

Staying Sane At Cornell

MILSTEAM

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Roberta's Story

Stress Factors:

- Needs good grades to declare major
- Feels behind other students with background knowledge
- Not used to college workload and structure
- Unsure if she will fit in this field
- Many students and limited professors



Roberta's Story

Stress Factors:

- Needs good grade
- Feels behind other
- Not used to
- Unsure if she will
- Many students are

**There are many reasons
why a class may be
stressful to students.**

**What part is the most
dramatic problem and how
can it be resolved?**



Interviewee Demographics

We wanted to interview many groups:

- Students currently enrolled in introductory courses
- Students who have completed introductory courses/in leadership positions
- Professors of introductory courses

... in order to gain insight to the perspectives of each group about the academic and social culture, learning style and organization, and effects of the experience.

Interviewees:

Students:

“L” - sophomore

- Information Science and Music

“K” - freshman

- Possible Bio or Physics major, pre-med track

“V” - sophomore

- ECE major, business minor
- Leadership position in Engineering sorority AOE

“M” - sophomore

- Bio-eng
- Changed colleges
- CHEM 2070 TA

Professor:

Dr. Lillian Lee - CS1110 Instructor

- Cornell alum
- Committee to help students
- “Not intended to be a weed-out course”

Insights and Unmet Needs

- Significant disconnect between professors and students views on access to external resources
- K enjoyed being in a harder/high pressure honors class; this could differ based on the individual as some of us found that some of the people in those types of classes are too intense making the class less enjoyable
- Supportive community and peer mentorship is a major factor that provides comfort and validation for struggling students. However, some student communities continue to foster the same selective culture (e.g. professional sororities with intense admission processes).
- Grade transparency is wanted, yet reporting mean/median and comparing causes negative feelings -> somewhat contradictory?

Unmet Needs

Students need a better way to communicate their concerns and develop understanding with their professors more comfortably.

Students need to understand what they don't know about themselves (e.g. learning style) .

How Might We...

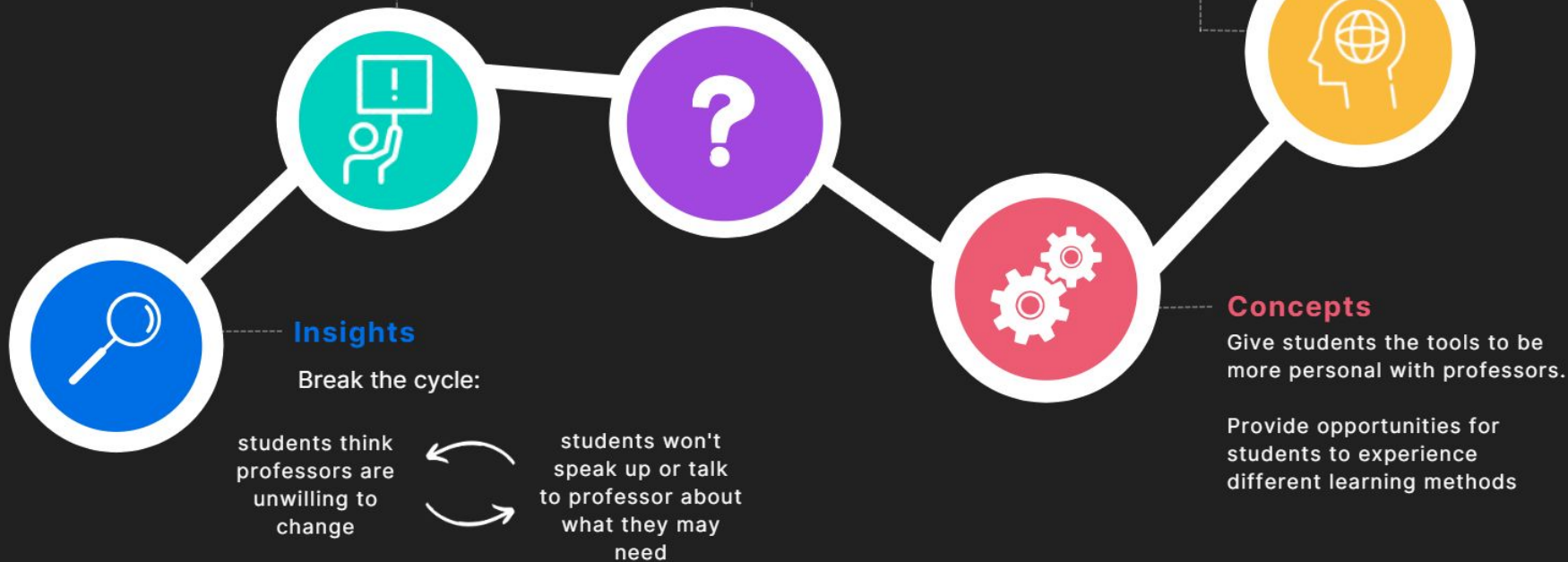
How might we better the communication between professor and student?

How might we encourage professor-student communication and make it more fun?

Solutions

One-on-one meetings

Two sections of the same class with different instruction methods or classes with alternating formats



Our Prototype: Roleplay Simulation

1-on-1 Professor and Student meetings

Designed to test/discover:

- Student emotions
- Discussion topics
- Whether students feel motivated/engaged?
- Pro/cons of prototype



Prototype Iteration

Academic

Professors are instructed to ask the student about how they feel about their class, their performance, and their academic concerns.



Required

Meeting was required for all students in the introductory class.



After Prelims

Students felt stressed, targeted, and uncomfortable when the meeting was about a recent prelim. They'd feel more comfortable if professors did not know about their score beforehand.



Topic/
Purpose

Nature

Timing

Personal

Students would rather the meeting be about getting to know your professor on a personal level instead of about their class performance.



Optional

Students felt the meeting was forced and disingenuous since professors were required to talk to everyone.

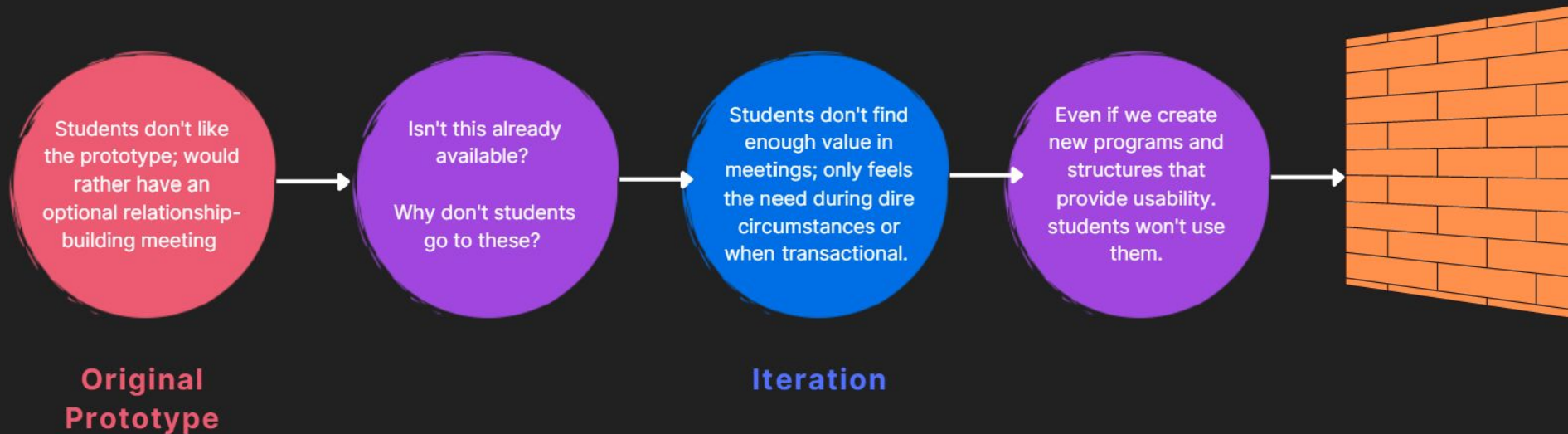


Start of Semester

Students would rather the meeting be at the start of the semester and be a first step and open doors for future interactions.



Hitting a Wall



Key Takeaways

Professor-student relationship is hindered by existing culture



Critical assumptions:

- Do professors know what students need?
- Are professors willing to change?
- We can test these by getting more professor interviews



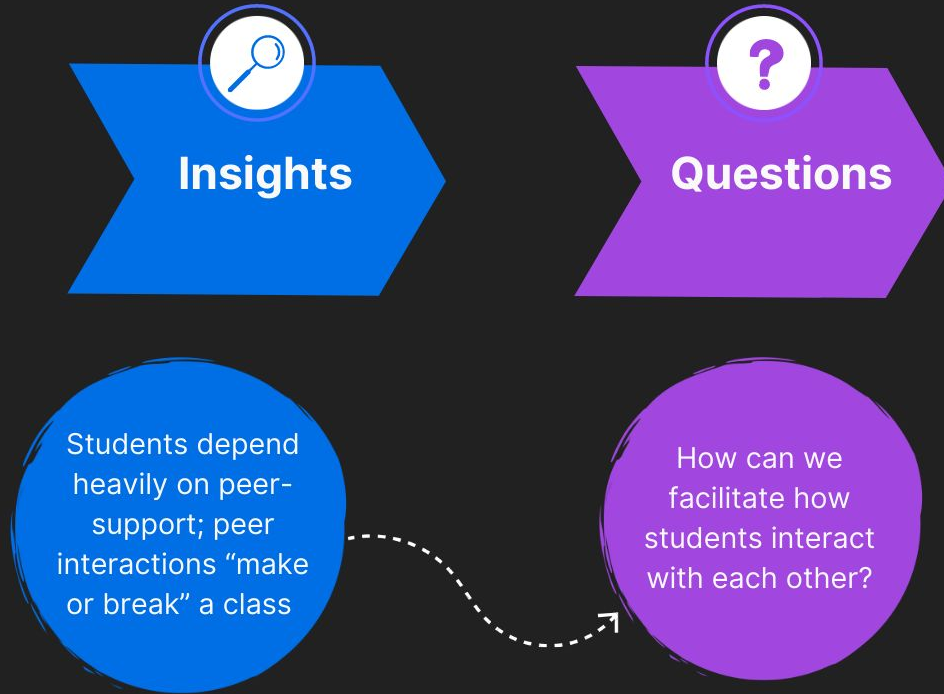
Alternative Concepts



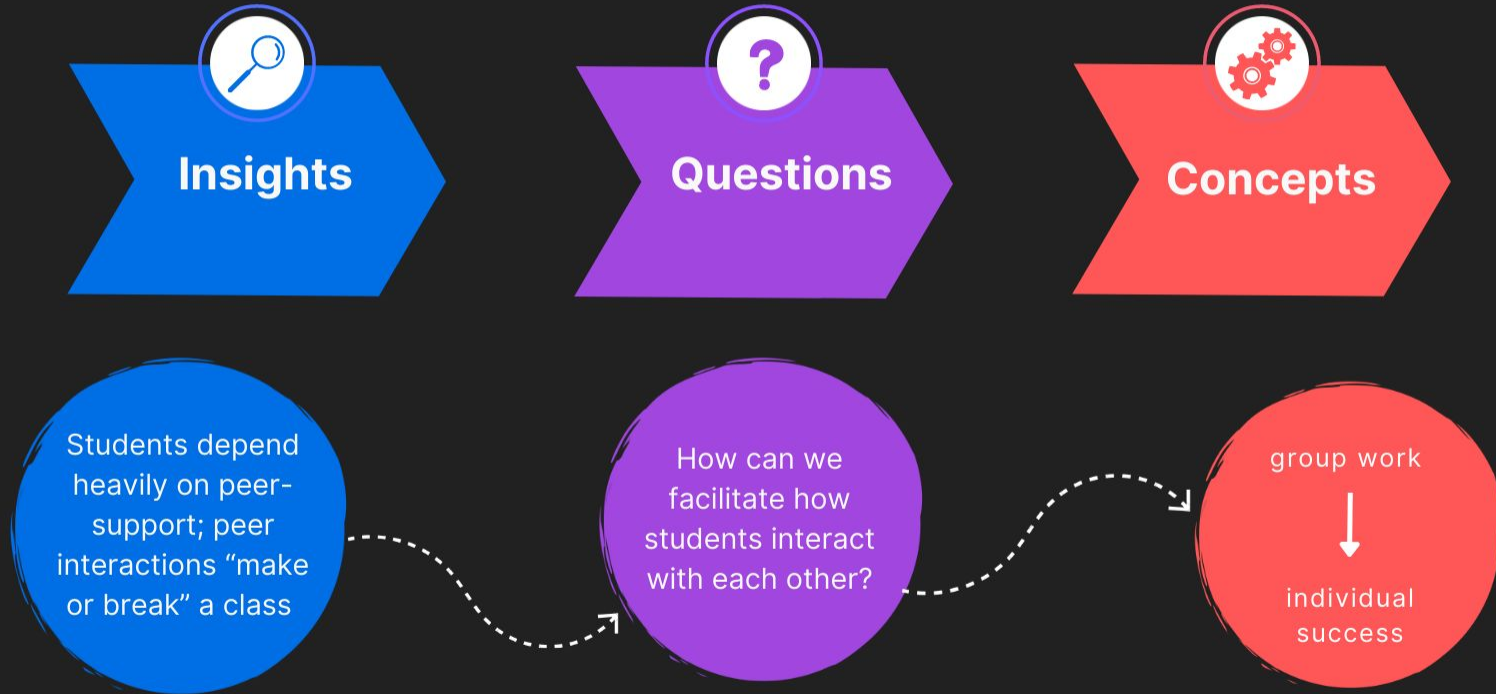
Insights

Students depend heavily on peer-support; peer interactions “make or break” a class

Alternative Concepts



Alternative Concepts



THANKYOU