



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY: LEVERAGING MOBILE FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, the way students, visitors, faculty, and staff navigate life on campus has rapidly evolved. At Kansas State University, this is no exception.

According to Loren Wilson, Director of Information Systems at the university, the majority of students on campus own smartphones. To help them easily accomplish their daily tasks, from finding a parking space to learning about events on campus, K-State wanted to offer a fully functional app to its students.

Before 2016, the university already had a mobile solution, but according to Wilson, “It wasn’t a true mobile app by any means,” because it simply linked out to other websites. It was determined that K-State needed a more impactful option.

A committee comprised of administrators and student representatives came together in search of a new mobile platform. They identified two fundamental needs. First, the platform had to connect to student information systems, allowing students to

more easily access schedules and grades. Second, the platform required functionality that would empower non-technical stakeholders to contribute content to the mobile app, without the need to delegate the work to IT.

The committee discovered a provider that would meet their criteria: Modo Labs. In June 2016, the institution rolled out a new-and-improved mobile app, K-State Mobile, built on the Modo Campus™ platform.

Soon, staff from across the institution, even those with non-technical backgrounds, would

discover how they could use K-State Mobile for special events, and, in turn, engage students, prospects, faculty and others more deeply with the university.

CAREER CENTER

Connecting Students to Employers and Careers

Like many universities today, K-State is committed to helping students explore a variety of career possibilities and to effectively transition from college to career. The Career Center is one of the main



resources K-State students turn to for their career readiness.

The center has five core student outcomes. According to its mission statement, it helps students:

- Explore majors and make decisions about career options
- Create well-written resumes
- Communicate effectively in interviews
- Conduct a successful job search
- Develop skills and experience through internships

Career fairs play an important role in helping students achieve these goals. Many students leave the career fairs with leads for a new internship, full-time job, part-time job, or co-op opportunity; and the school's mobile app is an important tool for student success.

“Our career fair app has been key to developing new ways for the Career Center to connect students and employers,” said Career Center Director Kerri Day Keller, PhD. “The mobile app provides our students with convenience, information and resources that are crucial to a successful career fair experience.”

In fall 2015, before the university's partnership with Modo Labs, the Career Center had been using a well-known competitor app. In Spring

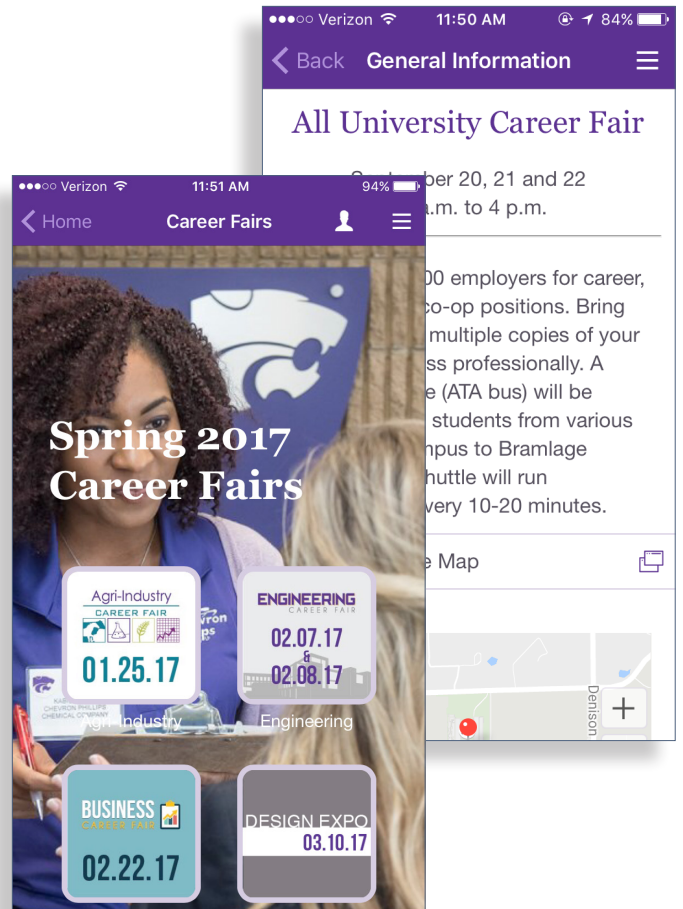
2016, ahead of the launch of the university's new campus app, the Career Center reassessed its mobile strategy. The team realized that maintaining their former app no longer made sense – it would be neither cost effective for the university nor user-friendly for students to navigate back and forth between the two K-State mobile apps.

Improving the Student Career Fair Experience

The Career Center launched its Modo Labs mobile career fair experience within the K-State Mobile app in September 2016. Its special module, Career Fairs, highlighted various events throughout the 2016-2017 academic year, including:

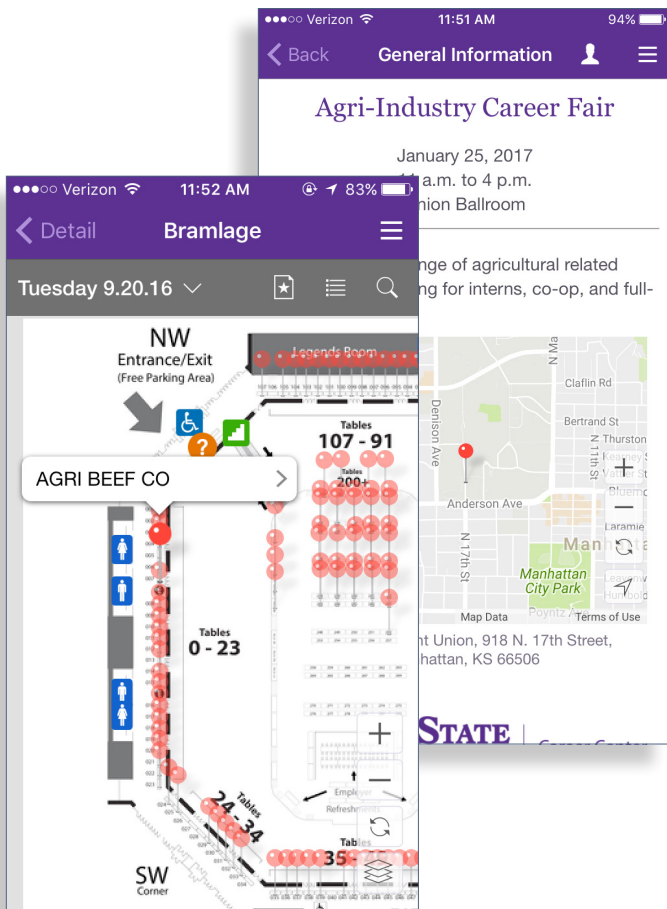
- **All-University Career Fair** – Held over three days in September, this is the university's largest fair with over 360 unique employers.
- **Majors, Minors, and More Fair** - Held in October, this event helps students find a primary major, secondary major, or minor they didn't know existed or hadn't considered.
- **Agri-Industry Career Fair** - Held in January, this event matches students with a wide range of agricultural-related industries, and it informs them about available full-time job and internship opportunities.

- **Engineering Career Fair** - Held in February, this fair helps students explore full-time and internship/co-op opportunities with employers seeking students in engineering and technical disciplines.
- **Business Career Fair** - Also held in February, this fair is an opportunity for students to visit with representatives from firms in the business industry.
- **Design Expo** - Held in March, the fair matches students up with internships and full-time opportunities with a wide range of design firms.



According to Ashley Bailey, marketing coordinator for the Career Center, the new mobile solution has had a purposeful impact on students.

For one, it's improved the career fair experiences for students. Those who travel via public transportation, have classes before the events, or have personal portfolios to carry to the career fairs are no longer burdened with career fair booklets. All the information they need is at their fingertips.



STUDENT RATING

Furthermore, the app makes research easy. Students can quickly browse participating companies days before and during the events. With the improved app functionality, they can also find companies recruiting their majors and locate their tables on the indoor maps.

Even though the events have limited seating, students can comfortably pause and scan the information while standing at high-top tables. The app is easy to navigate—more so than large event booklets—in crowded spaces.

Assessing App Effectiveness

Following the 2016-2017 career fair season, the Career Center conducted a survey which revealed how students navigated the fairs, accessed employee information, and rated the app. It also showed which features were most popular.

Some of the **highlights from the survey** showed:

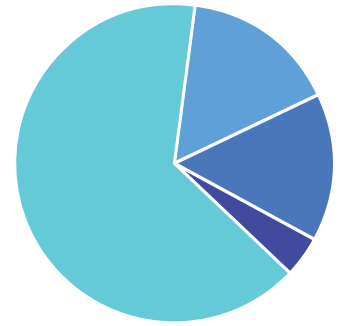
- More students navigated the fairs with the app than with the printed student booklets.
- The most popular app feature was employer lists, followed by the interactive maps.
- Eighty percent of students rated the app as “useful” or “very useful.”

Very Useful: 15%

Useful: 65%

Ok: 16%

Needs Improvement: 4%



A Positive Transition for K-State Staff

The Career Fair section of the mobile app is also a win for the university. For instance, it's helped K-State cut down its printing costs. Rather than develop a large booklet with all of the event and company information, the Career Center now develops a smaller printout that includes company names and titles. The rest of the information—company descriptions, majors, and recruiting—is accessible via the app or via students' online Career Center accounts.

Furthermore, the university benefits from the app because it's a manageable experience for technical and non-technical users. Though the Career Fair module was first owned by IT, it's since been taken over by

non-technical stakeholders, such as Bailey. According to the marketing coordinator, new career fair modules can simply be modeled after older ones.

INSPIRING OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

Open House

Motivated by the Career Center's success, Associate Director of Information Systems, Jennifer Gehrt, turned to K-State's campus app to promote the university's Open House. The annual event, which most recently took place in April 2017, showcases the university to family, friends, alumni, and future students. Participants enjoy food and fun, while exploring 250-plus majors and options, as well as 475-plus student organizations.

For Gehrt, creating a module was about more than attracting future students. It was

also about marketing the app to internal stakeholders.

"I wanted our Division of Communications & Marketing to begin thinking about content for the app that was more than a link to a mobile-friendly website," said Gehrt. She also commented that she wanted departments across the university to understand the potential uses for the app.

Though Gehrt admits that inclusion of Open House in the K-State mobile app occurred late in the planning cycle, she says it was a successful one. The app included videos and schedules in a more user-friendly way than they were presented on the website. Moreover, usage within the Open House module was impressive, despite the fact that the module was rolled out fairly quickly and with little publicity. Next year, the Open House team plans to include the app as a bigger part of their strategy.

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Research Showcase

Other departments across campus continue to follow in the Career Center’s footsteps.

In May 2017, the Office of the Vice President for Research organized and hosted the K-State Research Showcase, an event designed to facilitate collaboration between K-State researchers and companies seeking expertise or facilities. The office created a special module in K-State Mobile leading up to the research event.

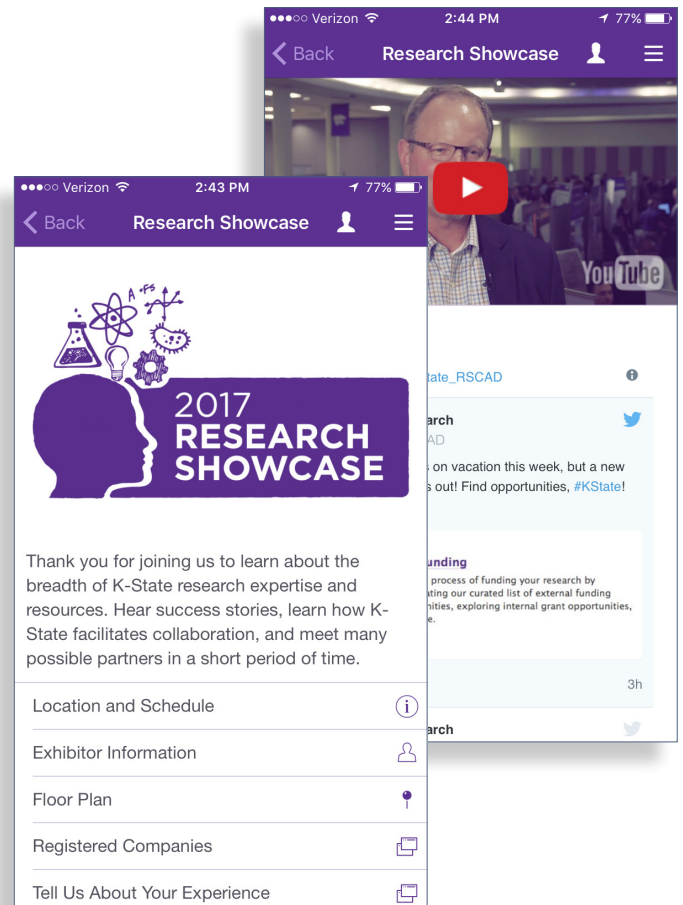
The team wanted the Research Showcase to have a presence in the university mobile app for several reasons. First, a member of their planning group who worked at the Career Center spoke highly of the Career Fair module. Second, the department knew an app would save money on printing costs. Finally, an app would make K-State stand out as a tech-savvy university, which was essential due to the nature of the event. Communications Coordinator Sarah Hancock pointed out, “This was an event designed to introduce industry representatives to K-State research capabilities. We felt it was important for the academy to use the kind of current interface to which [participating] companies are accustomed.”

The Research Showcase section of university’s campus app was a hit.

The module, which included locations and

schedules, exhibitor info, indoor maps, video, social media feeds, and more, received positive feedback. The Vice President of Research, Peter K. Dorhout, likewise expressed his satisfaction with the app. Now the Research office is looking for other ways it can add value to the faculty and industry offices through K-State Mobile.

Gehrt says that the Research Showcase app has demonstrated to other stakeholders at the university that K-State Mobile is “not just for students.” It’s a way to target the entire K-State community and build relationships with external organizations and companies.



NEXT STEPS

In the future, Gehrt hopes to get the K-State Mobile app in the hands of more non-technical administrators. She believes that Modo Campus is a functional solution that should be utilized by many stakeholders – whether technical or not – across the university.


To learn more about the K-State Mobile app and to follow its journey, download it in **iTunes** or **Google Play**.




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