



# UNCG CREATES PERSONALIZED MOBILE- FIRST EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF

UNC Greensboro (UNCG) is a research university of over 20,000 students who are served by approximately 3,000 faculty and staff in the heart of North Carolina. It is one of the 17 schools in the University of North Carolina System. When Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. was elected the 11th Chancellor of UNCG, he promised to lead UNCG into a new era of innovation, growth and engagement. He knew technology investments would be key to achieving this goal and issued a challenge to his ITS team: Make it as easy as possible for students to access resources and information via an engaging, dynamic mobile experience.

Though UNCG had a student app in place, it was outdated. It limited the school's ability to create multiple app personas, enable custom integrations with core technology – such as its Learning Management System (LMS) – and check the availability and book campus resources. In fact, the app was designed to support only part of the student lifecycle. As a result, it did not address evolving student needs or deliver on the Chancellor's strategic vision.

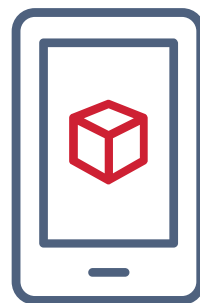




experience, the school needed an app that enabled a unified experience throughout the student journey. With that in mind, the app needed to support personalization so the school could segment relevant information for prospective, new students, graduate students, faculty, and staff. UNCG also wanted to send notifications based on audience personas and the ability for users to opt in to receive relevant, timely information to help drive engagement.

The ideal solution would also make it possible to see availability of on-campus resources – such as laundry rooms, labs and study space – and reserve these where applicable. Moreover, this app needed to integrate with the school’s existing LMS and Student Information System (SIS).

To begin the process, Sutton’s team sought in-depth user analytics for insight into how students engaged within the existing app so UNCG could evolve the app based on usage.



**To ensure an engaging, personalized experience, the school needed an app that enabled a unified experience throughout the student journey.**

## EVOLVING WITH STUDENT AND UNIVERSITY NEEDS

Given the project’s priority, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Learning Technology and Client Services, Todd Sutton, charged his team with finding a new solution. Part of the mandate was enabling rapid development because past efforts had stalled due to high overhead costs. As Sutton explains, his team had previously spent significant time working with staff in different departments to maintain their respective web content. Doing the same for mobile apps was not a sustainable or viable strategy. Mobile is about speed, flexibility, and decentralized ownership – it can’t be implemented well with “old school” thinking.

Sutton wanted to preserve the university’s distributed content management approach, leveraging existing content from the web and data feeds within a centralized mobile app. To ensure an engaging, personalized



## DEVELOPING A MOBILE-FIRST CAMPUS WITH MODO

After evaluating multiple app development solutions and vendors – and talking to other schools about their experiences – UNCG’s technology team discovered that the apps built on the Moduo platform served its needs and met its vision most comprehensively. Given the Moduo platform also supported all of UNCG’s technical requirements, Moduo Campus was selected.

Because of Moduo’s low-code, no-code development platform and the university’s robust collection of existing content, UNCG’s mobile app developer, Craig Biles, was able to build the first beta within a few weeks. This first iteration was designed to address two key personas: Incoming and new students. “If they go to the app and don’t see resources and information tailored to them, they’re not going to come back,” explains Biles.



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The result was a branded, cohesive experience. “Even though the app is personalized, you can tell from tile to tile that you’re at UNCG, and all the content is delivered in a consistent manner,” continues Biles.

Chancellor Gilliam was the first to test the beta version of the app on his phone. According to Sutton, he thought it was great – and asked for more. The Chancellor gave Sutton’s team a list of other things to implement, one of which was enabling students to view the lines at

popular campus locations such as the Barnes and Noble Café and Chick-Fil-A in the student center on campus, which the team immediately delivered (and which has proven to be incredibly popular among student users).

## SECURING BUY-IN ACROSS CAMPUS

In spite of the smooth experience developing the new app, Sutton had to secure support for it to ensure adoption. Because the school's app lineage was littered with previous uncoordinated efforts, he faced an uphill battle winning over the extended team of departmental stakeholders from across the university.

Sutton and his team embarked on a roadshow to present the new integrated web and mobile strategy. They explained that once information

is saved to a single, easy-to-access location, students can access it quickly via the mobile app. Plus, once a third-party app is loaded onto a device, the UNCG Mobile App connects to it directly. This greatly boosts the odds of students taking advantage of all the information and resources the university provides. "All of a sudden, content from areas all across the University becomes easily accessible because it's all together in one easy to access location," says Sutton. The goal was to make clear the real benefits of a coordinated, collaborative approach – a better user experience, greater engagement, easier distribution of important information, and a more connected community.

## TESTING THE PROTOTYPE

By enlisting stakeholders as partners, Sutton's team was able to make decisions more quickly



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**—Craig Biles, UNCG mobile app developer**

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**— Todd Sutton, Associate Vice Chancellor for Learning Technology and Client Services**



and deliver on its plan for transforming the digital campus experience ahead of target. “Given the simplicity of the platform, we were able to share a unified app that integrated the information that was important to app stakeholders – such as the personal safety app and social media feeds for every sport. We couldn’t have accomplished this without a platform that’s this flexible,” says Sutton.

One University administrator was amazed, telling Sutton: “I must have been in higher ed too long. When you proposed this, I expected you’d be back in two to three years to show us what you had built.”

According to Sutton, his team earned the respect of stakeholders by understanding and responding to their requirements, and by paying attention to nuances such as the difference between faculty

and staff, or undergrads and graduate students. He also developed a partnership with the university communications and marketing group, which now oversees marketing for the app and uses it as a primary channel for communication with the University community.

## **UNIFYING KEY CAMPUS RESOURCES**

In an effort to build student awareness and get them in the habit of using the app as a resource, the initial launch was to new students through the Spartan Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) program. UNCG modified Modo’s New Student Orientation package by meeting with University areas that had previously presented SOAR through a variety of

paper-based, web, and presentation resources. The Summer 2019 SOAR students and parents were instructed to come to campus with UNCG Mobile installed on their phones.

Biles attended over twenty welcome sessions and expos for these students and parents introducing the app, problem solving any download issues, and gaining valuable feedback from the end users.

As the SOAR sessions were wrapping up, the next focus was on faculty and staff. The team knew that if a student asked about the app and the faculty/staff weren't aware it could put the faculty/staff member in an awkward position and possibly squelch usage.

In place of the traditional 'State of the Campus Address' delivered at the start of the semester, the Chancellor had in the past two years

switched to a more informal agenda and welcomed faculty and staff back to campus with a kickoff lunch. This year, the focus of the day was largely on launching the new Mobile App for faculty and staff. Raffle prizes were offered and tickets were distributed to those that showed the app on their phone. UNCG tied the launch of the app to one of its most important student priorities – food insecurity. UNCG promised to donate a food item to the Spartan Open Pantry for students for every app download the week prior to the kickoff luncheon.

The biggest spikes in downloads occurred during the days where SOAR was conducted, during the kickoff luncheon announcement week, and the first seven days leading up to student move-in day. While the app launched with only the Student and New Student personas fully developed, the app also includes five other personas: Faculty/Staff, Graduate

## Users can freely switch between seven personas:



Prospective Student



New Student



Undergraduate Student



Graduate Student



Faculty and Staff



Alumni



Families, Friends, and Fans

Student, Prospective Student, Alumni, and a community persona called Families, Friends, and Fans. Users can freely switch between any of the personas. For instance, a staff member who is also an alum can toggle between the two personas on their phone.

“Although our app’s first day wasn’t its best day, it was a good day. That said, we’re already charting our plan for growth with the help of other folks within the university,” says Sutton.

The app’s persona ownership model has been adopted across campus. “There are positions in campus areas such as Advancement, Athletics, Academic units, etc that work closely with University Communications to manage the communications efforts for their areas. These people are invited to all the communications meetings, helping us with branding and maintaining a consistent message,” continues Sutton.

Additionally, UNCG has appointed persona liaisons from key areas to serve as resources in understanding audience needs and assisting with content.

With the new app built on the MODO platform, UNCG is delivering on the Chancellor’s vision of a mobile-first, digital-first campus.

**“When our Chancellor first arrived, people kept telling him, ‘You’re going to love UNCG. It’s the best-kept secret in the UNC system.’ He made it his mission to ensure we are no longer a secret. And the mobile app came at the perfect time to help us tell our story.”**

**– Todd Sutton, Associate Vice Chancellor for Learning Technology and Client Services**

To learn how MODO can help your mobile campus engagement soar, visit [modolabs.com/campus](http://modolabs.com/campus).



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