

IlliniExchange: A UIUC-Exclusive Marketplace

Aryan Taneja (aryant2) Madhav Kanda (madhav3) Rahul Sethi (rahuls14)

Team Name

IlliniExchange

Team Members (Names and NetIDs)

Aryan Taneja (aryant2), Madhav Kanda (madhav3), Rahul Sethi (rahuls14)

Problem Statement & Motivation

UIUC students and staff frequently need to buy, sell, or give away personal items such as textbooks, furniture, electronics, clothing, or subleases. These exchanges occur year-round and are often urgent, whether moving into a new apartment, replacing gear, or simply decluttering. However, current platforms like Facebook Marketplace or Reddit lack student-only access, exposing users to spam, scams, and unreliable communication. We have personally experienced this problem of getting to know about buy or sell items over Slack, WhatsApp much later and regretting not knowing about it.

Illini Exchange aims to provide a secure, staff+student-exclusive platform for item exchanges within the UIUC community. With verified NetID-based authentication, built-in messaging, moderation tools, and localized filters, the platform enables safe and efficient peer-to-peer commerce focused on trust, usability, and speed.

User problems we are solving

- **Trust and safety:** No student-only verification leads to spam/scams and low accountability.
- **Poor discoverability:** Unstructured posts and limited filters hinder targeted, local search.
- **Friction in posting:** Existing flows are slow and non-responsive on mobile.
- **Uncoordinated meetups:** Lack of standardized, safe pickup locations on campus.

Basic interactions our app will support in service of goal

- **Authentication (NetID SSO):** OAuth via UIUC to ensure student/staff-only access.
- **Create & manage listings:** Title, photos, category, condition, price, campus zone; edit/close listing.
- **Search, browse, filter:** Category, keywords, price range, distance/campus landmark, availability.
- **In-app contact:** Anonymized contact between buyer/seller to reduce spam.
- **Saved searches & alerts:** Favorites, watchlists, and notifications for new matches.
- **Safe exchange points:** Choose verified campus pickup spots (e.g., Illini Union)

Potential Implementation:

- **Frontend:** React + TypeScript, Tailwind CSS (responsive, mobile-first, accessible).
- **JavaScript Backend:** Node.js exposing a **RESTful API** for auth, listings, search, chat, moderation.
- **Database:** mySQL or PostgreSQL
- **Auth:** NetID SSO or Google Auth for UIUC

Other apps that are similar

- **Facebook Marketplace:** Broad reach but no student verification; high noise and scams.
- **Reddit (r/UIUC), Slack, WhatsApp Groups:** Useful communities, but threads are unstructured and not designed for transactions.
- **Craigslist:** Minimal accountability; dated UX; not student-centric.

How our app is different

- **UIUC-only, verified:** NetID-gated access fosters trust and accountability.
- **Campus-aware UX:** Filters for dorms/landmarks, safe pickup presets, and local-first ranking.
- **Low-friction flows:** One-minute listing with smart defaults and responsive UI.
- **Safety & moderation:** Content flagging, lightweight reputation, and clear conduct policies.
- **Design-first process:** Planned heuristic evaluation and revision to ensure clarity, consistency, and accessibility.