From my experience during this project, many of us were key to a successful product. All our roles were essential. The Product Owner kept us going with her vision of the end product and kept us in communication with the Stakeholders so we could pivot to prioritizing detox/wellness destinations easily. The Testers were able to keep the development stable and were able to make plans to keep the developers on track. I, The Scrum Master, was able to keep development smooth by providing what the development team needed, like when I was able to set up blinds to help the development team keep glare from their screens. Finally, the development team were able to pivot, successfully, to the detox/wellness focus.

We used the user stories to give us a defined guideline of what the users and Stakeholders wanted to see in the product we were creating. Without them, we wouldn’t know what the users wanted or needed. It also allows us to create guidelines that we set to define a completeness. This is especially apparent when using examples such as one from the SNHU Travel project “As an end user I want to filter and sort destinations so that I can find destinations more relevant to my interests”. We use that user story as a guideline to create a feature that the users want.

When interrupted with the change to focusing on detox/wellness destinations, the change was sudden but completed smoothly. Some user stories were deprioritized, and others changed to match the new specifications, but with the Agile approach, this was all easily available to do.

Communication is also important but can be easy. Email is a perfect example of how quick and effortless communication can be. From an email from a Developer to the Product Owner, he writes: “I see that we’re shifting our focus over to Detox/Wellness destinations in our SNHU Travel project” and “Are we focusing entirely on Wellness/Detox destinations or are we just putting them at the forefront temporarily?”. A focused email that quickly asks for pertinent information necessary at that moment to be able to clarify how much the focus is being shifted for the whole project.

The whiteboard we set up to track user stories was incredibly effective. It allowed us to simultaneously keep track of which user stories were the most important to work on while also tracking which were done and which were being worked on that day. This was particularly useful during the daily stand-ups where we would gather around the whiteboard and communicate our plans for the day regarding the user stories that were presented on the whiteboard.

There have been many pros and cons for whether Scrum and Agile was the correct approach for the SNHU Travel project. One of the main pros is the ability to pivot the direction of the project at any time, as stated above with the detox/wellness prioritization. Without Agile we would not have been able to pivot like this at all, or if we did it would have been incredibly difficult and would have wiped hours of work. Another major pro is the ability to have retrospectives after each Scrum session, both to improve ourselves and to improve the product. Being able to have this lookback on the progress we made frequently allows growth and gives us feedback from the Stakeholders so we can improve further sprints.

However, there were cons to consider with this approach. While we were able to smoothly transition our priorities to detox/wellness, it still was messy and cost us some time and confusion in the process. Agile also appears slower as more meetings and retrospectives are necessary to the process, as opposed to Waterfall’s linear process. Where Waterfall can be good for smaller projects, this was a larger one not suitable for it.

Agile should be a perfect approach to these larger projects, as Agile is perfect for something of the caliber of SNHU Travel. With a project of this size, and the amount of communication necessary, as shown with the detox/wellness pivot, Agile is exactly what is needed for SNHU Travel. At any time, we can pivot our priorities to whichever niche needed. We can keep track of what features need to be implemented, who is working on which feature, and which have been completed at that moment in time. We have open communication between the team and can get feedback from the Stakeholders on a regular basis. We can add extra features to the queue and even reprioritize certain features should they be important. Finally, we can test for and fix bugs and problems in the middle of development instead of waiting at the end for quality assurance to find them for us.

Without Agile, a linear Waterfall process is inevitable and causes too many problems towards the end of the project and will cause delays. Only if we’re very lucky and thorough during development will this be less of an issue, but still may crop up anyway. This is why Agile is superior for a project of this size and importance.