



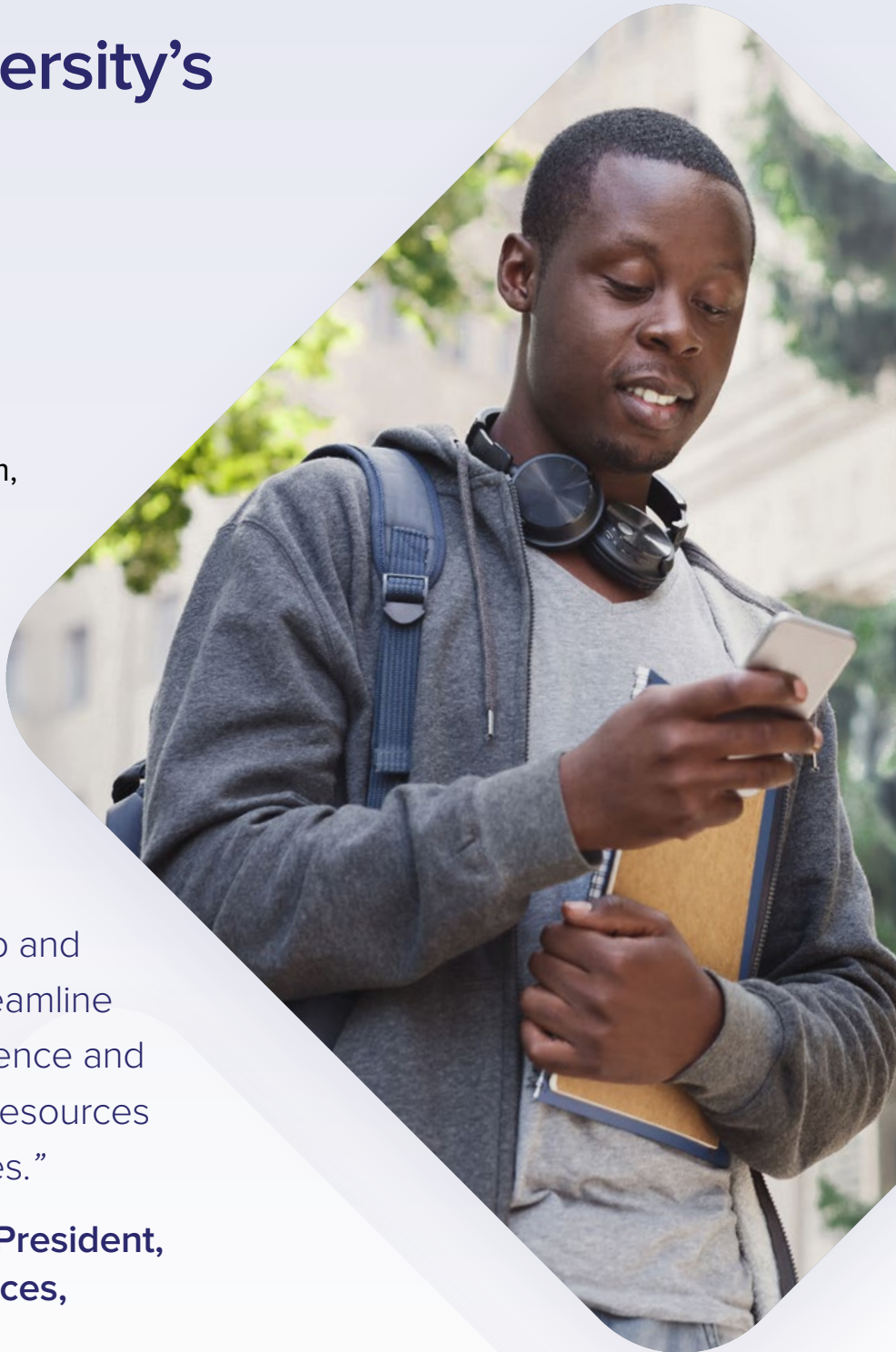
# Penn State University's Mobile App

## **Penn State Go Advances Its Digital Campus Experiences For Students**

By calling upon the MODO platform, Penn State Go is well positioned to achieve the goal of providing a seamless student experience and online access to key information via both mobile and desktop platforms.

“The Penn State Go mobile app and desktop experiences help streamline the Penn State student experience and provides seamless access to resources across all Penn State campuses.”

**Jen Stedelin, Associate Vice President,  
Enterprise Systems and Services,  
Penn State University**





Founded in 1855, the Pennsylvania State University is a public state-related land-grant research university with 24 campuses throughout the Commonwealth.

Serving over 725,000 students, Penn State is a top-ranked research university with a mission of high-quality teaching, expert research, and global service. In keeping with its strategic plan priority of Transforming Education, Penn State is committed to enabling one University, even with geographically distributed physical campuses and an online World Campus.

## Key Metrics

- 135,000 downloads
- ~25 million page views
- 6.7 million user sessions
- 100,000 users enabled push notifications
- 85% Adoption rate

## Needing to Streamline the Student Experience

In 2010, Penn State's undergraduate student government body – University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) – approached the IT department for an all-in-one app. Students were tired of visiting multiple places to access core resources like Canvas, PeopleSoft, and email. Plus, the student government body wanted to improve communications with students.

**“One of the biggest problems in higher ed is communicating with students – they don't want to read lots of emails. With nearly all students using mobile devices, they expect a personalized experience in their interactions with us. We knew a mobile app would satisfy many needs and fill many gaps,”** explains Jen Stedelin, Associate Vice President, Enterprise Systems and Services, at Penn State University.

Simultaneously, another group at Penn State was strategizing about creating a one-shop portal experience because the school's leadership felt students needed a single place for school-related communications and transactions. Knowing students wanted a unified experience and similar experience as mobile, Penn State IT spearheaded a University-wide initiative involving various units and departments to collaborate on the vision of creating a streamlined student experience.



## Collaborating to Deliver One University

Penn State IT established a mobile team to engage major stakeholders across Penn State for input on the ideal mobile app experience. In addition to securing leadership sponsors, the team surveyed over 3,500 students – both undergraduate and graduate – to understand what they were looking for in an app.

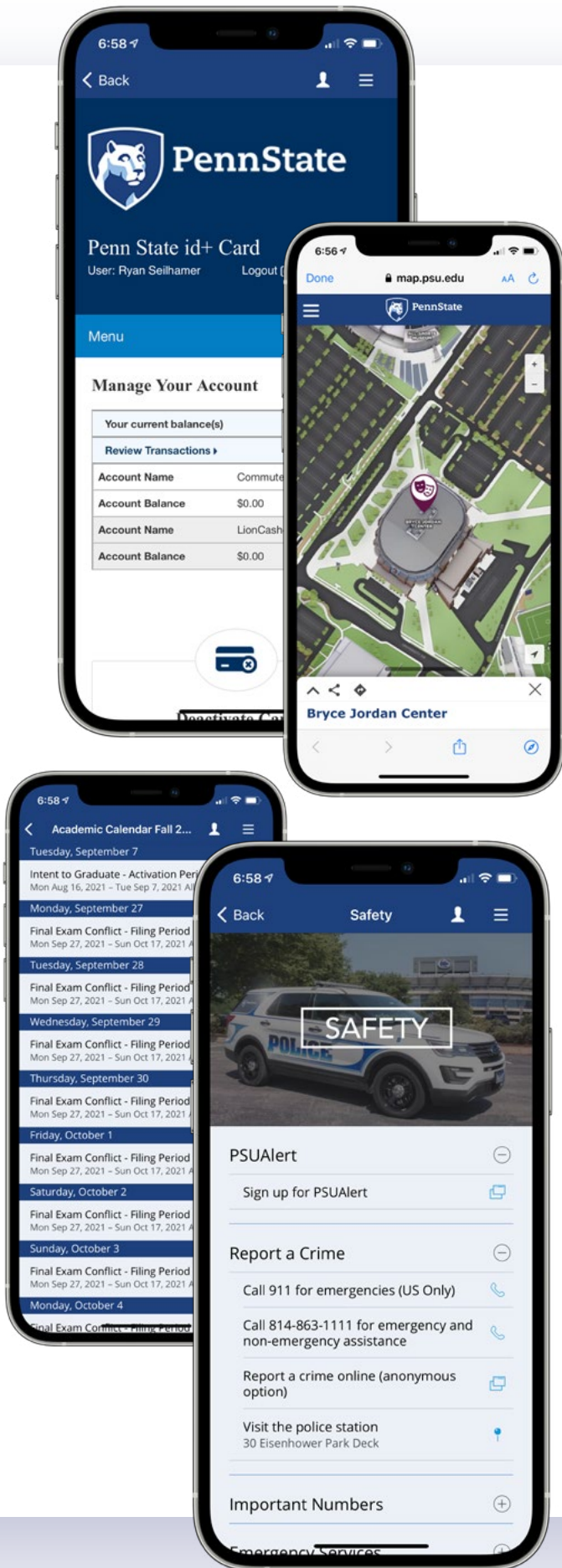
Discussions with UPUA, students and other groups provided insight into what Penn State Go features were essential to ensure the app's success. The result was the top features and name for the mobile app: Canvas, LionPATH – Penn State's student information system, Penn State email, academic advising, campus safety, and library services.

## Finding a Solution with Modocampus®

Penn State had previously used an open source mobile platform but turned to Modocampus due its support for both mobile and desktop. According to Stedelin, the Modocampus platform was appealing with features such as XModule™ for Modocampus™ and support for personas and personalized notifications. The school also appreciated the ability to deliver location-based experiences. "It's important that we can serve different experiences in the app, aligned with each student's interest, location, and campus affiliation," Stedelin continues.

She also underscores the ability to run events on demand through a Modocampus-powered mobile app, and Modocampus's commitment to accessibility for students needing accommodation.

Student input was key to the project's success. Penn State IT invited students to participate in multiple UI/UX reviews, beta testing, and face-to-face testing. The feedback from students helped shape the app's initial features and services, and a future roadmap—all to ensure an experience that students want.



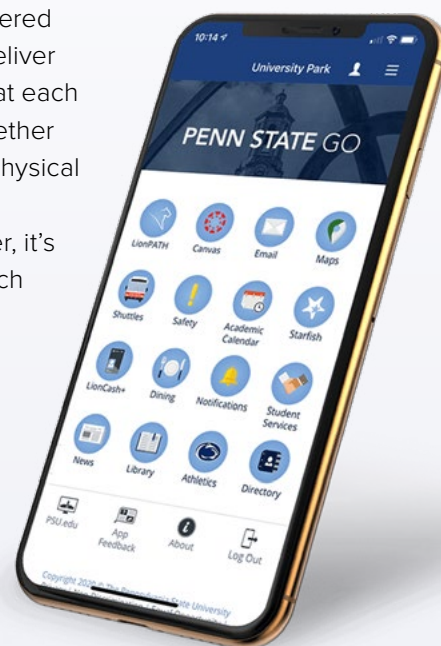
## Satisfying Digital-First Demands with Penn State Go

Penn State launched its all-in-one mobile app, Penn State Go, in January 2020 to provide students and others in the Penn State community with a single, unified mobile destination to manage their university life. The new app delivers single sign-on access to core school and campus features. These include Canvas – the school’s Learning Management System, LionPATH, email, and LionCash+ – an online, prepaid flexible spending account accessed by the Penn State id+ Card. Students can also access shuttle bus tracking, campus maps, library services, Starfish academic advising, and more.

Students curate their experience by selecting a persona based on their campus location – University Park (main campus with approximately 50,000 students), one of the Commonwealth Campuses (those outside of the main campus), or World Campus (online school). They can also stay informed and connected to what is happening at Penn State by opting into channels of interest.

After the initial app launch, Penn State developed personas for faculty and staff, and parents and families. Next Penn State IT is developing an alumni persona to serve the school’s huge alumni network of nearly 700,000.

“With our Modo-powered app, we can easily deliver what students need at each campus location, whether they are part of our physical or virtual Penn State experience. Moreover, it’s easy for them to switch their experiences. Penn State Go is a significant step in satisfying students’ demands for digital-first campus experiences,” says Stedelin.

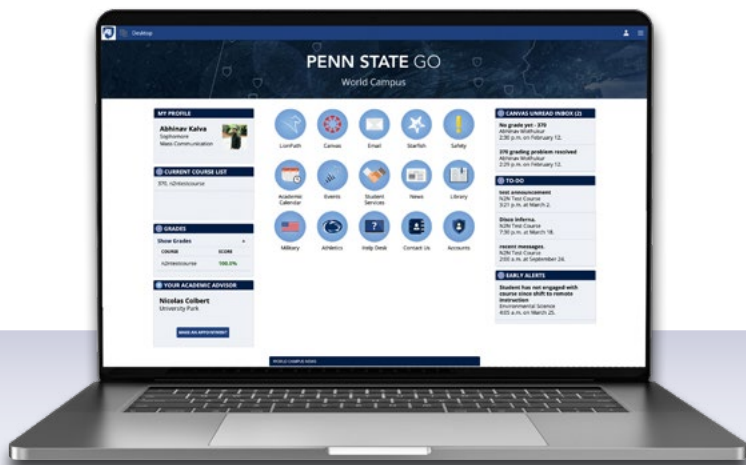


## Expanding Access via the Desktop

PA Modo-powered desktop portal is another way that Penn State calls upon innovative technologies to advance student success and provide students, faculty, and staff with access to needed resources from anywhere, at any time.

World Campus students could already log in to a previously launched portal to see courses and information on desktop. When it became clear that all Penn State students needed a one-stop transactional portal, Penn State IT called upon Modo XModules to ensure personalized access from the start.

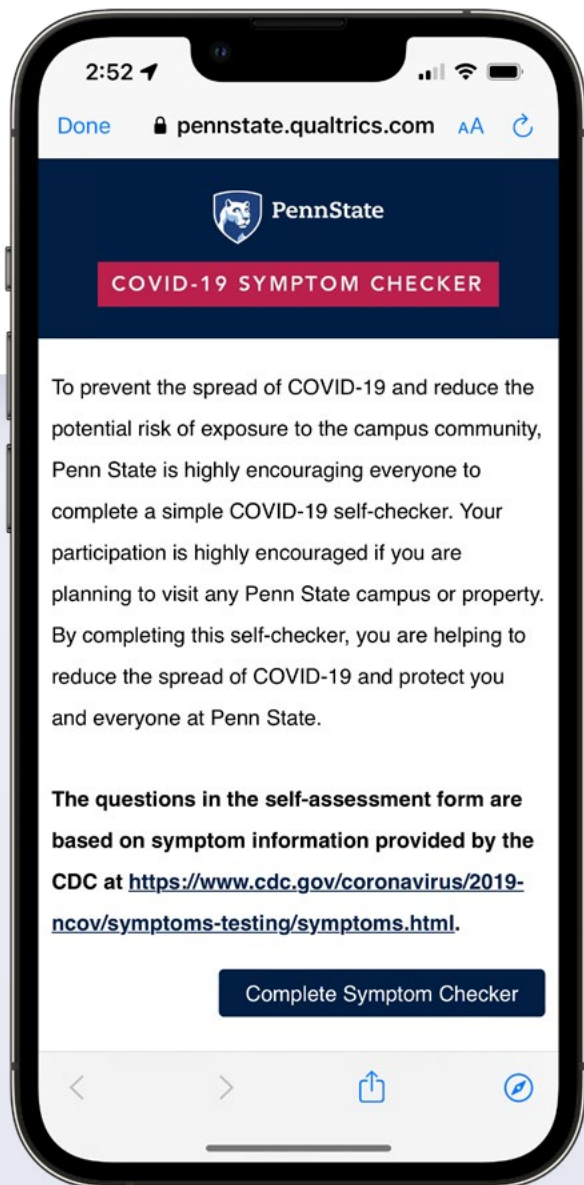
The Modo platform enables Penn State to easily, quickly, and cost efficiently take advantage of existing integrations to complement its campus mobile app with a desktop portal. Through a desktop version of Penn State Go, students can access information on the web with key links to Penn State resources and services, including LionPATH, Canvas, and Penn State email. Because Penn State didn’t have a traditional portal, this initiative helped bring student services and features under one umbrella regardless of platform.



## Agilely Adjusting the App to Address COVID-19 Impacts

When COVID-19 hit, Penn State added a symptom checker to the mobile app. Students enrolled for in-person courses or scheduled to be present at on-campus facilities were required to complete the daily student COVID-19 symptom checker.

An icon within the app made it easy for students to update their vaccination status, and a banner for each app experience indicated whether masks were required on campus. As the school transitioned to remote teaching and learning, it was even more critical for instructors, students and staff to stay informed and connected to what was happening at the school and access key University resources.



The personalized campus experiences that Penn State IT had already established on Penn State Go made it simple for students to receive important messages and access events, news and safety information. The school also made many special events accessible via Penn State Go so students could engage virtually. These included THON, Welcome Week, Class of 2024, Penn State Homecoming, and PS I (heart) U Week.

Other features Penn State IT added to the student experience included overlays in the maps function for remote learning rooms on campuses and Penn State Eats for contactless ordering. The latter launched with students placing 4,000 orders per day. The school also updated the Penn State Go app to enable live IT support chat for technical questions, an enhanced Canvas integration, and ways to stay engaged through You@PSU and with relevant academic colleges.

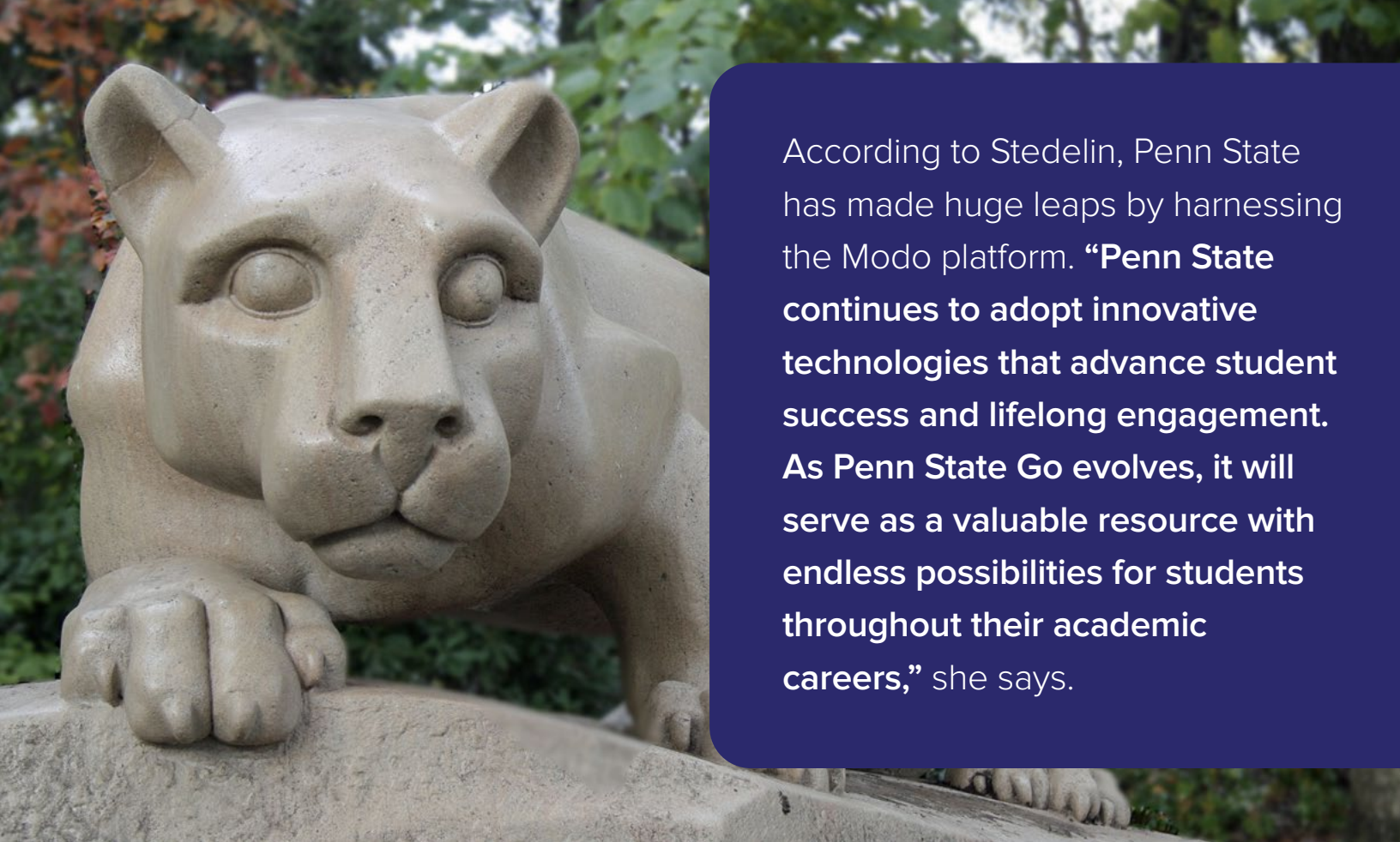
While You@PSU helps students find campus events and relevant activities, the enhanced Canvas integration brought many features of Canvas directly into Penn State Go. When Penn State Go first launched, Canvas was simply linked to the Canvas Student app. Now students can interact with Canvas without leaving Penn State Go.

## Rising Adoption, Better Communications and More Engagement

Across Penn State, the mobile app has been downloaded 130,000 times and the adoption rate is 81%. The app has served 23 million page views and 6.1 million user sessions, and 71,000 users have enabled push notifications.

According to Stedelin, Penn State Go has been instrumental in improving communications with students and engaging more of them. “It was nice to have the app when COVID hit so we had a central place for students to access information and resources. Even online students have a sense of identity through the app. Between push notifications and opt-in channels, our students can stay up to date on what is happening at Penn State and beyond, such as with travel restrictions,” explains Stedelin.





According to Stedelin, Penn State has made huge leaps by harnessing the MODO platform. **“Penn State continues to adopt innovative technologies that advance student success and lifelong engagement. As Penn State Go evolves, it will serve as a valuable resource with endless possibilities for students throughout their academic careers,”** she says.

## Ensuring Ongoing Success

Initially focused on the student experience, the app has been rapidly developed to serve the broader Penn State community. In August 2020, Penn State released the faculty and staff experience. In addition to features available for students, faculty and staff can receive targeted push notifications, in-app banner messages, and access Canvas Teacher and Workday.

To drive continued success with both its mobile and desktop experiences, Penn State IT has established an operations group, mobile app liaisons across campuses, and an advisory committee representing the main groups across campus.

“We have met with over 100 groups who want a presence on the app. The MODO platform empowers us to enable campuses with control over their communications via the app. Delegation abilities help ensure we maintain the agility we need to keep the app fresh,” Stedelin continues.

## Leading the Way Into the Future

Going forward, the school is looking forward to further exploring all it can do via both its mobile app and desktop experiences. In addition to representing the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in the app, Penn State IT plans to take advantage of all the ways it can personalize information and experiences.

“We chose the MODO Campus app-building platform for its agility and the way it empowers us to meet the immediate and future needs and interests of students, faculty, and staff, alumni and others. We are excited by all the untapped potential,” Stedelin concludes.



100 Cambridgepark Drive  
Suite 200  
Cambridge, MA 02140

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