

CONNECTVERSE



A Canvas plugin that helps online students to build connections

Yanqiu Li, Jingjing Bao, Junke Chen

BACKGROUND

In a learning environment, feeling connected to others can lead to positive learning attitudes, motivation, higher class participation, and learning outcomes (Wilson et al., 2010; Frisby et al., 2014). But 70% online students report feelings of loneliness and complain about a lack of interpersonal connections in their learning experience (Shelton et al., 2017).

It's important to build connections in both the virtual and physical world. ConnectVerse will start with the elements and processes of connection building, integrating various information and resources both online and offline, thus helping users to build better connections. We're also ready to adapt the features of the connectverse as the metaverse gets off the ground, such as more diverse data collection, recommended activities, and new social rules.

PROBLEM

It's difficult for online students to connect with their fellow students

Less disclosure of personal information
—>Don't know who to connect with
Less opportunities to hang out
—>Don't know where to connect with
Less motivation and knowledge to reach out online
—>Don't know how to connect with

TARGET USERS

Students who take online classes and have difficulties building connections with classmates.

GOALS

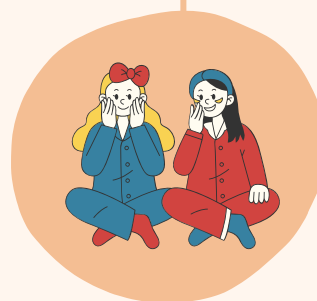
Online students will know who, how and where to connect with, thus creating more and high-quality connections.

DESIGN RATIONALE & RESEARCH



By linking students to accounts on other platforms such as LinkedIn, ConnectVerse aggregates personal information about students at the same school and recommends friends with similar interests or experiences to students. **Similarity** is an important influence on young people's choice of friendship, and they are more likely to build trust in people with similar interests. (Kandel, 1978; Ziegler & Golbeck, 2007) In addition to basic information, ConnectVerse also encourages students to enter life stories and only show them to friends who have reached a certain level of relationship. **Self-disclosure** can increase feelings of closeness between new acquaintances (Derlega et al., 2008).

Based on theoretical support for relationship building and analysis of interactions between students, ConnectVerse will scaffold students with personalized social recommendations. With the absence of traditional low-barrier classroom socialization, students lack the **Knowledge** of online socialization based on the school population, and become tired and less **motivated** to socialize online (Britt et al., 2015).



ConnectVerse aggregates a number of online and offline events for students to invite students who want to connect or have similar interests to go with them and receive a discount. Research shows that engaging in **activities** with friends based on the same interests can enhance the development of high-quality friendships (Mathur & Berndt, 2006).

MARKET ANALYSIS

Even before covid, over 30 percent of US college students took at least one online class. And because of covid, that number has risen to over 50 percent. There is a large number of potential users out there. Students also have a need to socialize with classmates and a willingness to pay for it. Data shows that a college student spends more than \$6,000 on socializing in four years. Users can download ConnectVerse for free and even save money by generating leads to event tickets through referrals, for which ConnectVerse receives a small commission. School administrators are also potential users of ConnectVerse. We found that it's difficult for school administrators to attract online students to participate in events, so schools will want to use ConnectVerse to reach a larger target audience and encourage them to participate. Therefore partnering with schools is one of the future directions of ConnectVerse.

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