

Devansh Agrawal
Sean Ayoub
Alonna Strong

In cities like Boston, many college students experience social isolation and limited opportunities to explore their surroundings. Two main factors contribute to this problem: the high cost of living, which discourages students from discovering new places, and the reluctance to go out alone, which leads many to miss out on potential social experiences. These challenges are especially relevant for students new to the city or those seeking community beyond their immediate friend groups.

Our team aims to address this problem by designing an app helping students discover affordable social and study spaces while making it easy to connect with others who share similar interests. Students would register with their .edu email, ensuring the platform remains student-focused, and could pin and share their favorite hidden gems — from cafés and restaurants to pop-ups and nightlife spots. The interface would also feature interest-based communities, enabling students to find companions to explore with and reducing the anxiety of going out alone.

This problem is real, important, and well-aligned with the theme of human-computer interaction, as it affects a large student population and impacts both mental well-being and social engagement. It is also well-scoped for a semester project: students are a clearly identifiable user group, and the solution involves designing interactive features such as collaborative discovery, real-time updates, and social coordination tools.

Current apps like Google Maps or Yelp focus on general audiences and static information, failing to address students' unique social and financial constraints or their desire to explore with others. Our solution will take a more community-driven, interaction-focused approach, where students not only consume information but actively contribute, connect, and coordinate activities.

By centering on affordability, social connection, and shared exploration, our project will explore innovative ways to combat student loneliness and encourage community-building. While the final design will evolve through research and iteration, our initial direction is clear: to create an interface that transforms how students discover spaces and people in their city.