# MicroPrompts

Mihika Iyer, iyer.mi@northeastern.edu

Alyse Courtney, courtney.al@northeastern.edu

Adam Mayyalou, mayyalou.a@northeastern.edu

TeamRepository

Figma Prototype:
https://www.figma.com/community/file/1573211945181699432

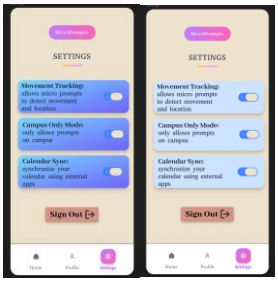
## Part 1: Problem Evaluation

#1: Consistency of Coloring

(Severity – Cosmetic)

The coloring of a number of different elements on our interface was somewhat inconsistent, such as gradients clashing with saturated colors.

Changes: Altered elements of our interface to have a consistent saturated color scheme.

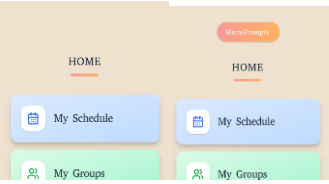



#2: Title at the top of the interface

(Severity – Moderate)

For a majority of the interface, there is a pill-shaped element that conveys the title of the interface or the name of the task being performed. This inconsistency can sometimes confuse players, with the pill-shpaped label sometimes not being there at all.

Changes: Remove the label at the top of each page unless it is useful to covey purpose (primarily remove the MicroPrompts label).

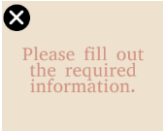



#3: Signing up without filling out all necessary information

(Severity – Moderate)

When the user attempts to sign in without filling in any information, an error message prevents them from doing so. However, the same thing does not occur when the user attempts to sign up without filling in any information.

Changes: Made it so this same error message prevents the user from signing up without any information.

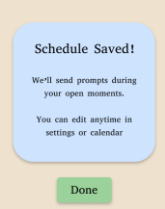



#4: Confirmation when performing certain actions

(Severity – Moderate)

When performing actions, such as creating an account, saving a schedule, or creating a group, there is no confirmation for the user that such an action succeeded.

Changes: Adding a confirmation pop-up for each of these actions.




## Part 2: Final Report

Our final project report is reflective, covering all semester's project activities, including the following:

### The Problem

**The core issue that TogetherLabs aims to combat is the widespread loneliness and social isolation that college students experience, even when they're constantly surrounded by peers**

**on campus. Students often find themselves in the same shared spaces (e.g., dining halls, libraries, study spaces/common areas) yet struggle to break the first couple of social barriers and actually talk to one another. This disconnect can happen for many different reasons, such as social anxiety, introversion, not knowing how to start a conversation, cultural differences, or simply staying glued to phones, laptops, and headphones that create invisible barriers between people. Students are literally surrounded by potential friends and study partners, yet they feel isolated and disconnected. This loneliness doesn't just feel bad in the moment, it can also seriously impact mental health, academic performance, and overall college experience. By making it easier and less awkward to initiate conversations, MicroPrompts turns everyday campus encounters into genuine opportunities for connection, through timely, low-pressure conversation starters during those natural idle moments in shared spaces.**

**Design**

The unique way that our interface is designed to assist our primary stakeholders is through the delivery of discrete, low-pressure nudges that facilitate social interaction. We also designed our interface to prevent its design from becoming as addictive as possible. We arrived at the first core insight due to how many students struggle to facilitate social interaction with their peers. Whether this is due to them struggling in the situation, or external factors. The reason we agreed on a non-addictive design is because of the fact that our interface is designed to truly help its users, and we do not wish for them to become dependent on the platform. It is the main reason the platform lacks a reward mechanism.

**Design – Continued**

Several different design decisions that were made over the course of the project were influenced by our user testing. Most commonly, simple interface navigation—such as missing back buttons or UI prompts—were added after being called into attention. This also included confirmations to prevent users from being confused when performing actions and error messages that were not included in where they should have been. One of the major changes that we made thanks to testing and TA feedback was ensuring that the interface color scheme was far more consistent. The choice behind our interface design was to help make it seem welcoming and positive to new users with its different colors, and we wanted to ensure that the coloring stayed to the saturated tone that we started with.

**Status**

While the reflection feature was added into the interface to help give the user intrinsic motivation (via the reflection streak, a numeric progress indicator) and reflector, we still want to add some kind of reward mechanism that could further motivate users to continue using our interface. This was not something we were able to easily design a solution to, partially thanks to us firmly wanting our interface to not become addictive in any way. Another usability problem

that we did not resolve in our final design was the structure of our main home screen. While we did not initially see the issue in its design, the two different home screens for the main features of the interface and nudge home screen could cause confusion in users. Thinking back on this now, it may be more efficient for the home screen to focus on the nudge features (as that is the main element of our interface) and have the schedule and groups tasks be deligated to the bottom of the screen like the profile and settings buttons.

**Evaluation**

To evaluate the interface, we would conduct a 6-8 week experiment with 50 Northeastern students. Participants would complete loneliness assessments before, during, and after the experiment, maintain daily logs of social interactions, and attend weekly 5-10 minute check-ins for qualitative feedback. App-engagement metrics would track usage patterns quantitatively. At the end, 30-minute exit interviews would explore participants' overall experience, behavioral changes, and suggestions for improvement. This approach would provide usability metrics, including loneliness score changes, interaction quality ratings, feature engagement rates, and prompt helpfulness rankings, giving us a foundation for user-centered design improvements.

**Reflection**

Overall, our group was satisfied with our work this semester. However, if starting over, we would first reconsider our anti-addictive design goals. Creating an app that users eventually stop using is challenging, so we'd either fully commit to a "graduation" feature that reduces prompts over time or adapt the design for sustainable long-term use. Second, we would conduct more paper prototype testing. Moving too quickly to high-fidelity prototypes made it harder to get feedback on fundamental flow and functionality versus cosmetic details. Lastly, we would draw more UI inspiration from existing successful apps to balance our colorful, welcoming interface with less distracting design choices. As this is most of our first time having to consider heuristic decisions in a computer science project, it would be helpful to take inspiration from apps that have certainly undergone many rounds of development and heuristic evaluation.

We believe our design meets a true need. User research validated that people struggle with forming in-person connections. While using an app to reduce app dependence presents challenges, our solution could serve as a temporary bridge, helping users build confidence and habits for independent social connections.