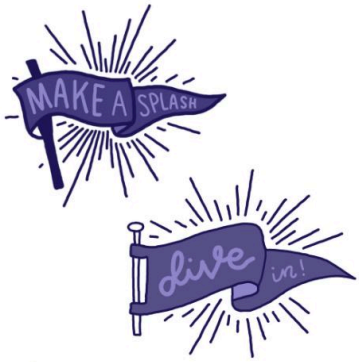
Dive In! Delivered: 76.8% First-Year Engagement in Just Six Weeks

CASE STUDY
University of Portland

INDUSTRY
Higher Education

The Challenge

When the University of Portland's student activities team looked honestly at how they were tracking campus engagement, what they found was pretty thin. Handheld clickers for headcounts. Event data spread across departments with no real way to pull it together. They could tell you roughly how many people showed up to something, but not who, not how often, and not whether any of it was moving the needle on belonging or retention.



That gap mattered more than usual heading into the 2025-2026 academic year. The university had been navigating enrollment losses and the wider demographic pressures hitting campuses across the country. Welcoming students back with the same approach wasn't going to cut it.

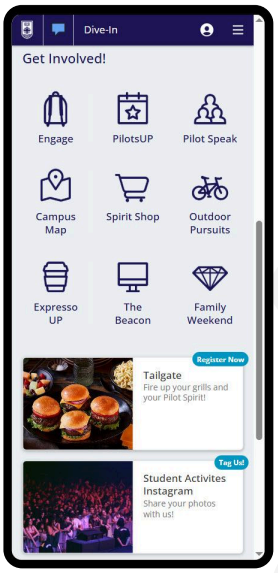
They needed a campus engagement platform that could rebuild community energy, give students visible reasons to show up, and actually generate data worth acting on.

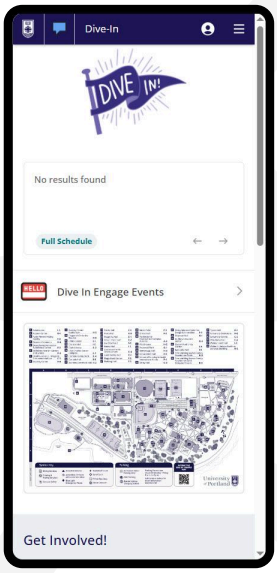
The Approach

The university had been using Engage as its student engagement platform and didn't want to walk away from it. Too much was already built around it. At the same time, Engage wasn't designed as a modern, mobile-first experience for students, which created a gap between where engagement data lived and how students actually interacted with campus life. That mattered because mobile is where students naturally discover events, connect with peers, and decide what to do next. If that experience isn't intuitive and accessible in the moment, engagement drops.

So the conversation shifted to what could work alongside Engage, specifically whether a higher education mobile app could bring things together in a way that felt cohesive, intuitive, and aligned with how students already behave, rather than like yet another tool students had to learn.

That's what led them to Modo Labs. Rather than launching a generic campus experience platform, the university worked with Modo's design team to build something tied to a specific goal: a six-week programming campaign called Dive In!, named with the school's nautical identity in mind. Pulling together Student Activities, Residence Life, Campus Ministry, Athletics, University Relations, ASUP, Marketing and Communications, and University Events, the team co-designed a calendar of signature events meant to create real momentum at the start of the year.





Dive In! became its own module within UP Mobile and launched alongside the app at the start of the academic year. It included an Engage-integrated event schedule, campus maps, and tiles that pointed students to resources such as the campus lexicon, the school mascot, the spirit store, and a soccer game tailgate reservation form. The branding was bold and intentional, designed to make the student portal campus app feel like something worth opening.

The decision to put the Engage event pass directly on the app's homepage turned out to be one of the most consequential calls they made. The pass is a QR code unique to each student and is used for check-in at events. Putting it front and center, rather than tucked away in a submenu, meant students actually used it, and that gave the team real tracking event data for the first time.

The Experience

Students arriving in August 2025 got a different kind of welcome. Instead of hunting across department websites and email chains to figure out what was happening, they had a single place that made the first six weeks of campus life feel like a season rather than a scattered list of events.

The programming itself ranged widely, which was the point. Reimagined traditions like Pilot After Dark, All Aboard, and Homecoming sat alongside new additions like a comedian, a magician, Rose City Circus, Silent Disco, and a Golf Cart Parade. The variety gave students multiple ways to engage, and the Dive In! branding tied it all into something that felt like it belonged together.

Word got around fast. The student body president mentioned in an early speech to student government that the campus had felt like it "changed overnight," with more people showing up and more students actually knowing what was going on. That kind of reaction is hard to plan for, but the combination of a fresh campus experience platform, consistent branding, and a calendar designed to give students something to look forward to every week made it possible.

The Results

Across roughly 65 social programs in the first six weeks, 76.8% of first-year students and 55% of continuing students attended at least one event. 128 first-years and 146 continuing students made it to five or more, a level of participation the university had never been able to document before because the tracking simply didn't exist.

What was equally notable was that the energy didn't fade. Looking at a broader sample of 104 events across the full semester, 78.8% of first-year students and 58.1% of continuing students attended at least one event. The numbers barely moved from the six-week mark, which suggested the early momentum had carried.

Individual events drew well, too. The Riverboat carnival pulled in 1,366 attendees. The comedian drew 498. The opening mixer All Aboard welcomed around 650 students. App traffic on the higher education mobile app ran between 5,000 and 22,000 page views per day throughout the six weeks, with daily logins consistently between 1,200 and 1,800. Students accessed the Engage calendar nearly 12,000 times and pulled up their event passes 7,400 times.

ASUP President Aidan Sanchez put it well: "As a senior, the first six weeks of the 2025-2026 school year have been the most engaging start to the academic year yet. It was so nice to see students engaged in several programs offered throughout Dive In!; there was truly something for everyone, and the number of events also allowed students to discover new interests!"

Behind the scenes, the university tracked 228 events through the Engage event pass over the course of the semester, across Residence Life, Athletics, Student Activities, and student clubs. For a team that had been working with generic headcounts, that kind of granular picture was genuinely new.

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The Takeaway

What the University of Portland built with Dive In! went far beyond a better, more updated events calendar. The real achievement was making the campus feel active and connected, and capturing proof that it was. The student engagement platform gave students one place to find everything, the branding gave the campaign a personality, and the Engage integration finally gave staff the data to understand what was actually working.

Other institutions facing similar pressure around engagement and retention might find the most useful takeaway in the cross-campus collaboration that made it possible. Dive In! worked because it was a shared investment across departments, with the campus engagement platform serving as the thread that held it all together. With push notifications and more personalized experiences planned for future iterations, the University of Portland is already thinking about where to take it next.

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