Brainstorming Session Notes

Idea 1: Digital Diary and Campus Navigator for First-Year Students (Chosen Idea)

- **User Group:** First-year McMaster University students.
- **Possible User Problems:**
  - Difficulty adjusting to university life and managing time effectively.
  - Getting lost or having trouble navigating the campus.
  - Anxiety from juggling multiple deadlines and schedules.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
  - A tool that helps them manage their daily schedule, assignments, and exams.
  - Guidance to find their classrooms and navigate campus efficiently.
  - Reduce anxiety by providing clear organization and reminders.
- **Possible Solution:** An app that combines a digital diary, campus map, classroom navigation, a schedule planner, and reminders for assignments and exams.
- **Pros:**
  - Directly addresses a common stressor for first-year students.
  - Helps them feel more organized and less overwhelmed.
- **Cons:**
  - Requires up-to-date integration with campus data.
  - Needs to provide a lot of value quickly to encourage adoption.

Idea 2: Sales Performance Tracker for Retail Managers

- **User Group:** Retail store managers or sales supervisors.
- **Possible User Problems:**
  - Difficulty tracking sales performance in real-time.
  - Challenges in motivating the sales team and meeting targets.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
  - A tool that provides real-time updates on sales data and targets.
  - Features for setting sales goals, monitoring employee performance, and generating reports.
- **Possible Solution:** A mobile app that tracks individual and team sales performance, offers a leaderboard for gamification, sends alerts for targets, and allows managers to quickly analyze sales trends.
- **Pros:**
  - Helps improve team motivation and performance.
  - Provides actionable insights for better decision-making.
- **Cons:**
  - Requires integration with the store's existing sales systems.
  - Needs continuous updates to maintain real-time accuracy.

Idea 3: Home Gardening Assistant for Urban Residents

- **User Group:** Urban residents who are interested in home gardening.
- **Possible User Problems:**
    - Lack of knowledge about which plants are suitable for their environment.
    - Difficulty in maintaining a healthy garden due to limited time or space.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
    - Guidance on plant care, such as watering schedules and sunlight needs.
    - Tips on growing plants in small spaces, like balconies or windowsills.
- **Possible Solution:** An app that acts as a gardening assistant, recommending plants based on local climate and space constraints, providing care instructions, and setting reminders for watering or fertilizing.
- **Pros:**
    - Encourages sustainable practices and healthier lifestyles.
    - Caters to a growing interest in urban gardening.
- **Cons:**
    - Requires location-based data for accurate recommendations.
    - Competes with existing gardening resources and apps.

Idea 4: Professional Development App for Early-Career Professionals

- **User Group:** Early-career professionals looking to advance their careers.
- **Possible User Problems:**
    - Uncertainty about how to develop necessary skills or identify career advancement opportunities.
    - Lack of time or resources to engage in professional development.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
    - Access to learning materials, webinars, and mentorship opportunities.
    - Tools to set career goals, track progress, and receive feedback.
- **Possible Solution:** An app that provides curated professional development resources, offers goal-setting tools, and connects users with mentors or industry experts.
- **Pros:**
    - Helps users advance their careers and acquire new skills.
    - Builds a community of learners and professionals.
- **Cons:**
    - Needs high-quality content and mentorship to be valuable.
    - Faces competition from existing professional development platforms.

Idea 5: Wellness Companion for Office Workers

- **User Group:** Office workers spending long hours at their desks.

- **Possible User Problems:**
  - Health issues due to prolonged sitting, such as back pain or eye strain.
  - Lack of reminders or motivation to take breaks, stretch, or hydrate.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
  - Regular reminders to stand up, stretch, hydrate, or take breaks.
  - Tips for desk exercises and healthy habits.
- **Possible Solution:** A wellness companion app that sends customized reminders, suggests short exercises, and tracks hydration and screen time.
- **Pros:**
  - Promotes health and wellness in the workplace.
  - Simple to use and integrate into daily routines.
- **Cons:**
  - Needs to be engaging enough to encourage regular use.
  - May face resistance from users who are already overwhelmed with notifications.

Idea 6: Customer Feedback Platform for Small Businesses

- **User Group:** Small business owners looking to improve customer experience.
- **Possible User Problems:**
  - Difficulty gathering and analyzing customer feedback in a structured way.
  - Lack of actionable insights to improve products or services.
- **User Needs/Goals:**
  - A tool to easily collect and analyze customer feedback.
  - Features to engage with customers and respond to reviews.
- **Possible Solution:** A platform that allows businesses to create surveys, gather reviews, and analyze feedback with simple analytics tools.
- **Pros:**
  - Helps small businesses understand and improve customer satisfaction.
  - Provides easy-to-use analytics for non-technical users.
- **Cons:**
  - Needs to compete with larger, established customer feedback tools.
  - Requires effective marketing to reach small business owners.

User Problems/Pain Points

General User Group: First-Year University/College Students in Canada

Problem 1: Difficulty Adjusting to University Life

- **Description**: First-year students often struggle with the transition from high school to university, where the workload is heavier, the environment is unfamiliar, and there's less direct guidance

from faculty. This adjustment can lead to stress, confusion, and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the rapid pace and volume of academic responsibilities.

- **Justification**: New students face a steep learning curve as they navigate the university's academic systems (e.g., Avenue2Learn, Mosaic), manage more complex schedules, and learn new study habits. Without proper guidance and tools to help organize their time, they are more likely to feel lost and fall behind.

Problem 2: Navigating the Campus

- **Description**: A large campus can be challenging for new students to navigate, particularly during the first few weeks. Many first-years experience difficulty finding their classes, study spots, or key facilities like the library or cafeteria. This lack of spatial awareness increases anxiety and leads to missed classes or delays, especially during busy times.
- **Justification**: University/college campuses are much larger than high school environments, and the lack of familiarity adds unnecessary stress. Students need clear and efficient ways to navigate, especially when they are juggling tight schedules between classes and extracurricular activities.

Problem 3: Managing Multiple Deadlines

- **Description**: Juggling assignments, quizzes, midterms, and exams across multiple courses can be overwhelming for first-year students who are used to simpler schedules. The complexity of post-secondary timetables and deadlines often results in missed assignments or cramming, which negatively affects both academic performance and mental health.
- **Justification**: First-year students frequently report that they struggle with time management and organization. The lack of a centralized, easy-to-use system for tracking academic deadlines can result in procrastination, heightened anxiety, and last-minute rushes to complete work. A solution that provides clear, timely reminders and assists with prioritizing tasks would directly address this pain point.

Problem 4: Anxiety from Balancing Academic and Social Life

- **Description**: First-year students often struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities, social engagements, and personal downtime. The pressure to maintain a healthy balance between work and life can lead to anxiety, particularly for students who are adjusting to living on their own for the first time.
- **Justification**: First-year students frequently experience high levels of stress from trying to manage their academic and social lives without a structured support system. A solution that helps organize not just academic tasks but social and extracurricular activities could significantly reduce anxiety and improve their university experience.

Potential Solution:

A potential solution for first-year students at McMaster University could be a personalized digital planner mobile app designed to help with organizing classes, events, and academic responsibilities. The app would allow users to seamlessly connect with McMaster's Avenue2Learn and Mosaic platforms, automatically syncing due dates for quizzes, assignments, exams, and adding all classes. It could also generate personalized reminders for upcoming academic deadlines and social events.

Beyond scheduling, the app could feature an interactive campus map that helps students navigate their way to classes and other facilities. Additionally, students would have the option to create, join, or search for study groups for specific courses, fostering collaboration and academic support, especially for first-years who may not have established study groups.

To evaluate this idea, existing academic planner apps and platforms like Google Calendar or specialized study group apps could offer inspiration. Key features such as automated calendar syncing and location-based reminders could provide insights on how to design a tool that effectively meets the needs of first-year students.

User Needs/Goals/Tasks

1. First-year students often struggle to manage multiple academic and social responsibilities. They need an intuitive system that helps them keep track of course schedules, assignment deadlines, study sessions, and extracurricular activities. The system should provide clear reminders, avoid overlap, and help them stay on top of their commitments without feeling overwhelmed.
2. The goal is to achieve better time management by organizing all academic and extracurricular tasks in one place. This will help students reduce anxiety around missed deadlines, balance their coursework with social and recreational activities, and allow them to perform well academically while still engaging in campus life. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a balanced university experience that supports academic success and social integration.
3. The student regularly uses a digital calendar or planner app to:
   ○ **Input their course schedule**: Add weekly class times, locations, and tutorial sessions.
   ○ **Set assignment deadlines**: Add assignment due dates, project deadlines, and exam schedules.
   ○ **Organize study sessions**: Schedule blocks of study time based on course workload and upcoming exams.
   ○ **Track extracurricular activities**: Input club meetings, campus events, and social gatherings.
   ○ **Receive reminders**: Set automated reminders for assignments, upcoming classes, and events to avoid forgetting key dates and responsibilities.

Elements that are new/valuable about your project and/or possible solution (e.g. how is your solution different from existing ones):

Some existing solutions include:
● Calendar apps such as Google or Apple Calendar: these provide functionality to create events and receive reminders for things like classes, meetings and exams.

- They do not give campus specific features which would be important for a university student, such as classroom location and navigation, which will be features available on our app.
- Mytimetable: allows users to enroll in and view their schedule and class locations
  - It does not have functionality to receive notifications about classes, or to view their classes on a map, which will be features available on our app.

How our solution is different from existing solutions:
- As mentioned above, our app can include campus specific features such as timetables, an interactive campus map, organizing deadlines and tracking extracurriculars. This will reduce anxiety, as students can have everything they need laid out in a simple and easy manner, so that they never feel lost with anything relating to university.

User Groups/Situations

User Group 1 (Primary): First-Year Mcmaster University Students
- First-Year students are the primary (priority level) since they are the students who are most likely to face the most challenges when it comes to navigating the campus, managing their time and adjusting with other major life changes (e.g. living alone, doing things for themselves, etc). Compared to the other user-groups, first year students face heavier burdens.
- Characteristics
  - Physical attributes
    - Students who know how to use phones (and have phones to use)
  - Environment
    - Students are new to campus, and are not sure where things are
  - Perceptual/cognitive abilities
    - There is a higher workload in university and the jump from highschool to university is grand, so they may have the abilities to study and juggle their courses but its going to take a lot more out of them since it requires much more for university
  - Social/cultural traits
    - Students are transitioning from highschool to university, and there is a big jump (living on their own, much bigger school with much bigger classes, less individual focused)

User Group 2 (Secondary): Returning Students (gap years, coop, etc)
- Returning students are the secondary (priority level) since the students are not in need of all of the system's features. Since they are returning getting around campus may not be something they'll need, but they would most definitely benefit from the other features like the organization of their schedule/time and reminders.
- Characteristics
  - Physical
    - Students who know how to use phones (and have phones to use)
  - Environment

- - ■ Students are already familiar with campus, but may not remember where things are
    - ○ Perceptual/Cognitive abilities
      - ■ Students are more familiar with university and its intense workload than first year students but because of the time off they took off they may need something to get them back on track
    - ○ Social/Cultural Traits
      - ■ Helps them focus more on balancing their studies, extracurriculars (clubs, sports, part-time jobs), and life.

User Group 3 (Tertiary): Faculty helping First-Year Students
- Faculty are tertiary (priority level) since they are not the main user group(s) (students (first years)). But they can certainly help students benefit whether it be serving as a guide for the app, or contributing to the students in any way they can.
- Characteristics
  - ○ Physical Attributes
    - ■ Faculty may be less tech savvy but their main goal is to help students in any way they can
  - ○ Environment
    - ■ Faculty have been to university before, they have an idea of what students should expect. They also have year of experience teaching students so they know what works for their classes and what doesn't
  - ○ Perceptual/Cognitive abilities
    - ■ Due to their vast amount of experience they have very strong organizational, and time management skills
  - ○ Social/Cultural Traits
    - ■ Faculty can be a support system for first year students, helping them get through their year