

The Campus App That Powered The University of North Dakota's Largest Fall Class



CASE STUDY

University of North Dakota

INDUSTRY

Higher Education

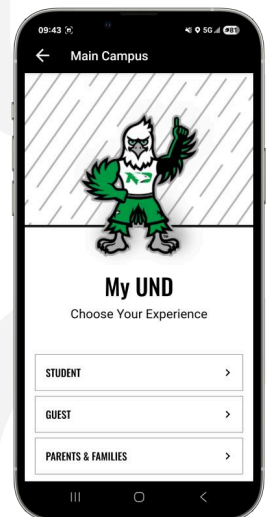
The Challenge

Starting college is disorienting in ways that syllabi and orientation packets can only partially address. At the University of North Dakota, new students and their families arrived on campus each fall juggling a tangle of disconnected tools: separate websites for scheduling, printed maps, email chains about financial aid, and standalone systems for enrollment and advising. There was no single student portal or campus engagement platform to begin from.

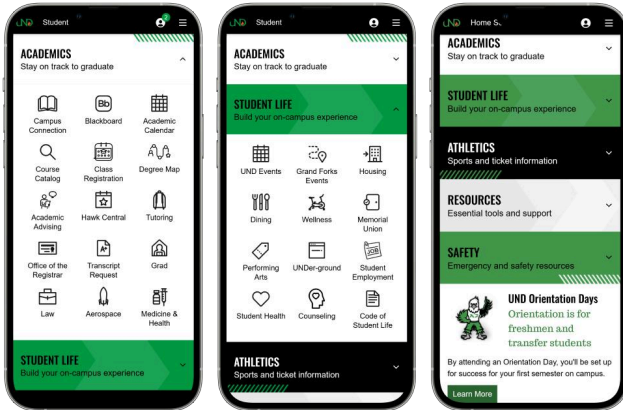
UND is a comprehensive research university in Grand Forks, North Dakota, with a Fall 2025 enrollment of 15,844 students, a record high in university history. As enrollment grew, so did the complexity of onboarding that many students found stressful. The admissions journey, which should feel welcoming and clear, was instead marked **by too many logins, too many tabs, and too little clarity** about what to do next. For families attending orientation, the experience was similarly fragmented. The university needed a way to bring everything together without adding another system to the pile.

The Approach

UND partnered with Modos to modernize and optimize its My UND campus experience platform, launching a ground-up redesign in June 2025. With Modos as the enabling platform, UND created a unified environment that serves every student, family member, and guest with **a single, reliable starting point for campus life.**



The redesign introduced persona-based experiences for four distinct audiences: Students, Online Students, Guests, and Parents and Families. Each persona surfaces only the content relevant to that user. A first-year student landing on the Student view sees academic tools, Campus Connection, advising links, and a degree map front and center. A parent logging in during Orientation sees a simplified layout focused on parking, maps, schedules, and family resources. The student engagement platform also responds to context, meaning on-campus users see dining menus, wellness hours, and housing information, while off-campus users get a view centered on course materials and remote advising tools.



Beyond personas, the team rebuilt the campus map with corrected and validated wayfinding points, overhauled the event calendar, and moved opt-in communication channels out of a buried menu into the app's bottom navigation bar, making them genuinely discoverable.

Accessibility ran through all of it: layouts meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards, with improved contrast, larger tap targets, and stronger screen reader support.

To govern communication quality across departments, UND built a Blackboard training course that every staff member must complete before receiving delegate access in the app. The course covers

brand voice, accessibility requirements, message formatting, and writing effective calls to action. Editors create content, approvers review it, and the system enforces frequency limits to prevent notification overload.

The Experience

For students attending UND's Orientation in July 2025, the campus experience platform served as a digital guide from the moment they stepped on campus. Schedules, reminders, and campus navigation were available in one place. Interactive maps helped families find building entrances, parking, and event locations without having to hunt through separate websites. Parents and Families received a tailored view highlighting the resources they actually needed, rather than the full student academic toolkit.

The App Quest program, built around a mascot named Scoops, gave new students a gamified reason to explore the campus engagement platform during their first week. "During welcome week, we had a broad list of steps for students to complete, like downloading the app and finding dining services," said Mandi Tyszer, Operations and Communications Coordinator for University Information Technology. Students also had bonus entries tied to campus landmarks and submitted their completed quests for prize drawings. The campaign used digital signage, yard signs with QR codes, social media, tabling events, and peer outreach through RAs and student government to drive awareness. A life-sized 3D-printed Scoops statue, built by students in the campus Makerspace, became a photo opportunity that organically spread the campaign.



For students who came to rely on the app throughout the semester, the experience felt noticeably faster and easier to navigate than before. Session times dropped, not because students were less engaged, but because they were finding what they needed more efficiently.

The Results

The numbers that followed the June 2025 redesign were significant across the board. Daily Active Users increased by 41.37 percent year over year. Campus Map views grew by 950.86 percent. Event Calendar views increased by 609.72 percent. Logged-in users rose by 81.36 percent, and sessions per user climbed by 16.52 percent. The Message Center alone drove 557,209 views and 9,732 visitors in a six-month period, representing 38.5 percent of all module activity.

During orientation in July 2025, the higher education mobile app recorded 56,387 screen views and 3,536 unique visitors over ten days, with usage during that window accounting for more than 43 percent of all July activity. Welcome Weekend on August 25 reached a peak of 78,183 screen views and 2,418 unique visitors in a single day, a 79 percent year-over-year increase in views and a 44 percent increase in unique visitors. Parents and Families rated the app 4.254 out of 5, with more than 83 percent giving it 4 or 5 stars.

In a campus-wide Quick Poll, 365 students gave the student portal campus app an average rating of 4.0 out of 5 overall, citing clarity, organization, and reduced stress during the admissions and onboarding process as key strengths. "I think the whole purpose of this campaign was to increase awareness," said Madhavi Marasinghe, UND's Chief Information Officer. "We have had the app for a while, but we wanted to take it up another notch to get the students involved."

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THE RESULT

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The Takeaway

What UND built is a case study in what happens when a campus experience platform is designed around the student's situation rather than the institution's org chart. Persona-based experiences meant that every user, whether a nervous first-year student or a parent navigating a parking map on a phone during a July orientation, landed in a view built for them. Accessibility was treated as a baseline, not an afterthought. And governance ensured that the communications flowing through the student engagement platform maintained consistent quality across dozens of departments.

The results reflected all of this, most visibly in UND's record fall 2025 enrollment of 15,844 students and in the platform's nearly one-to-one match with active devices registered across campus. UND is already looking ahead, with plans to expand personalization, integrate the Encoura Engage platform, and add a university chatbot directly inside the app. The foundation is in place. The students are already there.

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