Mobile Indoor-Outdoor Wayfinding Guides Students at NUI Galway

MapsPeople inside Modo is visual, easy to use, and completely empowers people. You can add content so fast and there's so little that needs to be done. Modo does all of the heavy lifting."

— Evan Ryder, Technologist, Information Solutions and Services, NUI Galway

Founded in 1845, **National University of Ireland Galway** (NUI Galway) has been inspiring students for 175 years. Recognized as the Sunday Times University of the Year in 2022, NUI Galway has earned international recognition as a research-led university with a commitment to top quality teaching.

The University serves 19,000 students and is listed among the 30 most beautiful campuses in Europe. For arriving first-year students, though, navigating the campus wasn't always a beautiful experience.

"The map directions available on our mobile app would get them to the right buildings, but not all the way to where they needed to go," said Evan Ryder, Technologist, Information Solutions and Services, NUI Galway. "It can be confusing as some building entrances bring you in on the ground floor, and others on the first floor. Some of the room numbers had changed. It was common to see people wandering around looking lost. We wanted them to have a better experience; to feel more in control."

It was always a problem he intended to solve, and when a student survey turned up indoor directions as one of the most-requested features for the NUI Galway mobile app, Ryder got to work. He engaged with **Modo** and leveraged its low-code app-building platform to deliver interactive indoor and outdoor maps and directions through MapsPeople as part of a unified digital experience with **Modo Campus.**

Re-Launching the Campus App with a Centralized Experience in Mind

NUI Galway had a rudimentary mobile app in place; one developed by students who had since left the University. Using Modo Campus, Ryder launched a "1.0 version" of a new NUI Galway mobile app in 2018, with personas for students, parents/guardians, visitors and staff. It gave students a central hub for all of the information they needed quickly and exposed them to services they weren't aware of.

"On the home screen they'd see what they were looking for, maybe the bus schedule, and they'd see other services that they didn't know we offered. The app is excellent for that kind of exposure."

The mobile app also addresses the problem of students missing timely communications sent to their campus email addresses, which some students didn't check often after setting them up initially. By moving important notifications to the NUI Galway mobile app, the University is able to communicate more effectively. In the case of an annual survey that students receive after graduation, notifying students on the app had a significant impact on workload.

"We need to get an 80% return on that survey and provide it to higher education authorities," explained Ryder. "We have to chase people down if they didn't respond. Now we use the notification feature on the app for the initial ask and reminders, which reaches graduates more readily."

While the first version of the app put in place the initial building blocks for a centralized digital campus experience, it is the seamless, turn-by-turn indoor/outdoor directions that addressed the University's biggest priority.

Integrating MapsPeople into the Modo-powered App

By leveraging a technology partnership between MapsPeople and Modo, NUI Galway is able to offer students seamless navigation and wayfinding, including turn-by-turn directions outdoors and indoors, directly from the NUI Galway mobile app. With this capability students gain confidence and feel comfortable on campus, even if it's their first time in a building. Having MapsPeople inside the NUI Galway app also means they don't have to cut and paste web addresses, download anything, or complete any additional verification. And as the MapsPeople integration features the well-known functionalities of Google Maps, like zooming and panning, it offers a familiar user experience.

"The indoor directions are a Godsend," said Ryder. "Suddenly, people are just no longer lost. That problem disappeared overnight when we rolled out the app with interactive maps."

The feature was a big driver of app adoption, particularly among first-year students. Today approximately 60% of the undergraduate population uses the app, and the number is growing. "We expect adoption to rise again next term with new students starting on campus instead of remotely," Ryder noted. "It's the biggest selling point for students as they look to find where their lectures are."

As much as students love having directions to everything on campus right at their fingertips, Ryder is thrilled with the ease of adding locations and making changes to their maps, which he is able to delegate to the University's Buildings Office. With the MapsPeople content management system (CMS), they can very easily update, add, and delete Points of Interests (POIs) and areas as well as make changes to routes.
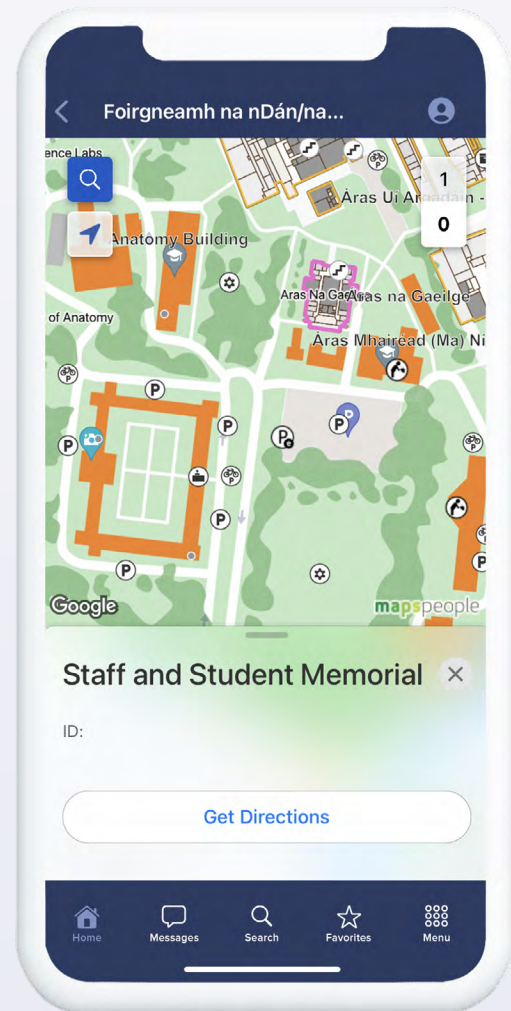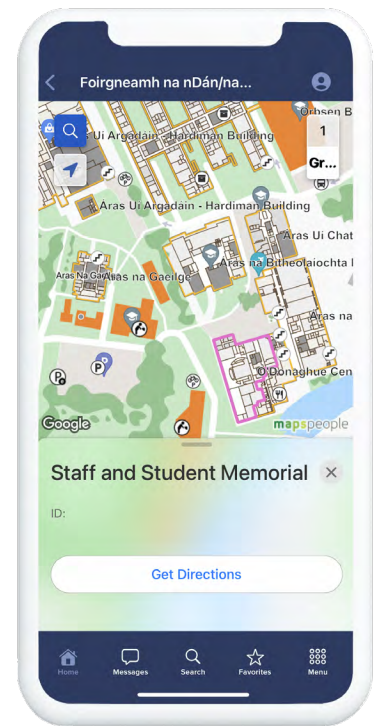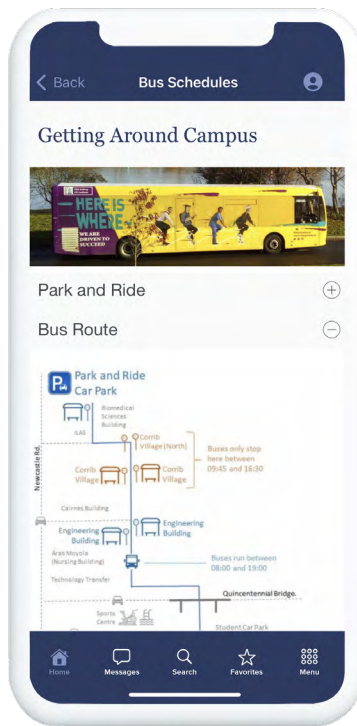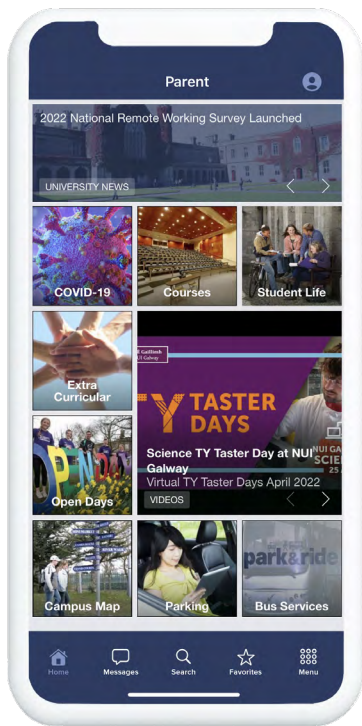
"If someone asked me to make changes to a map in the past I would have to choose between doing it myself or using that time to train someone else, who may not be around when the next change request came in. MapsPeople inside Modo is the best of both worlds. It is visual, easy to use, and completely empowers people. You can add content so fast and there's so little that needs to be done. Modo does all of the heavy lifting."

The ability to add and change content is particularly useful at NUI Galway where they have a lot of pop-up locations that people need to find quickly, like a desk set up in a common area where students could register for a blood drive, or a pop-up service/temporary location. They are able to add those sorts of locations quickly via the content management system and have them appear in the app's interactive maps immediately. The University also leverages the MapsPeople/Modo integration for seminars and campus events, as the feature is available to visitors as well as students, faculty and staff.

The MapsPeople Modo solution even helped NUI Galway shorten its exam days period by half. "We don't have enough on campus venues for all the exams to happen at once. Instead of stretching them out to four weeks as we used to do, we were able to shrink that to two weeks by using more venues on and off campus, and we could help people navigate to them easily."

Continuing the App Journey

Ryder plans to continue evolving the NUI Galway mobile app to centralize and integrate more aspects of the campus experience. Some of his plans include making use of the survey feature in Modo Campus to poll students, and taking advantage of the low-code Modo platform's delegation capabilities to enlist other departments to manage content for different sections of the app in the same way that the Buildings Office manages content for MapsPeople.
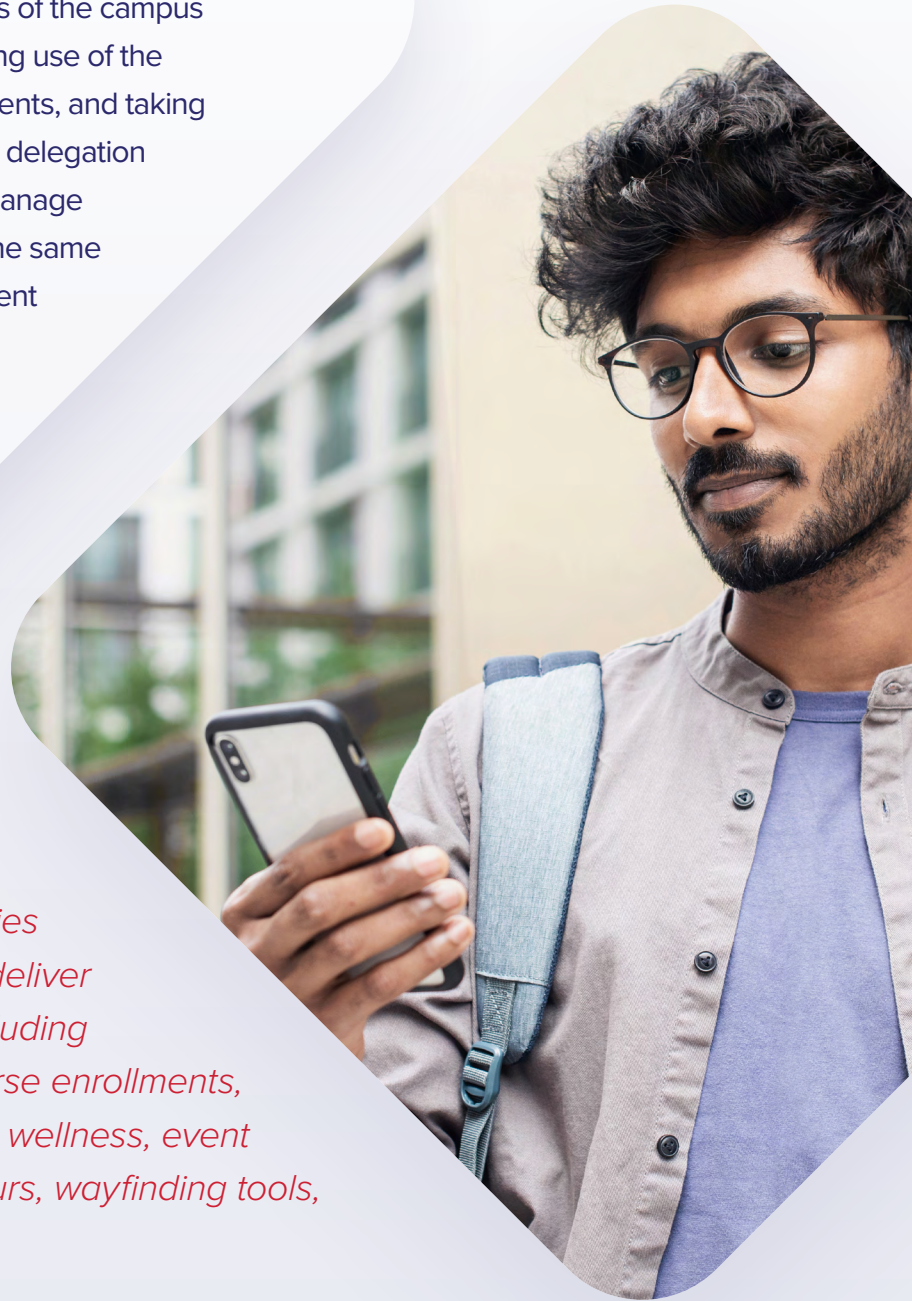
More than 300 colleges and universities use Modo Campus to centralize and deliver a wide array of services and tools including learning management resources, course enrollments, emergency communications, health & wellness, event notifications and ticketing, campus tours, wayfinding tools, and digital IDs.

Visit **modolabs.com/modocampus** to learn more, access Starter Kits and resources, or get a demo.

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