

Northern Arizona University launches a student-centered mobile experience



CASE STUDY

Northern Arizona University

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Founded in 1899, Northern Arizona University (NAU) serves over 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students across the main Flagstaff campus, 20 statewide campus sites, and its online program.

Like all modern universities, NAU recognized a need to create student experiences exclusively for mobile. The mission of its IT Services group is to use technology and services to meet students where they are. “A mobile app is pivotal for student engagement and success and familiarizing students with campus life,” says Patty Allenbaugh, Senior UX/ UI Analyst at NAU.

Over the years, NAU launched mobile apps but wasn’t meeting the needs of its students. The platform used to launch its apps had gotten stale, and the IT group found it challenging to maintain multiple uncoupled systems to enable a mobile view of PeopleSoft. “We were using limited functionality but spending lots of time and money to keep everything updated and in sync,” says Chris Graver, Manager, Applications Programming for NAU.

Seeing the need for an enhanced mobile campus app that was easier to manage, the school’s CIO and leadership charged the IT Services team with finding a new solution.

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Marc Lord, Director of Enterprise Information Services
Northern Arizona University

Enabling an app for students by students

An RFP committee of stakeholders from across campus reviewed five mobile app platforms, including Modo Campus. According to Marc Lord, Director of Enterprise Information Services at NAU, the Modo platform stood out due to its ease of implementation and customization, numerous pre-configured modules, and ability to build a single app experience for multiple personas and apps.

After the selection, a mobile app team headed by Allenbaugh met with student groups to solicit their input and participation in designing the app. As Allenbaugh says, “Student developers and designers are the heart of our team – providing us with guidance and instant feedback. In fact, we make it clear the app is ‘built for students – by students.’ ”

The first mobile app using the Modo platform went live in 12 weeks. Originally designed to serve current students, the NAUgo app now includes distinct experiences for Flagstaff campus students, statewide and online students, and faculty/ staff. It also has a guest experience for visitors to the Flagstaff campus, pointing them to parking, events, and other relevant information. A temporary persona helps orient new students to campus.

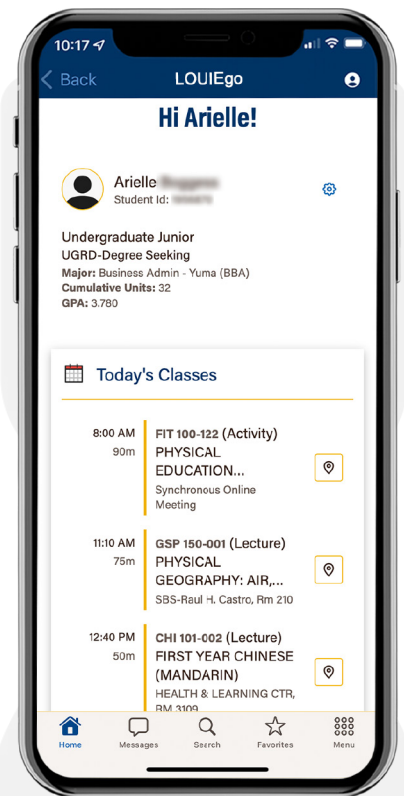
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Harnessing XModule and Modo Communicate

NAU took advantage of XModule for Modo Campus and Modo Communicate Premium to deliver a student-centered app. Both features enabled NAU to provide the personalized experience students were craving.

Previously, students took screenshots of information in PeopleSoft and saved them on their phones. Now, within the NAUgo app, students can see their class schedules, whether for in-person or online classes. They can also review their financial and graduation status and any issues preventing them from registering for classes or graduating. The app makes accessing past grades – even decades back – and instructor, advisor, and mentor contact information easy. With a click on a name, an email client opens for easy communication.

App users can get information and news via several general and opt-in channels for events, freshmen, transfers, and parents. “Parents love that they can subscribe to a channel-specific to them to stay abreast of what’s happening on campus,” explains Allenbaugh.



Replacing and improving portal access

LOUIEgo is how students authenticate into PeopleSoft via the mobile app. Students could log in to a previously launched portal to see courses and other information on a desktop, but the experience needed improvement. Leveraging Modo's support for web portals, NAU simplified the desktop experience by delivering information and links tailored to each user.

Students benefit from self-service access to academic, financial, and personal information, including the ability to request unofficial transcripts and add/drop courses. It's also easy for users to seamlessly transition to other app tools from LOUIEgo.

"LOUIEgo replaced the student version of our previous portal, greatly simplifying the experience for them," says Allenbaugh.

Enabling students with digital IDs

More recently, NAU's ID card office approached Allenbaugh's team for help launching digital student IDs. "We already had the infrastructure in place for door readers and ID cards, and a digital version would provide the added benefit of better security for transactions and the ability to track and disable IDs if they were lost or stolen," she explains.

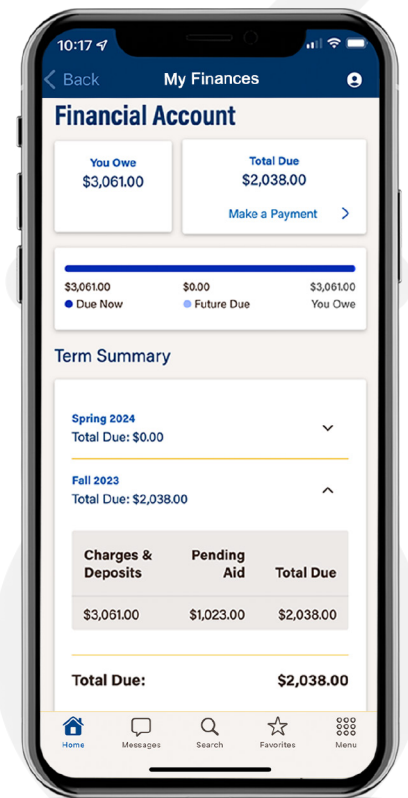
Calling upon this existing infrastructure, Allenbaugh's team launched a Digital JacksCard for iOS, allowing students to store their JacksCard ID right in their Apple Wallet. Working closely with TouchNet, Apple, and Modo, NAU started with a pilot in March 2021 and went live with the Digital JacksCard in August 2021.

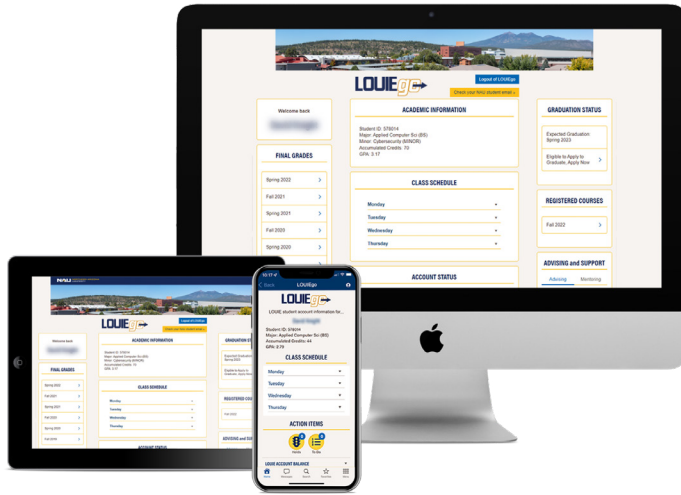
"Modo was an amazing partner, working closely with us throughout the project and providing needed integrations for a seamless transition from NAUgo through OneCard technology to Apple Wallet. We plan to roll it out to staff and faculty soon and launch an Android version in 2022," Allenbaugh explains.

Continually evolving the app

Every month, the app steering committee, comprising representatives from Student Affairs, Marketing, Advising, and Accessibility, meets to evaluate student needs. Working cross-departmentally helps ensure the school captures every opportunity to engage students and keep them informed. Allenbaugh explains, "All these points of view help us make great decisions about content and the app's trajectory."

Using built-in Modo analytics, NAU tracks and presents the committee with app adoption and usage metrics, helping inform changes.





NAU also runs frequent student surveys using the Quick Poll feature provided by Modo. Most recently, it surveyed 1,000 students about their Digital JacksCard and learned that 90% are having a good to excellent experience.

Feedback resulted in adding featured items at the top of the app's home screen that show the latest events or information, such as about Homecoming, Pride Month, Black History Month, and Native American Month. "We set a schedule for when these will appear on the app, and it helps raise awareness and engage students," Allenbaugh says.

Another addition has been a persona for prospective students, giving them a feel for what it's like to attend the Flagstaff-based school. Potential students can see top reasons to choose NAU, testimonials from NAU students, information about living in Flagstaff, and a virtual view of campus life.

Planning for future experiences

Going forward, NAU is exploring how to enable business processes via the app, such as paying a bill or accepting financial aid. It is also looking at options for personalizing communications via the app outside of opt-in channels. "We want to send tailored messages to users and groups and continue providing them with information they can't get from the NAU website," shared Allenbaugh. "At the same time, we want to take further advantage of opportunities with XModule to grow LOUIEgo usage within NAUgo. By using the app and website as complements and taking advantage of the seamless transition between the two enabled by Modo, we enhance the experience of both."

Visit modolabs.com/modo-campus-app/ to learn more about the Modo Campus platform.



AWS services used:

AWS EC2, AWS Lambda, AWS Simple Storage Service (S3), AWS Well-Architected

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