Team SARANZA
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Overview:

As face-to-face classes return in a post-pandemic academic setup, group projects have remained an essential part of student life. However, many students continue to struggle with effective group coordination, especially when they are dealing with multiple subjects, deadlines, and varying levels of commitment from peers.

As students ourselves, we've experienced the difficulty of managing roles, tasks, and communication within group work—whether for minor assignments or capstone projects. Despite the wide use of messaging apps and shared drives, students still face disorganization, uneven task distribution, and last-minute cramming.

These recurring problems lead to unnecessary stress, poor performance, and conflicts within groups, affecting both individual grades and learning experiences.

Solving the Problem:

To address this issue, our team plans to develop an application that specifically targets student group coordination. The app will aim to centralize communication, task delegation, and scheduling in one student-friendly platform. To gather insights, we will conduct a survey of 10–20 students across different colleges and year levels. We will also hold interviews with students who recently completed major group projects to explore their pain points and current solutions. These responses will inform which features are most useful and what design considerations are needed for a smooth user experience. Our goal is to ensure the app reflects the actual behaviors, frustrations, and expectations of student groups.

The Application:
Application Name: SYNCO (Student Y(i)nteraction Nurturing Connected Outputs)

What it is:
SYNCO is a collaboration tool built specifically for university student groups. It helps students plan, divide, and track group project work more easily and efficiently. The app intends to simplify what students already try to do with Messenger, Google Docs, and group chats—but in one place that understands their academic needs.

Features:
The app will offer the following features based on user needs:

- **Task Assignment Dashboard:** Members can assign roles, set deadlines, and mark tasks as complete.

- **Progress Tracking:** Group progress is visualized clearly (e.g., percent of work completed).
- **Shared File Repository:** A space to upload and categorize group files (Docs, PPTs, PDFs).
- **Built-in Chat System:** For group-only discussions, separated from personal messages.

Additional features may be added or adjusted depending on the survey results and feedback.

Questions about the Application:

Who are the potential users?

- University students from all year levels, especially those involved in:
  - Group assignments
  - Research teams
  - Capstone or thesis projects
  - Org-based collaborative academic events

What tasks do they seek to perform?

- Divide and assign project components
- Monitor each member's progress
- Communicate and plan meetings effectively
- Ensure fair contribution from members

What functionality should any system provide to these users?

- A clean and simple task tracking and status display
- Real-time updates and notifications
- Tools for file sharing and version tracking
- Support for synchronous and asynchronous collaboration
- Feedback and accountability mechanisms

What constraints will be placed on your eventual design?

- **Device compatibility:** The app must function well on Android, Apple, Windows and Mac devices, to suit most students.
- **Connectivity issues:** Offline modes or data-light design may be needed for students with limited internet.
- **Time constraints:** Students won't spend much time learning the app, so it must be intuitive and usable from Day 1.
- **Group size:** The app must work equally well for small teams (2–3 people) and large ones (10+).

What criteria should be used to judge if your design is a success or not?

- Students adopt the app for more than one project
- Users report increased ease in coordinating tasks
- Positive comparisons against Messenger, Google Docs, and Trello in post-use surveys

Approach:

1. **Identify the Problem:**
   Students face difficulties coordinating group projects using general-purpose tools.
2. **Gather Data:**
   Conduct surveys and interviews with students who have recently completed group work.
3. **Analyze Pain Points:**
   Look for recurring themes like unclear roles, missed deadlines, poor communication.
4. **Define User Needs:**
   Identify features and tools students wish they had to manage collaboration better.
5. **Design Conceptual App (Part 2):**
   Use insights from Part 1 to inform user-centered features and design goals.

Discussion of Implications:

Beyond meeting usability goals, SYNCO has the potential to significantly improve how students experience group work. By centralizing communication, task tracking, and file sharing, the app can reduce common issues like uneven workloads, unclear responsibilities, and missed deadlines. This leads to more balanced contributions and less last-minute stress.

SYNCO also encourages a culture of accountability and transparency within student groups, helping to build better teamwork habits. Through user feedback and iterative development, the app reflects real student needs, promoting a sense of ownership and engagement in the design process.

If widely adopted, SYNCO could influence how academic collaboration tools are developed placing student-specific workflows and pain points at the center. It can serve not only as a tool for productivity but also as a step toward more equitable and efficient learning environments.