human relationships in the college application process.

Rebecca's HMWs

- **Make the financial resources human**
- Make interviews a resource for applicants rather than a test for applicants
- Allow students to find 'human' resources
- Foster face to face interactions between applicants and administrators
- Make mentorship a part of the college process
- Simplify the college app process
- Support upperclassmen through the college process to support lowerclassmen
- Place a bigger emphasis on college interview
- Utilize alumni network
- Make college free

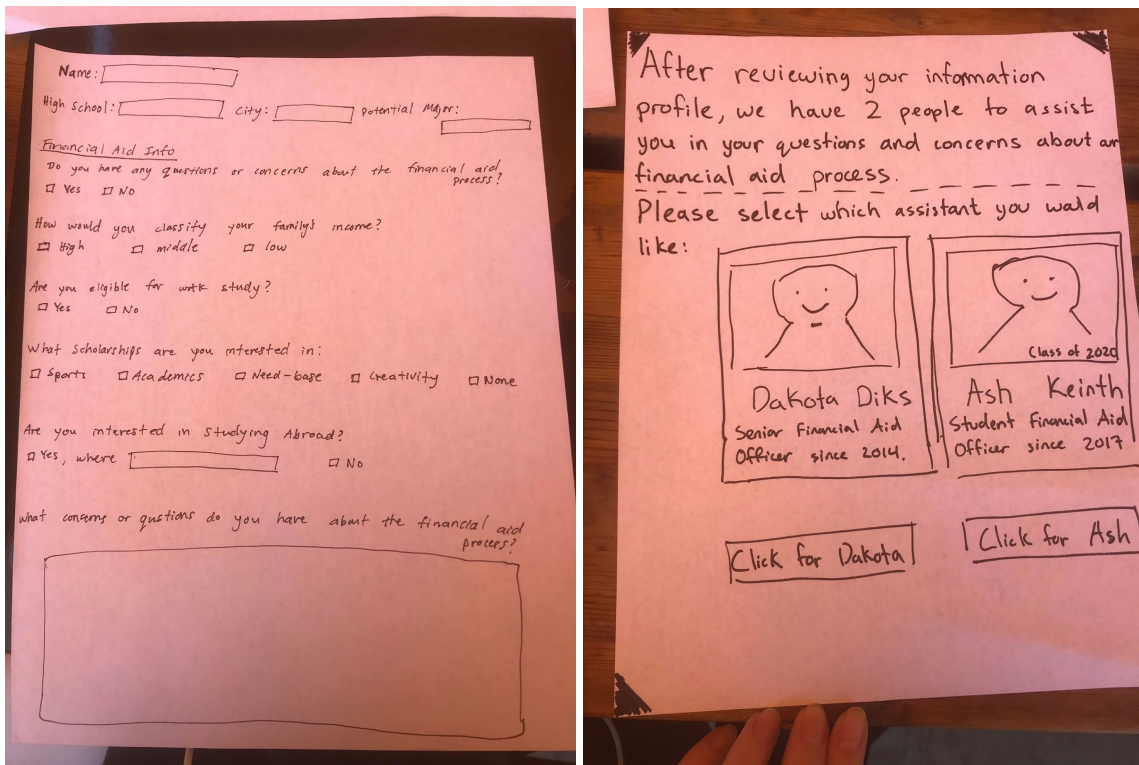
Experience Prototype 1



Talking with a high school student in the Town & Country Village area to get prototype feedback.

For this prototype, we wanted to tackle the need to make financial resources more human. We took the approach of making financial resources more human by making resources have student staff more closely reflect the people they were serving. For this case, we assumed that people prefer the assistance of someone of a similar background to themselves.

First, we had the participant fill out a basic financial aid profile form we created. Second, we matched the participant with two people whom they could choose from to assist them: one being a professional financial aid officer and the other being a student financial aid officer who closely reflects their own profile information.



A sample financial aid survey form (left) that we had the participant fill. After “submitting,” it would present the user with the second piece of paper that would allow them to select an assistant.

Our assumption turned out to be correct. The participant selected the student financial aid officer and stated that their reasoning behind this choice was that they felt more comfortable and thought that “their goals were the same”.

Ali

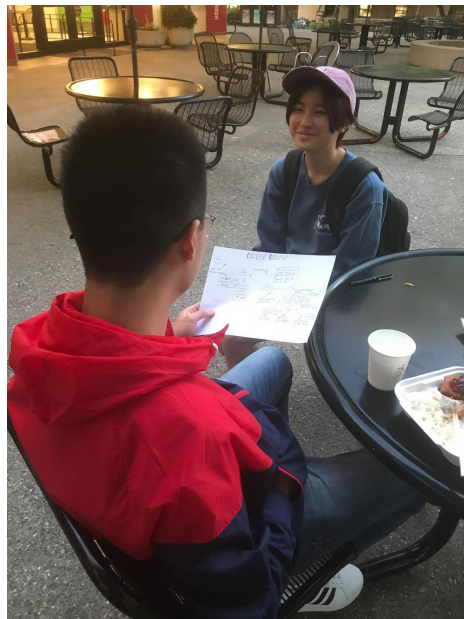
We met Ali, a recent University of Michigan graduate and self-described first generation immigrant student who did everything on her own. We were amazed to realize even though she considered two relationships to be pivotal to her success in the college process, she took pride in that she had taken the initiative to form those relationships, and as a result accredited herself for her accomplishments. It

would be game-changing to connect students to the necessary resources in a way that empowers them to take charge of the college application process.

Ali's HMWs

- **Allow students to create the resources they need**
- Give students a platform to share their success with others
- Reduce competition + increase collaboration
- Make finding resources fun
- Gamify the resource finding process
- Get resources to go to students instead
- Give back while getting help
- Help students feel pride in getting help from others
- Make high school students feel less alone
- Reward proactivity

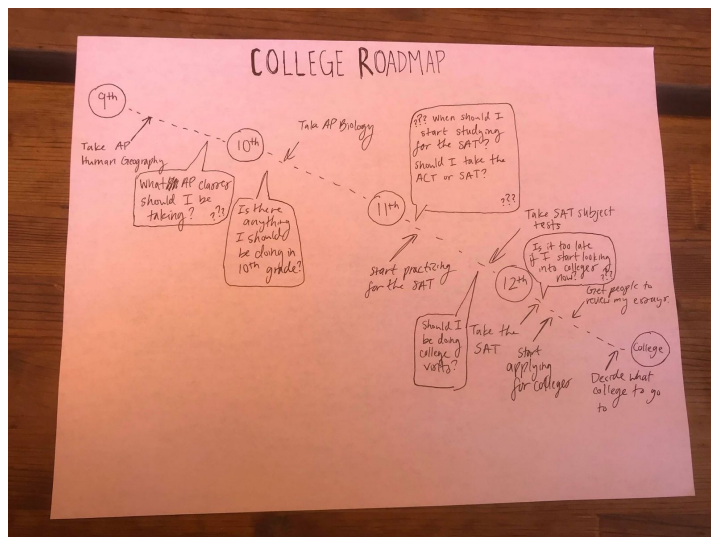
Experience Prototype 2



Talking with a random college student to get guidance/feedback on our college success roadmap

For this prototype, we addressed the need for allowing students to collaborate with one another in helping build a college success roadmap. Our assumption is that college students would be willing to engage in helping high school students with their college success roadmaps.

First, we made a basic college roadmap ranging from 9th-12th grade and filled it with basic action steps and questions at each grade level. Second, we found a random college student and asked him to help give some feedback/guidance on our roadmap.



The roadmap that we showed to the participant. It displays the steps to take towards college and also presents questions that a high school student might have when completing such a plan.

*Something to note is that we tested two people for this prototype because the first participant was a case of potential bias as their part time job was a college consultant for high school students. As such, we will focus on our insights gained from the second participant instead for this report.

Through our prototype testing, we found our assumption to be correct in that college students were willing to engage and help high school students with their college success roadmaps. A new finding that arose from our testing was that not everyone understands the United States college application system. Our participant was a non-US citizen master student, whom didn't feel qualified to give advice related to some aspects of U.S. college admissions. However, despite this, he was still willing to engage and help in providing guidance about the timing of things listed and his sharing own experience.

Elizabeth

We met Elizabeth, a recent UCLA graduate who felt crushed when she didn't get accepted to the school her parents had attended. We were amazed to realize that she loved her college experience, even though UCLA was the "opposite" of the other schools that she had applied to. It would be game-changing to broaden high schoolers' ideas about what college can be and encourage them to keep an open mind to eliminate emotional roadblocks that come with college rejections.

Elizabeth HMWs

- **Get students to question their own assumptions about college**

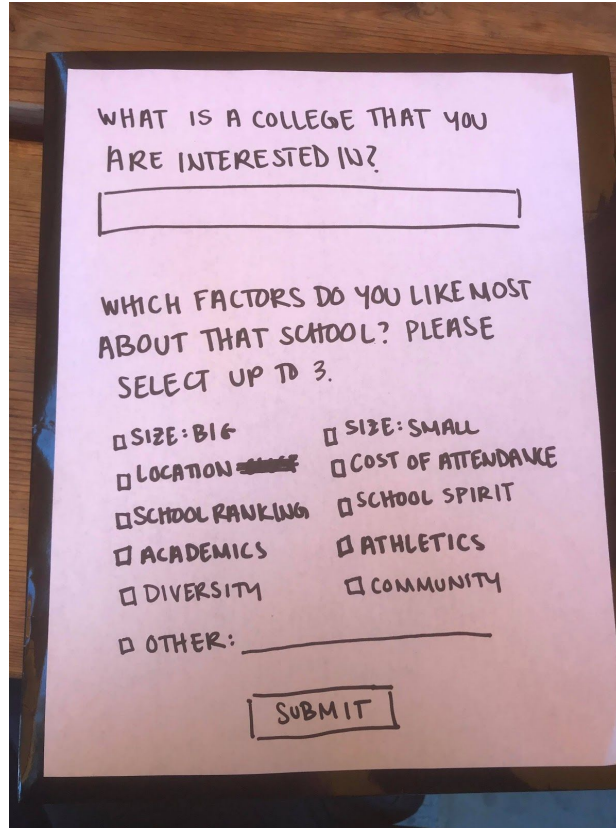
- Get students to share with each other their perceptions of what college ‘is’
- Connect students to colleges based on their personal qualities
- Make college more on personal experience than random adjectives and statistics
- Make college admission more like sorority recruitment
- Allow high schoolers to “experience” college for a year -> test run
- Utilize personal relationships with students and alumni to better understand a school
- Eliminate the idea of a ‘dream school’
- Connect high schoolers with college freshman to talk about college apps - more realistic expectations
- Reduce the focus on prestige

Experience Prototype 3



Surveying and speaking with a high schooler about college expectations to test the prototype experience.

This prototype intended to probe a high schooler’s perceptions of college and any assumptions that they make about what their ideal college “fit” would be. Our assumption was that high school students would be receptive to engaging in a conversation about expanding their assumptions of their ‘fit’ factors.



The survey that we had our participant fill out.

First, we had the participant fill out a survey asking for information such as their top college and other qualities and characteristics they would want in a college. We then prompted them verbally, asking if they would like to talk to someone who attended a college with qualities that are somewhat similar yet different to what they had in mind.

Through this prototyping, our initial assumption of high school students being willing to engage in conversations with college students at schools other than their top choice schools and that the result of that conversation could change the high school students' perceptions of their college list was true; after talking with Kate, who went to a college on the other side of the country, our participant seemed more willing to consider colleges that are farther away from home.

*Note: Our participant mentioned that it is often hard for her to get a good idea of what a college is like and that she would be very much willing to have conversations like these with students in order to get a better understanding of what an experience at a certain college could be like.

Key Takeaways

In this week's needfinding, POV, HMW, and prototype testing, we learned a lot of new things. We learned that people feel deeply invested into the college process such that it often takes an emotional strain and stress for them. From preparing and planning a roadmap to attend college, researching and selecting a perfect college for themselves, and figuring out how to pay for college, students are often confused and scared of making the wrong choices. As such, the key takeaway from all of this is that many students feel there is a need for more resources to assist them. However, beyond just being resources, they would like more human connection, relationship, and mentorship throughout this process.

In conclusion, we realize that all our prototypes had successful elements, and that all our prototypes shared a common theme of 'humanizing' and 'connecting' the college application process to other people who could get involved in the process, be it financial aid officers or other college students. Moving forward, we would like to focus more on specifically how and where we would like to humanize the college process to benefit the most for high school students and college students.