Project 3 Designing for Community

Grace and Cuiling

Summary

This design aims to facilitate connections among Mount Holyoke students. It became hard to build new connections with people after the first two weeks of the new semester. Most of the students still want to do so, but lack opportunities. Some of them simply want some accompany in doing things together. The current design cares about the needs of students and provides enough flexibility for them to meet people who match themselves. Using Mount Holyoke's representative color blue, we want to build the community with comfort.

Part 1 Finding the right problem

The interview is semi-structured. Our target audience is current MHC students. We ask random follow-up questions to understand the interviewee's views better and get more detailed information.

<u>Here are some potential questions we would like to ask in each interview:</u>

1. Collecting Demographics
    a. Name
    b. Class year
    c. Major
2. What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?
    a. Shared hobbies? Shared major? Shared background? Random people?
3. How often do you make new friends?
4. How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?
5. Do you want to establish connections with new people?
    a. YES: Do you find it easy to do so?
        i. What are some of the features/ways that work well?
        ii. Are there any inconveniences or barriers?
        iii. What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of features/characteristics do you want them to have?
    b. NO
        i. What's the reason for that?
6. What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?
7. What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?
8. If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?

<u>Interviewee 1</u>

Basic information: Xi, class of 2024, Psychology major

1) What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?
   Similar personalities, same courses, etc.
2) How often do you make new friends?

2 friends every semester on average

3) How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?

Most of her friends are students who take the same course with her (maybe doing group projects together), or who work in the same lab with her.

4) Do you want to establish connections with new people?
    a) YES: Do you find it easy to do so?

        No

        i) What are some of the features/ways that work well?

        Same class

        ii) Are there any inconveniences or barriers?

        She's willing to make new friends, but because she is an introvert, she won't try to start a conversation with new people actively.

        iii) What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of features/characteristics do you want them to have?

        She wants to be friends with people who have similar interests and are easy to get along with.

5) What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?

In person.

6) What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?

She thinks having a phone app might be the easiest way to connect people on campus.

7) If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?

Yes.

<u>Interviewee 2</u>

Basic Information: CL; Class of 2025; Computer Science Major

1) What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?

Most of her current friends have the characteristics of being a caring person. A lot of them major in STEM major, which is the same field as her. They have diverse backgrounds and it is hard to think about more common/shared characteristics.

2) How often do you make new friends?

Randomly.

3) How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?

She meets friends who share common interests in clubs.

A lot of her friends she met were during her freshman year. There are some random first-year gatherings in the dining hall, so she just joined, ate, and chatted. Some of those people were her friends' friends and she knew more people.

4) Do you want to establish connections with new people?

YES

    a. Do you find it easy to do so?

It is not easy to do so as a junior → people want to hang out with those in their class year; most of her friends are people she met in her first year.
People tend to stay in their comfort zone (friend group) and the connections stabilize and it is hard to connect with new people.
If you have a similar major or take the same class, then you can have common topics. If not, it will be hard to have topics to talk about.

i) What are some of the features/ways that work well?
Willingness to talk/share ideas through events
If people have common interests, it will be easier to make friends.
When having some basic information/shared background (like similar food, having the same hometown)

ii) Are there any inconveniences or barriers?
Some groups are hard to blend in because they have small friend groups and they will be more connected and unconsciously reject new people to get into the group.

iii) What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of features/characteristics do you want them to have?
Those people who have a passion or are good at one area. Generally, people who love life and want to progress and be better.
Optimistic, ambitious, emotionally stable
Most importantly: Share the same values

5) What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?

In person. Maybe using data to pair up some people who are more similar to her. Don't want to make friends on purpose.

6) What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?

Social name card - some basic info, whether they want to make friends or not

7) If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?

Good idea

<u>Interviewee 3</u>

Basic Information: Cindy, Class of 2027; Biology Major

1) What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?

same personalities; same hobby-dancing; same classes

2) How often do you make new friends?

Always, attracted by their appearance and personality, vibe

3) How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?

Directly approach and add social media; eat or hang out

4) Do you want to establish connections with new people?

YES: Do you find it easy to do so?
No.

i. What are some of the features/ways that you think work well?
Club-same hobbies; classes
ii. Are there any inconveniences or barriers?
introverted people → hard to communicate ; different culture, difficulty in small talks; language barriers
iii. What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of features/characteristics do you want them to have?
Pretty, friendly, have shared hobbies

5) What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?

In-person; data pair-up
Personality matters more, hobbies don't matter that much

8) What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?

an account that can help match those who are suitable
Improve Fizz(?)

9) If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?

No, because she prefers in-person communication. If the app is just an indication of communication and they can mainly communicate in person, she would use that.

<u>Interviewee 4</u>
Basic information: Amanda, Class of 2024, Psychology Major

1. What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?

Share the same values, and similar personalities - kind, trusting, energetic to the world, supportive, caring
Similar cultural background and socioeconomic status
Similar hobbies/activities - sports & music, small talk, photography, enjoying the nature

2. How often do you make new friends?

Meet most of my friends during her first semester in her sophomore year (the first year on campus).
In-person contact and daily life involvement are the keys to making friends for her.
Not too often now.

3. How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?

It's kind of a vibe. Same class, club, or dorm to meet with them. Friends' friends. She is willing to make friends with some friends of her friends with high credentials.

4. Do you want to establish connections with new people?

Yes.
Do you find it easy to do so?
It is easy to meet new people, but it is hard to be friends as it takes a lot of time to know each other. She has high standards of making friends.
She doesn't have any problems meeting new people.
Barriers: time commitment, social relationship with others
5. What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?

In-person.
6. What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?
Tags for people, like hobbies, topics that prefer to talk about, MBTI, what they want to do
7. If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?
She doesn't need this kind of platform, but it is a good idea!

<u>Interviewee 5</u>
Basic information: YY, class of 2024, Environmental studies

1) What are the characteristics of your current friends or people that you know?
   Similar personalities, the same courses, the same clubs, etc.
2) How often do you make new friends?
   3-4 months
3) How do you make friends on campus? What's your experience of making friends on campus?
   Most of her friends are students who take the same course with her (maybe doing group projects together), or club events.
4) Do you want to establish connections with new people?
   a) YES:
      i) What are some of the features/ways that work well?
         Similar interests
      ii) Are there any inconveniences or barriers?
         Almost no
      iii) What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of features/characteristics do you want them to have?
         Would like to spend time with friends
5) What's your ideal way of making friends? In-person? Online? Randomly exploring? Using data to pair up?
   In-person/randomly exploring. She seldom tries making friends online because she thinks it is hard to make friends without real conversation.
6) What do you think can be created or improved for people to make connections or build friendships on campus if they want to do so?
   Have more in-person activities.
7) If there is a platform or an app to help you make friends, would you like to use it?
   Yes.

Problem Statement

From the previous interviews, we can see that people prefer to make friends in person rather than simply online. However, people tend to stay in their comfort zone and stick to certain friends although they intend to establish new connections. So, it is hard to see whether a person wants to build connections with others and prevents them from establishing new connections or making new friends. Some people don't necessarily need to make new friends, but they still hold the perspective that finding

someone with the same interests or needs, such as having a buddy to study together or do sports, can be a great option to build the community tighter.

Persona 1

Name: Lucy
Demographics: a Mount Holyoke student
Goal: Meet new people and try to make different friends (not from the same courses, labs, group projects)
Challenge/Frustration:

(1) Introvert, so hard to start a conversation with new people in person.
(2) Don’t know people’s interests.
(3) Don't know whether they can find some topics to talk about.
(4) Don’t know whether others would like to meet new people.

Persona 2

Name: Emily
Demographics: a Mount Holyoke student
Goal: I already have enough friends, but I want to have some buddies to do things that I enjoy together at certain times.
Challenge/Frustration:

(1) My friends’ schedules don’t fit mine, and I am alone to do those things that I enjoy.
(2) Don’t know people’s interests.
(3) Don’t know where to find people with similar interests.
(4) Don’t know whether people are willing to hang out together.

Part 2 Picking a tool to fit the problem

1) Matching member info page (name, class year, pronoun, major, interests/hobbies)

When people sign up, they are asked to provide some personal information. Based on that information, the system automatically recommends some students to users. For example, if people have the same interests, the system will recommend them to one another. Student A can take a look at Student B's profile, and if Student A would like to chat with Student B, Student A can swipe right/click on request chatting. But if Student A doesn’t want to connect with Student B, they can swipe left to see the next recommended person.

2) Forum

People who want to have someone to hang out with can post their needs in the forum. For example, “Who wants to play badminton this Saturday?” or “Anyone interested in learning to dance together?” The users can also try using keywords in the search bar to find specific posts. The posts are ordered from the latest to the oldest.

3) Post in-person events

People can post some community events (self-hosted events, school-hosted events, community-hosted events).

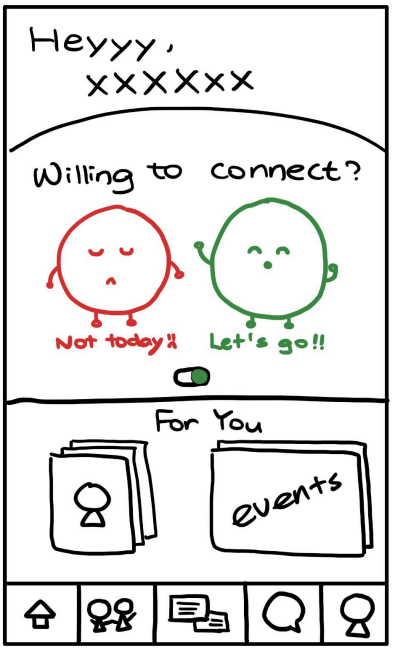
4) An indication of whether people want to make friends

It can be an on-off switch button for people to indicate whether they are willing to socialize. If they do, they turn it on; if not, they turn it off. Then, other people can know their state and won't bother if they don't want to connect. It will be introverted people friendly as other people know what they are thinking about and may open conversations.

5) Study zone (course/major)

As lots of people build connections by taking the same course, people can organize study zones for their courses, or more broadly study zones for the same major, to study and ask questions to each other.

Part 3 Visual Design

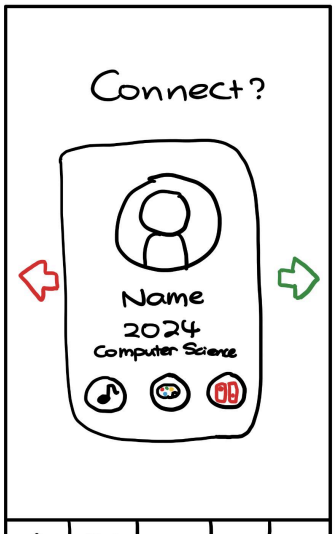


Homepage

We want the user to take the initiative of blending into the community so that they can feel free to step in and step out. As a result, having a warm welcome message directly to the user is the primary step. Then, the majority of the page is for the user to select whether they want to connect with others. If they want, then the mascot on the right will turn green with the button turning green. If they want to keep some distance from others sometimes, they can turn the button off, which is grey, and the mascot on the left will turn red. When the user does not choose anything, the two mascots are grey and will only light up when the user chooses the corresponding option. Following the selecting option, there are some recommendations generated by the information provided by the user about some matching people on campus and some recommendations for in-person bonding events.

At the bottom, there is a navigation bar that can direct users to different pages, which will appear on each of these pages. The house represents the homepage. Two people holding hands represent the matching page. The third one represents the forum. The chat bubble represents the chat page. The last one represents the user's profile page.

Matching Page



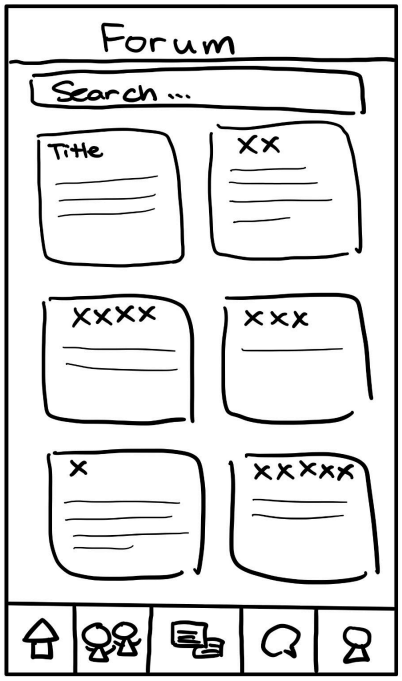
On this page, users can see other people's information automatically recommended by the system based on their personal information (interests/majors/class year, etc.) that users saved in their profiles. For the profile card shown, it will show their profile image, their name, their class year, their major, and some icons representing their interests. The users can tap on the profile card to check for more specific information.

For the connecting process, they can touch the green arrow and red arrow to connect or disconnect. They can also simply swipe right or left to

do so. The right side represents connect; the left side represents disconnect. When both of these people choose to connect, a notification will pop up on the chat page and they can establish connections. The navigation bar is at the bottom.

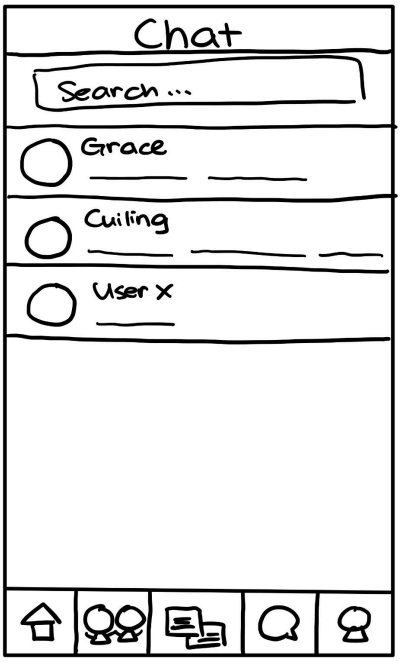
<u>Forum Page</u>

The forum page is used to post forums. The forums are shown with the latest on top by default. There is a search bar at the top of the page so that the users can search keywords to find specific forums. Each post contains a bolded title and some specific texts. The navigation bar is at the bottom.



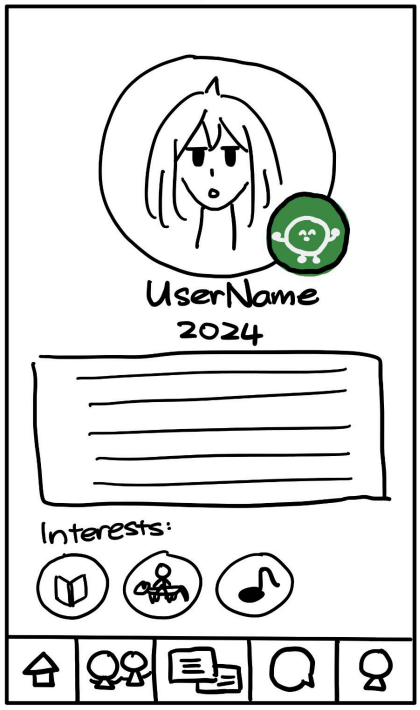
<u>Chat Page</u>

On the chat page, there is a search bar that the user can directly use to find the person or some keywords they talked about. The main components are the chat channels listed with the latest on top. For each channel, it shows the profile photo of the other person with their name and the latest message. The bottom is the navigation bar.



<u>Profile Page</u>

On the profile page, it shows the user's profile image with a green icon or a red icon showcasing their willingness to connect at the right corner. There is specific information about the user below. Their interests are shown by icons and they can add their self-designed icons to the system. The navigation bar is at the bottom.

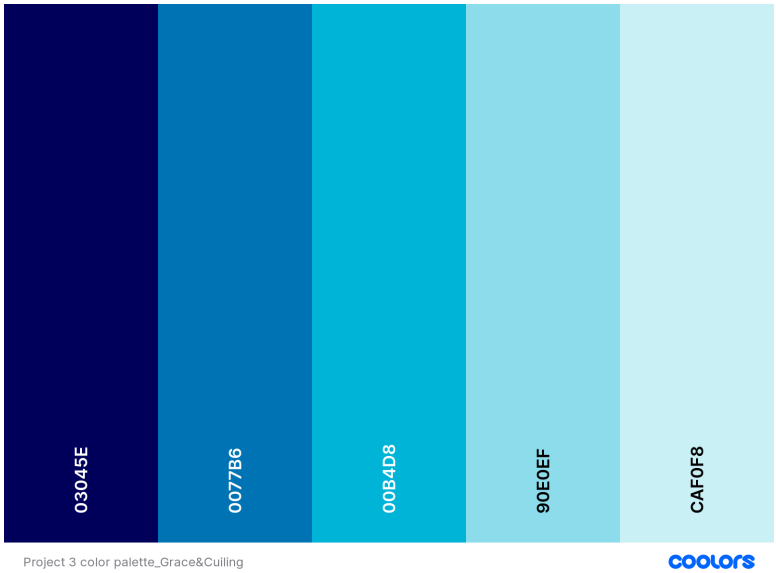


Part 4 Building our Prototype

<u>Color</u>

We chose Blue as the main color of the app. This app is designed for MHC students to build connections or friendships, and MHC's logo is blue, so we decided to use Blue as the primary color. The brightest blue

conveys a sense of comfort, and we want students to feel comfortable when they are using this app, so we set the brightest blue as the background on every page. For the menu bar, we used a comparatively less bright blue. We wanted to distinguish a separate block from the information area in the middle. To keep color consistency but emphasize the menu bar at the bottom, we used a blue with higher saturation. For other little blocks or buttons in the middle of each page, we chose a blue with saturation between the lightest blue (background color) and higher saturation blue (menu bar color)



Fonts

Baloo Bhaijaan

For You

Iceland

PEOPLE

Baloo Bhai2

Name

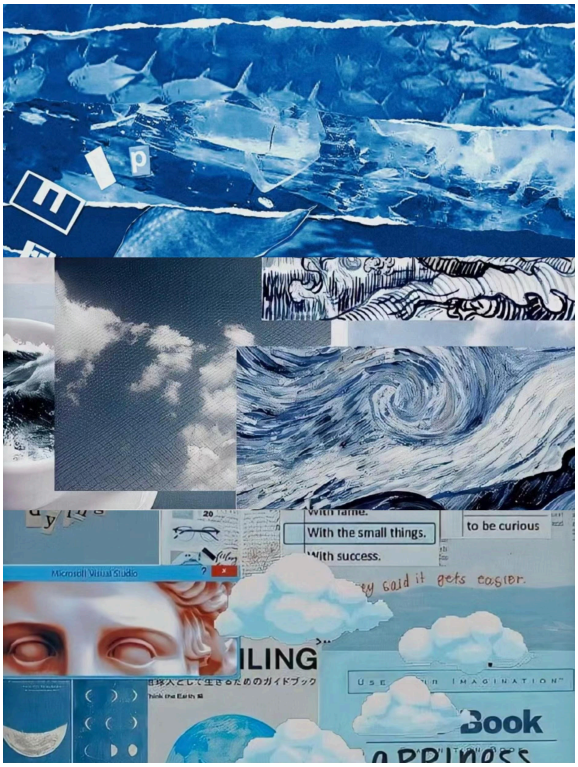
Class year

ABeeZee

Search

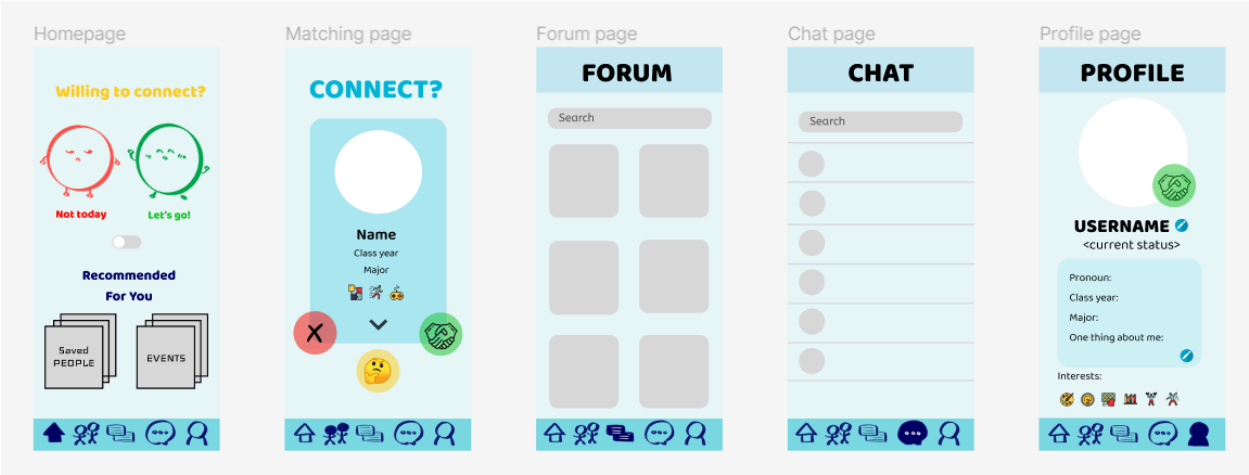
Mood Board

We create an overall calm and comfortable design for the application. We want the users to feel that they have all the flexibility to choose what they feel most comfortable with.



OUR FINAL PROTOTYPE

https://www.figma.com/proto/b2fk4DPzcFQBvIRseSv98r/Project-3_Cuiling-%26-Grace?type=design&node-id=5-2&t=vYThxVry0kElAZlz-1&scaling=scale-down&page-id=0%3A1&starting-point-node-id=5%3A2&mode=design



Homepage

We mainly stick to our visual design sketches. We deleted the greeting part because it looks a bit messy after adding the colors. The primary purpose of designing this page the way it is to reassure users that their needs are the priority of the application, and we aim to furnish them with as much helpful information as we can.

Matching page

On this page, we added a “maybe” button (the emoji of thinking), in addition to “Yes” and “No” (what we’ve already had in sketches, below the student profile. Since we considered that it’s possible that when users see a student’s profile, they are not sure this is someone they want to connect with. Maybe they have the same class year and major but not the same interests. The users want to find somebody who has the same interests to talk with, but they might be willing to talk about internships/research/grad schools with someone who has the same class year and major as them. In this case, they can click on the “maybe” button, then we will save this student’s profile so that they can go back to connect with the student later. For uniformity and aesthetics, the green and red arrows are replaced by the green and red buttons at the bottom.

When users click on the arrow at the bottom of the student’s profile, they will be redirected to a page where they can view the full information about the student.

Forum page and Chat page

We stick to our initial sketches.

User page

Since the system asks users to enter some personal information when they sign up (name, pronoun, class year, major, and interests), all that information is saved and will show up on the user page. We provide

“edit” buttons (the pencil button), so whenever users want to update any information, they can click on the button and revise the information. They are also encouraged to add additional information which allows others to know more about them. For example, they can share one fun fact about themselves, or share a recent favorite song/movie, etc.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength is the flexibility of choosing the status. People can choose to block connecting to other people when they don’t want to do so at certain moments and reopen it if they want at any time. They will not be disturbed when they choose no for their willingness to connect. However, as we need to keep track of their status, all users need to sign in which may block some users from using. Possible improvements can be cooperating with OneCard which is accessible for students all the time and they could simply use their student ID to sign in. There are also more aspects to think through, such as the specific way and rules for connection.

During the feedback session in class, the color scheme seems to create a great sense of belonging and the design elements are clear and understandable for everyone.

Conclusion

The existing design prioritizes the needs of Mount Holyoke students and aims to offer a platform for students to establish connections with individuals they feel at ease meeting. For people who would like to make new friends/meet new people, we provide a “connect”, so that they can see the information of other people (recommended by the system). For people who only want to find someone to do something with them, they can simply make a post.