Elevate the Student Experience Task Force Recommendations: 2022-2026

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I. Executive Summary

"Elevating the Student Experience" is a key initiative for CU Anschutz. At our core, we are an academic medical campus supporting students to become the best in the healthcare workforce. To that end, it is imperative that our students are 1) challenged and supported through an academically rigorous educational experience and 2) integrated into a community that promotes holistic wellbeing and values such as diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Elevating the Student Experience Task Force, comprised of key stakeholders from across the campus, convened over the course of the 2021-2022 academic year to assess needs and make recommendations to elevate the student experience. After completing a design innovation process facilitated by Inworks that solicited input across the campus community, the task force established recommendations for CU Anschutz to implement over the next several years.

These recommendations center on five key themes:

1) Expand and strengthen academic and student support
2) Build community and belonging through intentional opportunities for students to connect within and across Schools, Colleges, and programs
3) Improve digital resources and navigation with centralized resources and increased accessibility
4) Unify onboarding and the experience across the student life cycle
5) Allocate and/or construct a physical space for students to come together and make the built environment more welcoming

Specific recommendations for each theme are outlined further in the "Final Recommendations" section. The task force has also provided an initial list of resources needed and metrics that will help evaluate the success of these recommendations. Once selections from these recommendations are made, a future implementation team will need to refine the metrics further and identify a plan for routine assessment.

II. Introduction and Charge

The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus has established 5 strategic initiatives for 2021-2026:

- Leverage Data
- Build a Healthcare Innovation Institute
- Enhance the Student Experience
- Partner on Patient-Centered Care
- Invest in Our People

Students expressed a desire for stronger language that would put the educational mission on par with the campus's research and patient care missions, so the third initiative was renamed "Elevate" the Student Experience. This initiative is, in part, intended to create a strong sense of belonging for the diverse members of the CU Anschutz student community, develop tailored and proactive student support, and create an ongoing ecology of connection. These goals also dovetail with the strategic direction outlined by the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (ODEICE)[1].

To dive deeper into how the campus might accomplish these goals and others, the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Office of Student Affairs convened a task force to make specific program, policy, and process recommendations to be implemented in fall 2022.

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[1] https://www.cuanschutz.edu/offices/diversity-equity-inclusion-community/programs-and-initiatives/diversity-and-health-equity/strategic-direction#ac-new-beginnings-0

Task Force Membership and Process

The task force was co-convened by Laura Borgelt, Associate Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Jan Gascoigne, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

Member	Representing
Oluwatosin Adebiyi (Student Representative)	School of Medicine and ODEICE
Danielle ("Dani") Brittain	Colorado School of Public Health
Taylor Craver	International Education
Trace DePeralta	School of Dental Medicine
Melissa DeSantis	Strauss Health Sciences Library
Lauren Fontana	Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion (ODAI)
Brian Hemstreet	Skaggs School of Pharmacy
Carrie John	Enrollment Management
Carl Johnson	Student Affairs – Student Engagement
Kiley Kudrna	Office of Communications
Felicia Martin	Finance and Administration
Kristi Rodriguez	College of Nursing
Jacqueline Sivahop	School of Medicine
Jennifer Thurston	School of Medicine
Craig Wimmer	Student Affairs – Health Promotion
Aimee Woznick	Office of Strategic Initiatives
Shanta Zimmer	School of Medicine

Guided by a team at Inworks, the task force used an evidence-based design innovation process to conduct stakeholder engagement, then develop recommendations based on those responses. Each member was tasked with interviewing members of the campus community about strengths, opportunities, and areas for improvement in the student experience. One-on-one interviews with faculty, staff, and students (as well as larger focus groups like Student Senate, the Office of Advancement, and the Master Planning Committee) helped the group prioritize needs and opportunities. The insights gleaned from those conversations were then used to design prototypes for innovative strategies to elevate the student experience. With these prototypes in hand, the task force returned to stakeholders for further feedback before finalizing the recommendations that follow.

III. Key Themes

The stakeholder engagement described above helped the task force identify five key themes:

1) **Expand and strengthen academic and student support**

2) **Build community and belonging through intentional opportunities for students to connect within and across Schools, Colleges, and programs**

3) **Improve digital resources and navigation with centralized resources and increased accessibility**

4) **Unify onboarding and the experience across the student life cycle**

5) **Allocate or construct a physical space for students to come together and make the built environment more welcoming**

> ** Note: The Elevate the Student Experience Task Force affirms and advocates for a sense of place for the academic experience. A deeply rooted sense of belonging requires common areas of collaboration and connection. We are aware recommendation has been taken up by the Master Planning Committee, which includes significant representation from the task force, so the recommendations below do not expand upon it further. Documents and notes from the task force's stakeholder engagement were provided to that committee to aid them in the process of developing the next Master Plan.*

IV. Final Recommendations

In keeping with these key priorities, the task force's final recommendations are as follows:

Expand and Strengthen Academic and Student Support
to create a holistic educational experience that reduces barriers to academic success

1) Create a centralized Science Learning Center focused on the needs of students in the health professions. Staff resources needed for this center include learning specialists and clinical coaches to help learners navigate their academic and clinical experiences.
2) Expand and improve resources and outreach for student support. Specific examples include mental health and holistic wellness services and career services.
3) Create a testing center for students with testing accommodations.

Build Community and Belonging
through intentional opportunities for students to connect

1) Create annual traditions that encourage cross-campus interactions and foster engagement for all campus constituents (including alumni)
   a. Suggestions included: a campus-wide moniker, mark, or mascot to promote a common identity; structured and accessible volunteer opportunities in Denver and Aurora to help tie students to the community; a coordinated DEI summit for the campus community; increased funding for campus-wide programming; a campus-wide calendar of events; a campus-wide national speaker series (or common read) that would connect the campus community on an annual theme
2) Create an academic entrance to the campus on the south-facing corridor (consistent with the emerging Master Plan) that would include murals and other artwork that represent the contributions of the campus community.

Improve Digital Resources and Navigation
with centralized resources and increased accessibility

1) Improve digital wayfinding for the physical campus.
   a. Consider a mapping tool with GIS layers to help students easily find resources and services (e.g., student services, university offices, dining options, lactation rooms, etc.).
2) Design a centralized digital hub for resources.
3) Design an app, portal, or platform for students to connect with each other and with the alumni community
   a. Include a social networking component (along the lines of Facebook or MeetUp) to foster organic connections, as well as a feature to allow students to easily identify and participate in campus-sponsored student programming.

Unify Onboarding
and the experience across the student lifecycle

1) Create a common all-campus orientation session to provide students from across Schools and Colleges opportunities to connect and to develop a common CU Anschutz identity.
2) Design a series of "wow" experiences from the moment of admission through graduation
   a. "Wow" experiences are moments that excite and energize students about their membership in the campus community and reinforce a sense of student identity
3) Generate connections to alumni and mentors from the very first interactions with the campus
   a. Consider having students help plan and lead the orientation session described above.

V. Measures of Success

	Recommendation	Resources Needed	Key Partners for Implementation	Key Performance Indicators
Expand and Strengthen Academic and Student Support	Create a centralized Science Learning Center focused on the needs of students in the health professions.	Funding for staffing (learning specialists, clinical coaching specialists, etc.) Space for a learning center	Office of Student Affairs ASAL Academic Deans Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion Students	Establishment of a center with dedicated leadership and staffing Increased student satisfaction about the availability and quality of student support Increased number of students accessing services year over year Improved academic outcomes in courses or clinical experiences with high failure rates
	Expand and improve resources and outreach for student support. Specific examples include mental health and holistic wellness services and career services.	Funding for new student resources and services IT support to make resources available to online sources *Assess and compare services currently offered by Schools, Colleges, and programs; identify needs and gaps; identify services that can and should be universally offered to all students*	Student Health Services Office of Student Affairs ASAL Academic Deans Students	Increased student retention Increased use of services, year over year Increased student satisfaction with the quality, accessibility, and convenience of mental health services Increased ability of student to identify available resources
	Create a testing center for students with testing accommodations.	Physical space for a testing center Funding for a testing coordinator and proctors Funding and IT support for new hardware and software	Office of Student Affairs Academic leadership and faculty SOM Assessment, Evaluation, and Outcomes Team	An increased number of accommodated tests proctored over a semester would indicate increased capacity to meet demand Positive student evaluations of testing center experience

Build Community and Belonging	Create annual traditions that encourage cross-campus interactions and foster engagement for all campus constituents (including alumni)	Allocated programming dollars IT support to engage online students in campus-wide events A common set of expectations for and communications from Schools, Colleges, and programs for operationalizing and marketing campus-wide programming New or allocated FTE to oversee and implement traditions and to coordinate among Schools, Colleges, and programs	Advancement Alumni Office Leadership from programs Students Office of Student Affairs Office of Communications	Positive evaluations from students and alumni who participate in these programs/events Participants will indicate on surveys that programs and traditions increased their sense of belonging Increased referrals from Student Outreach and Support and Student and Resident Mental Health to participate in these events
	Create an academic entrance to the campus on the south-facing corridor (consistent with the emerging Master Plan) that would include murals and other artwork that represent the contributions of the campus community.	N/A – to be addressed in Master Plan	N/A – to be addressed in Master Plan	N/A – to be addressed in Master Plan
Improve Digital Resources and Navigation	Improve digital wayfinding for the physical campus	Allocated FTE and/or funding to contract with a vendor to design and maintain this space Improved Wi-Fi infrastructure	OIT Facilities Units that provide onsite resources for students Office of Student Affairs Students	When asked, students can locate places and resources Usage statistics from wayfinding tool

	Design a centralized hub for resources	Allocated FTE for personnel to create and maintain content Full-time communications specialist dedicated to Student Affairs IT support for UX of hub	Providers of resources OIT Point-people for existing tools (e.g., FindHelpNow, YOU@CUAnschutz) Students	When asked, students can identify resources available to them Staff and faculty can identify and provide appropriate referrals
	Design an app, portal, or platform for students to connect with each other and with the alumni community	Dedicated FTE to create, maintain, and generate content for the space Funding for a contract with a vendor for an app or platform (if not home-grown)	Alumni Office Office of Student Affairs Student Affairs Staff at Schools and Colleges Students	Increased participation in campus-sponsored programming and events Usage statistics from the digital space
Unify Onboarding and the Student Experience	Create a common all-campus orientation session to provide students from across Schools and Colleges opportunities to connect and to develop a common CU Anschutz identity	Dedicated FTE to design and run this session during in-person and virtual formats Buy-in from Schools and Colleges	Alumni Office Academic Deans Student Affairs Staff in each School and College Office of Student Affairs Communications Office and/or designated communications specialist within Student Affairs Office of Interprofessional Education Students	Attendance at in-person and virtual sessions increases year over year Positive responses on session evaluations

		Design a series of "wow" experiences from the moment of admission through graduation	Funding for campus-branded items Dedicated FTE to organize the ordering, shipping, and storage of campus-branded items and to conduct Dedicated FTE to design and execute virtual and in-person experiences	Alumni Office Academic Deans Student Affairs Staff in each School and College Office of Student Affairs Communications Office and/or designated communications specialist within Student Affairs	Increased participation at "wow" programming, year over year Positive responses on programming evaluations Increased indications of sense of belonging on Campus Workplace & Climate Survey
		Generate connections to alumni and mentors from the very first interactions with the campus	Release time for current employees to mentor students IT support for virtual participation by students, alumni, and/or mentors Funding for refreshments and mentor appreciation gifts (for in-person and virtual programming)	Alumni Office Academic Deans Student Affairs Staff in each School and College Office of Student Affairs Communications Office and/or designated communications specialist within Student Affairs Students	Increased participation in events and programming, year over year Positive responses on session evaluations

VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

These recommendations will be shared with senior leadership, who will select projects to advance. An implementation team will meet regularly and will serve as an advisory body for the key partners involved in these projects. Smaller project teams will address the specific projects that are chosen.

The recommendations of the Elevating the Student Experience Task Force intersect with other campus-wide initiatives that are geared at increasing community, overall wellness, and a sense of belonging. It is the hope of the Elevating the Student Task Force that these recommendations, once realized, will act in a symbiotic way with the recommendations set forth by the Holistic Hiring, Staff Pathways, and Faculty task forces so that all members of the campus community feel more connected and included.

As our campus continues to expand and attract the best and brightest students from diverse backgrounds, we are committed to investing in their success. With an eye toward diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will make the CU Anschutz Medical Campus a welcoming and accessible destination for a diverse community of students.

VII. Appendices

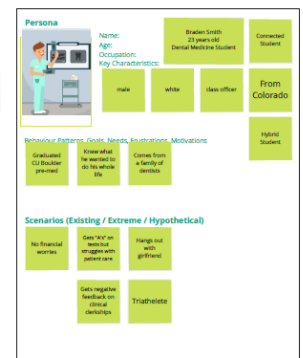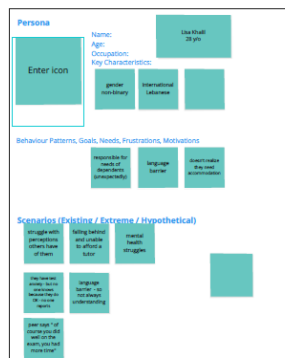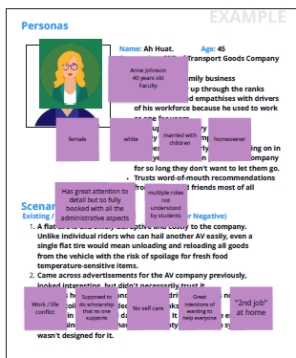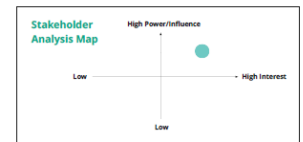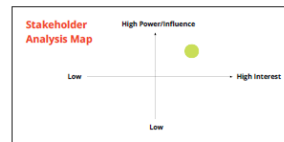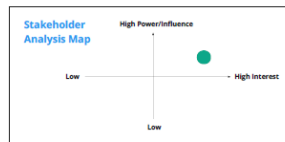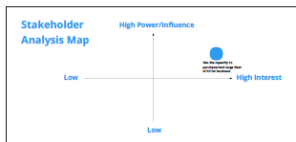## Appendix A: Design Innovation Example: Personas and Scenarios

The figure below shows an example from one of the first phases of the Design Innovation (DI) process, which involves imagining personas and scenarios. Task force members developed personas of fictional students, staff, and faculty with unique characteristics and imagined them in specific scenarios. These personas and scenarios helped to aid in the development of interview questions for stakeholder interviews.

What is a Persona?
A Persona is a fictional depiction of what typical or extreme user is like. It aggregates and maps user behaviour patterns of actual users into archetypal profiles, allowing focused study on the user.

Why Personas?
Personas make key characteristics of user types explicit and aids in bringing a human touch to user research.

What are Scenarios?
Scenarios paint the context of use of a product, service or system, extracting context-specific needs.

Why Scenarios?
Scenarios are used to extract and understand needs that arise specifically to the context of use of the product, service or system (PSS). Users are to react to predetermined scenarios. Reactions are observed to discover latent needs.

Appendix B: Design Innovation Example: Community Engagement

After developing personas and scenarios, task force members designed sample questions for interviews with members of the campus community. The feedback gleaned through these interviews was then used in future sessions to help the task force identify patterns of need and design potential solutions.

Community Engagement

Stakeholder Interviews

Our team conducted dozens of interviews over a two-week time span initially with a range of students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders identified in Session 1.

Sample Questions for Interviews:

Student: **What would you tell new applicants about your experience at CU Anschutz?**

Student: **Do you remember when you were accepted into your program/school/college? How did it feel?**

Student: **Is CU Anschutz supporting you now? How is this happening?**

Faculty: **How do you impact a student's sense of belonging?**

Faculty: **Tell me about a time when a student needed support**

Appendix C: Design Innovation Example: Affinity Analysis

Below is an example of an affinity analysis, one of many methods the task force used to identify patterns and themes across responses in the dozens of interviews and stakeholder engagement sessions that were conducted.

Appendix D: Design Innovation Process Example: Prototypes

Leveraging the input from the community engagement sessions, the task force designed several prototypes for potential solutions to address areas of need. Some examples follow.

Example Prototype 1

Below is an example of a prototype for one of the "wow experiences" that the task force recommended. In this example, the student receives a box soon after admission that contains several items meant to inspire and excite them about becoming part of the CU Anschutz community: their ID badge, a letter from an alumni member and/or mentor, important information about resources, a CU Anschutz T-shirt, and other CU Anschutz-branded items.
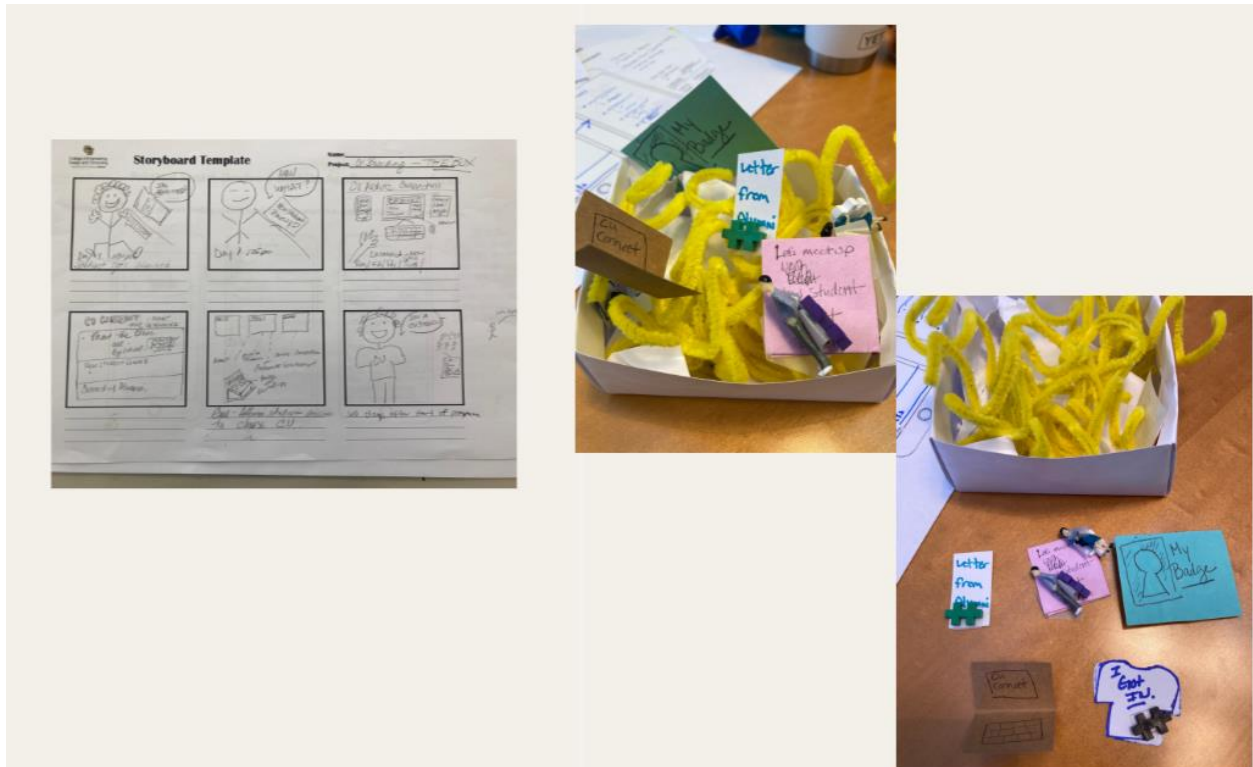
Example Prototype 2

In the prototype below, a student accesses a centralized space for student services that they learn about through a digital app.
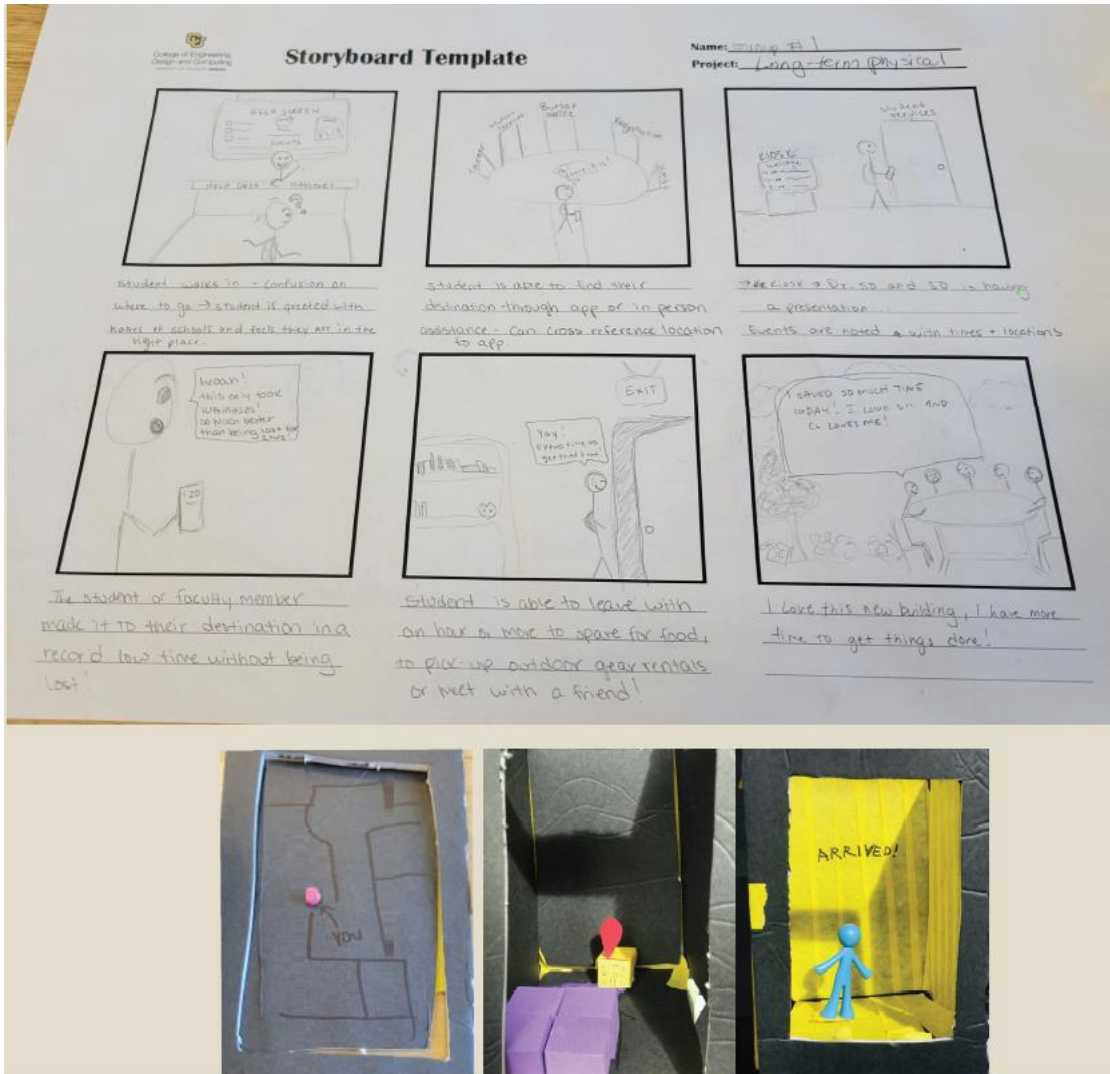
Example Prototype 3

In the prototype above, a student uses a digital phone app to learn about campus events, resources, and programming.
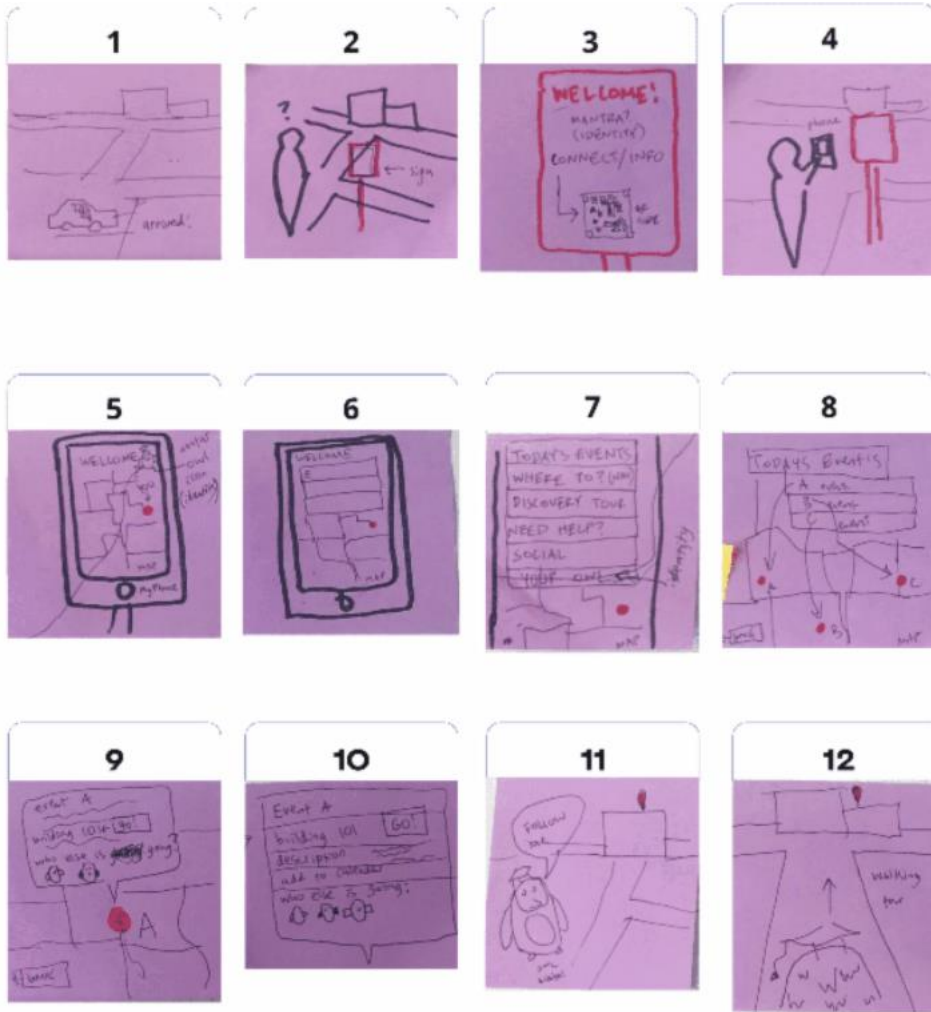
Appendix E: Design Innovation Example: User Testing

Once prototypes were developed, task force members returned to stakeholder groups for input on the solutions they had designed. Below are example comments from this round of stakeholder engagement.

User Testing

ED pillar needs greater focus... that's what is meant by "centering" learning

Things that make students' personal lives better while on campus

Broader Support Services

Digital ED , AR... Digital components should be incorporated

Student autonomy to allow an elective course with other students from diff units, we want you to have wellness and interests with others (protected time)

Experience is disjointed. There is not a blatant intentionality for the student experience

We really need this visual culture/belonging. You are what makes this place work

We need to change the CULTURE (not just enhancing)

Have technology in the classrooms and conference room spaces that could be supported remotely. This means that someone in a central location could see many different spaces one time and could troubleshoot from that place (rather than have many A/V tech people running around campus from space to space).

Prospective students and alumni need to be included

Shift our thinking about the belonging components

DEFINE who we mean by students enrolled in Academic courses

Become a bike and/or scooter friendly campus. Perhaps even have a repair shop for students.

Loved the themes of welcoming, belonging, and a sense of community for those "in person" as well as those "off-campus."

Center for belong: not only IPE but also needs to be a broader, co-curricular space and united co-curricular experience

If we are about interprofessional education, there has to be a feeling that this is important to Anscutz

How do we make belonging blatently intentional

Working with the city on montview to make our entry safe and accessible

Navigating campus / wayfinding

Currently no landmarks, and need more

CU Anschutz should be a place of learning and healing (a place of respite). To achieve this, we could have more community spaces that invite healing. Examples include places where musical instruments are available for students to play. A community garden would be great...perhaps a garden that grows herbs or plants with therapeutic properties that are all legal. Partner with art communities in Aurora to have more art spaces on campus (murals, sidewalks, etc). Value of murals: https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2021/12/06/public-art-cities

"Take care of souls and minds."

We need to recognize that we are a commuter campus with problematic neighborhoods nearby so safety is a concern. Could the app be used for students to connect and ride share together (especially if evening hours)?

Bike/scooter friendly campus (storage for bikes)

Library would be a great interim step for the community hub. Many good spaces already there.