CS 2484 T3

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PROJECT TITLE: NUConnect

REPOSITORY: https://github.com/seanayoub/HCIDesignProject

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

In cities like Boston, many college students experience social isolation and limited opportunities to explore their surroundings. Two main factors contribute to this: 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 social experiences.

Our team aims to design *NUConnect*, a mobile platform that helps students discover affordable social and study spaces while connecting them with peers who share similar interests. By enabling students to pin, review, and share hidden gems – cafés, events, or pop-ups – NUConnect hopes to foster community, affordability, and exploration among Boston's student population.

USER ANALYSIS:

Primary Users — Northeastern students (undergraduate and graduate, ages 18–25), studying on campus or abroad, seeking affordable social experiences in Boston.

Demographic: 18–25, tech-savvy, enrolled full-time or part-time

Geographic: Urban Boston area with access to diverse venues

Psychographic: Curious, social, digitally fluent

Behavioral: Heavy app users; motivated by authentic, low-cost experiences

Needs:

Easy discovery of affordable, engaging local spots

Opportunities to meet new people outside existing circles

Pain Points:

Intimidation when exploring alone

Feeling disconnected from the city or overwhelmed by choices

Financial limitations

STAKEHOLDER CLASSIFICATION:

Primary Stakeholders:

First-year and Transfer Students: New to campus and city; need orientation and social entry points

International Students: Cultural adjustment, language barriers, seeking local connections

Socially Hesitant / Introverted Students: Prefer low-pressure engagement; favor asynchronous or digital-first interactions

Budget-Conscious Students: Seek affordable/free activities and discounts

Secondary Stakeholders:

Local Businesses and Venues: Gain visibility, can post promotions or student-friendly events

University Departments / Student Affairs / Wellness Offices: Care about inclusion, retention, and mental well-being

Student Organizations: Want tools for event coordination, member engagement, and outreach

Tertiary Stakeholders:

City Government / Tourism Boards: Interested in local engagement and student participation

Parents and Families: Concerned with students' well-being and safety

Mental Health Advocacy Groups / Counseling Centers: Support the app's social health goals

Facilitating Stakeholders:

App Development Team & Designers

Marketing / Community Outreach Teams

Data Privacy & Ethics Committees

PERSONAS:

Sean – Persona 1/2. Alonna – Persona 3/4. Devansh – Persona 5/6.

1. Emily Chen – First-year International Student

   Background: 19, from Taiwan, newly arrived in Boston for undergraduate study.

   Goals: Find cultural events and new friends; explore safely and affordably.

   Pain Points: Unfamiliar with local venues; nervous going out alone.

   Motivations: Wants a sense of belonging and discovery.

2. Liam Patel – Shy Sophomore

   Background: 20, Boston native, introverted, studies computer science.

   Goals: Wants to socialize in low-pressure settings (board games, cafés).

   Pain Points: Feels excluded from big social scenes; unsure where to meet others.

Motivations: Craves connection but prefers structured, more laid-back environments.

3. Akira Sato – Graduate Student from Japan

   Background: 24, on a one-year program; balancing classes and part-time work.

   Goals: Discover local spots between classes; learn about Boston culture.

   Pain Points: Limited time and social confidence; unsure where to start.

4. Maria Gonzalez – Local Café Manager

   Background: Runs a small café near campus.

   Goals: Attract students through college-friendly events and deals.

   Pain Points: Hard to reach student audiences; limited marketing budget.

5. Jordan Lee – Budget-Conscious Junior

   Background: 21, balancing co-op and classes; tight schedule and finances.

   Goals: Explore city on a budget; find flexible, affordable activities.

   Pain Points: Feels left out of expensive social plans; time-constrained.

6. Taylor Brooks – Club Leader

   Background: 22, president of a student organization; plans weekly events.

   Goals: Improve member turnout, connect events with other clubs.

   Pain Points: Low engagement and event visibility on existing platforms.

POINT OF VIEW:

Students in Boston want to explore and connect — but feel constrained by cost, uncertainty, and isolation. NUConnect empowers students to discover the city through community-shared experiences, making exploration affordable, social, and authentic.

We reviewed survey data from previous class assignments and mapped user emotions during social planning. Through the persona comparison, we realized students' hesitance stems not from lack of interest but from lack of companionship and trusted information. This shifted our focus toward features emphasizing shared discovery and peer trust rather than just venue listings.

TASK ANALYSIS I:

As above. Sean – Persona 1/2. Alonna – Persona 3/4. Devansh – Persona 5/6.

1. Discover local events or hidden gems nearby
2. Connect with peers interested in attending the same event

3. Bookmark or share a favorite venue with others
4. Organize a small group outing through the app
5. Claim student discounts at participating venues
6. Report safety concerns or venue issues

TASK ANALYSIS II:

HTA Diagrams.

TASK ANALYSIS III:

Sean: I hadn't realized how many micro-decisions users make – from feeling comfortable with group size to verifying safety before meeting up.

Alonna: Mapping out Akira's workflow made me notice how cultural familiarity affects navigation patterns.

Devansh: Taylor's persona helped me see how event organization overlaps with student wellness and inclusion.

USABILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. Discoverability:
   At least 80% of users can successfully find and save an event or location in under 2 minutes during usability testing.
2. Connection Success Rate:
   75% of users who express interest in attending an event with others receive at least one connection request within 24 hours.
3. Satisfaction / Retention Proxy:
   Return use within a week exceeds 60%, suggesting continued perceived value.

CONNECTION TO LARGER GOALS:

From our task analysis, we identified that trust, ease of navigation, and quick decision-making are fundamental.

To address this:

We'll prioritize intuitive filtering and contextual trust signals (e.g., "verified student" tags).

Integrate group size options in event joining flows.

Use low-pressure interaction cues (e.g., "interested" vs "join now") to support socially hesitant users.