Implementation of a Technology-Enhanced Peer Mentor Referral System for First-Year University Students

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College students are in need

60%

of college students meet criteria for at least one mental health challenge

Lipson et al., 2022

FINDING THE RIGHT RESOURCE IS CHALLENGING

DROPOUT IS HIGH, ESPECIALLY FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

MARGINALIZED STUDENTS FACE MANY BARRIERS

OVERALL, ABOUT **30-40%** OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS DROP OUT OF COLLEGE WITHOUT FINISHING THEIR DEGREE

60% HIGHER CHANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
23% HIGHER CHANCE FOR FIRST-GENERATION COLLGE STUDENTS
35% HIGHER RISK FOR BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

Hanson, 2022

College students are in need

Research supports that mentoring is most effective when it...

...is delivered by credible, trained peers

...focuses on specific goals and challenges and encourages follow through

...provides a sense of belonging

...helps those needing it most

Burton et al., 2022; Christensen et al., 2020; Hagler et al., 2022; McQuillin et al., 2022; Raposa et al., 2020;

Why Technology?

Technology interventions may have more accessibility than typical services

Online informational support interventions may help bridge service gaps

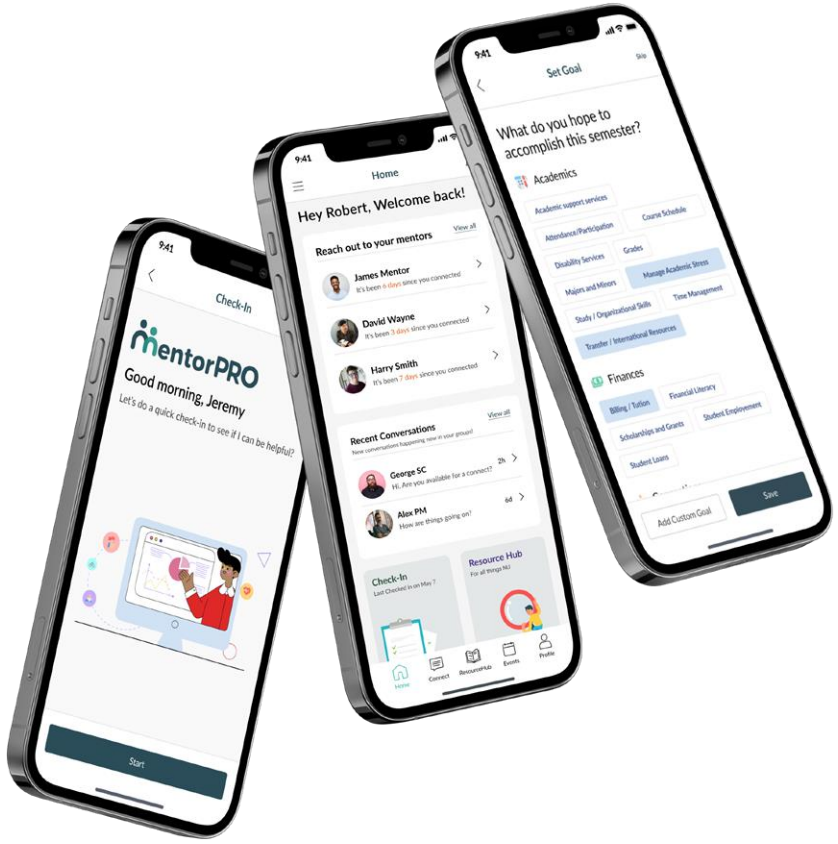
Secure messaging and data monitoring

Human support for intervention use can lead to positive outcomes

Andersson & Cuijpers, 2009; Linardon et al., 2019; Mohr et al., 2011; Ware & Ramos, 2013

Current Study

MentorPRO



Study Aims:

1. Examine the acceptability and feasibility of MentorPRO with a college student population.
2. Explore what insights college support staff can gain regarding student functioning.
3. Identify areas of improvement for the future of MentorPRO and peer mentoring in the technology space.

Methodology

Participants

-Pilot Program: August 2021-May 2022

-Private university in northeastern United States

-6,709 eligible first year students

-Paid trained peer mentors

(2nd year +)

	Full first-year class	Students in peer mentoring program
Number of students (*N*)	6709	3141
Age (*m* [*sd*])	18.60 (0.70)	19.36 (0.65)
Gender* (*n* [%])		
Female	3979 (59.33)	1961 (62.43)
Male	2724 (40.60)	1177 (37.47)
Not reported	6 (0.09)	3 (0.10)
International students (*n* [%])	605 (9.02)	334 (10.63)
Race and ethnicity[a] (*n* [%])		
Asian	1318 (19.65)	543 (17.29)
Black or African American	449 (6.69)	203 (6.46)
Hispanic or Latino	849 (12.65)	377 (12.00)
Other	6 (0.09)	6 (1.63)
White	2883 (42.97)	1391 (44.29)
Two or more races	468 (6.98)	240 (7.64)
Race and ethnicity unknown	131 (1.95)	47 (1.50)
Generational status (*n* [%])		
First generation	751 (11.19)	331 (10.54)
Continuing-generation	3631 (54.12)	1484 (47.25)
Not reported	2327 (34.68)	1326 (42.22)

*The university only reports female and male gender at this time

[a]The university only collects race and ethnicity from domestic students

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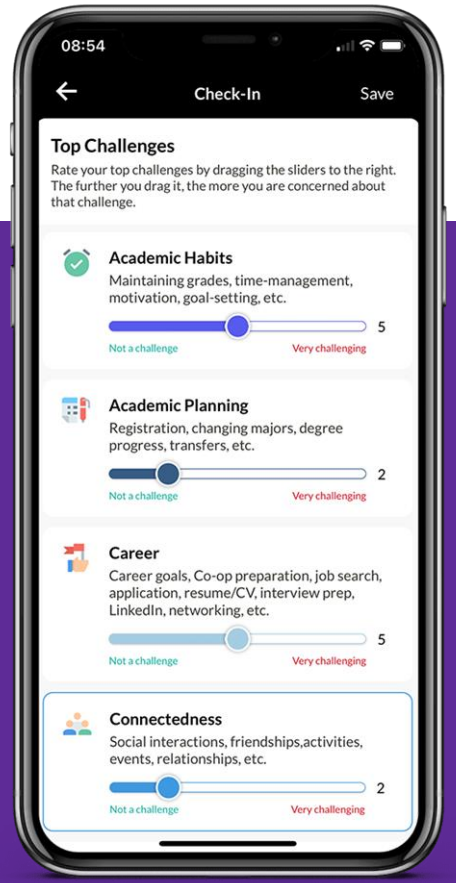
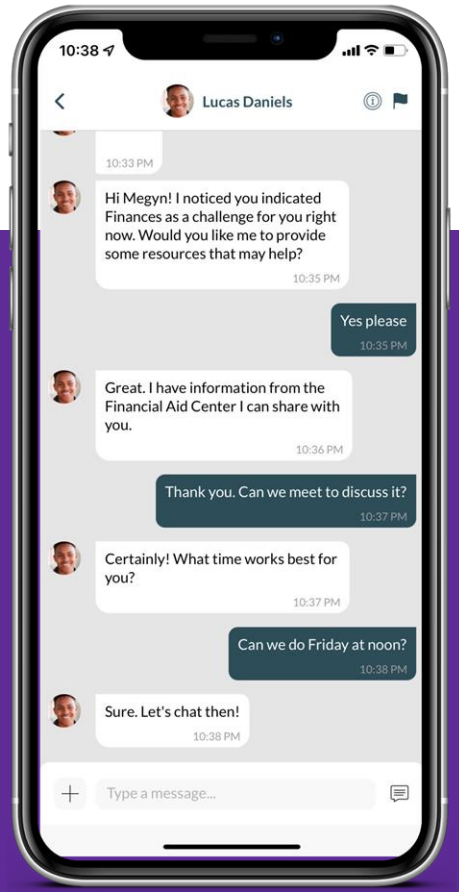
Acceptability & Feasibility:

Engagement

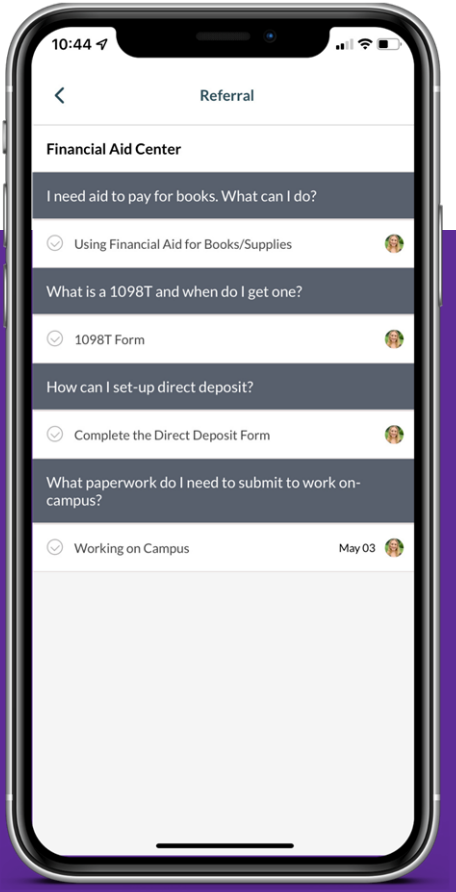
Check-In



Messages

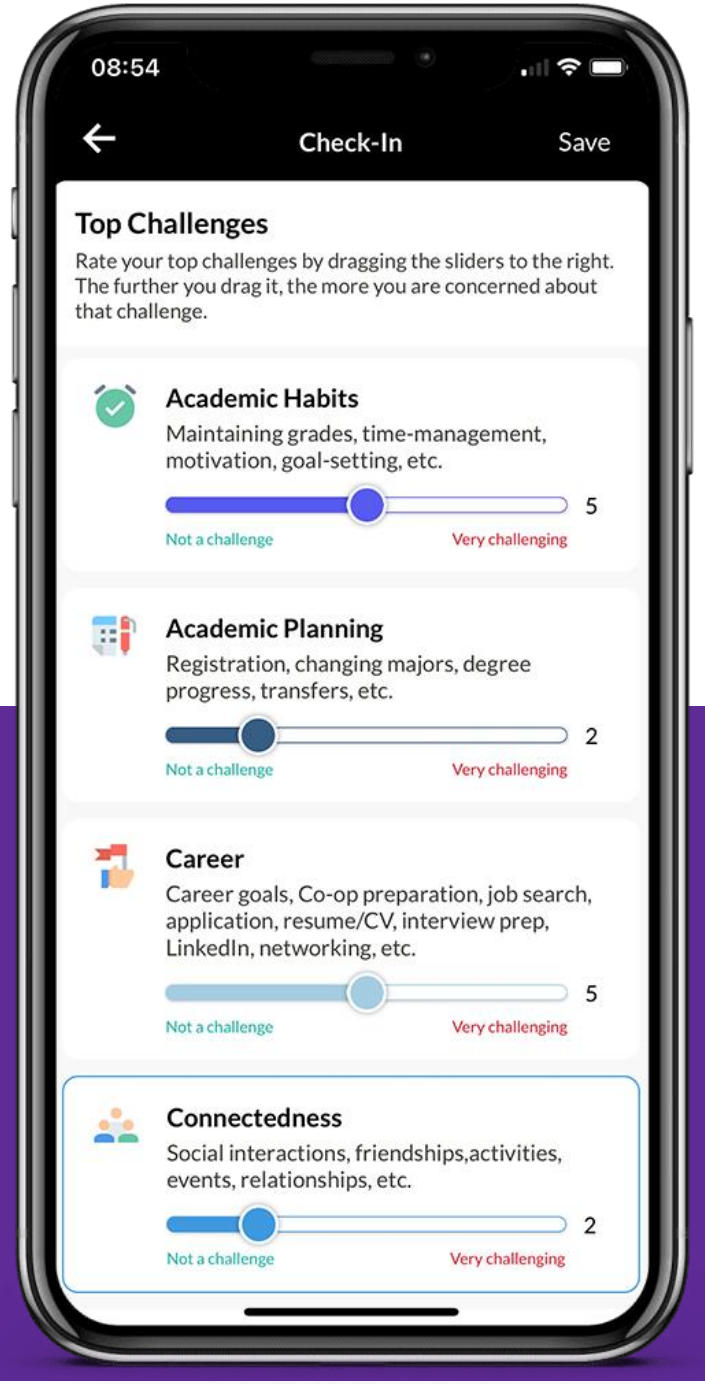


Referrals



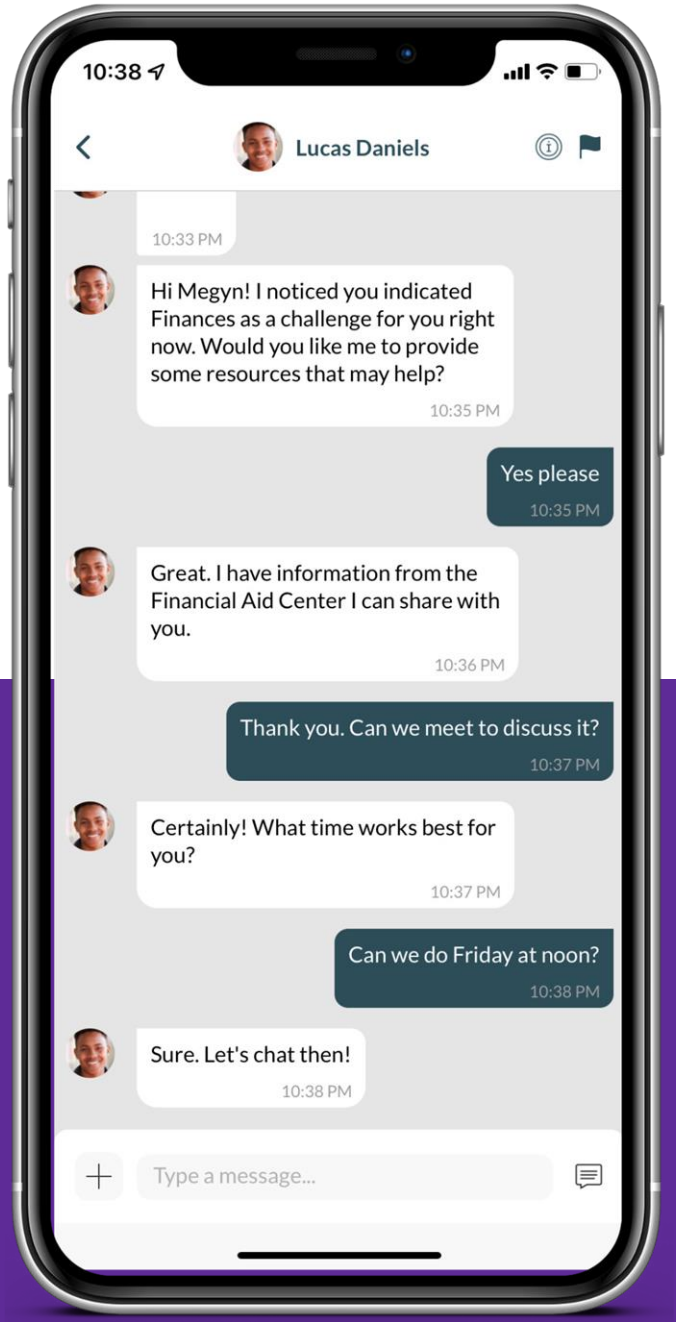
Check-In

- Students identify how severe their top challenges are
- Inspired by Top Problems (Weisz, 2011)
- Six life domains:
  - Academic Habits
  - Academic Planning
  - Career
  - Connectedness
  - Finances
  - Health & Wellbeing
- Measured engagement by number of completed Check-Ins



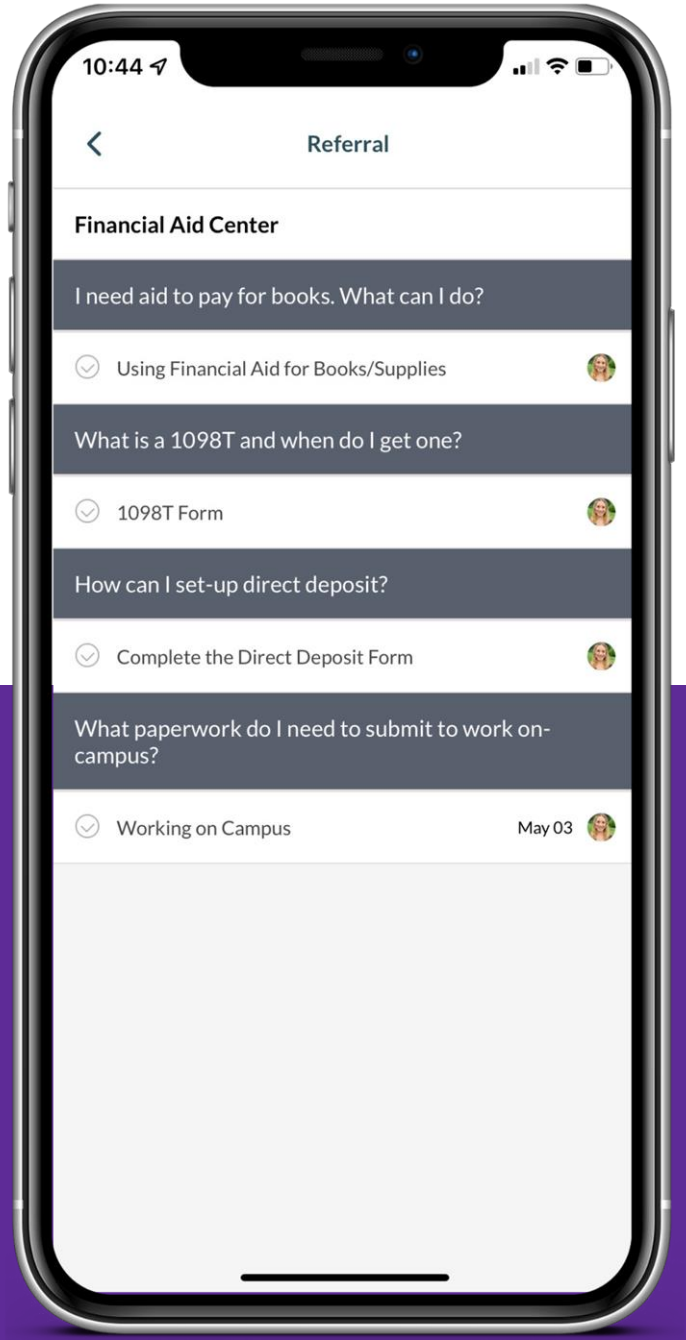
Chat

- Students are able to message the mentors that they have been assigned to
- Messages are also monitored by peer mentors' supervisors for students' safety
- Engagement defined by number of messages sent to peer mentors



Referrals

- Main intervention feature
- Mentors assign mentees with resource referrals related to their challenges and goals
- Supportive Accountability Model



Student Wellbeing:
Student Adjustment Surveys

3 Items:

"I feel part of the [university] community"
(adapted from Goodenow, 1993)

"I am confident that I will be a successful student at [the university]"
(adapted from Bedewy and Gabriel, 2015).

"When I have questions about [the university], I reach out to my peer mentor"
(created by MentorPRO team)

*5-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)

*This questionnaire was presented the first time students used MentorPRO, then was presented again every 3 months.

Results

MentorPRO Pilot Program

	Full first-year class	Students in peer mentoring program	Difference statistic
Number of students (*N*)	6709	3141	
Age (*m* [*sd*])	18.60 (0.70)	19.36 (0.65)	$t(3140)=65.53, p<0.001$
Gender* (*n* [%])			$\chi^2(2)=13.08, p=0.001$
Female	3979 (59.33)	1961 (62.43)	
Male	2724 (40.60)	1177 (37.47)	
Not reported	6 (0.09)	3 (0.10)	
International students (*n* [%])	605 (9.02)	334 (10.63)	$\chi^2(1)=10.10, p=0.002$
Race and ethnicity[a] (*n* [%])			$\chi^2(6)=21.71, p=0.001$
Asian	1318 (19.65)	543 (17.29)	
Black or African American	449 (6.69)	203 (6.46)	
Hispanic or Latino	849 (12.65)	377 (12.00)	
Other	6 (0.09)	6 (1.63)	
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Two or more races	468 (6.98)	240 (7.64)	
Race and ethnicity unknown	131 (1.95)	47 (1.50)	
Generational status (*n* [%])			$\chi^2(2)=79.68, p<0.001$
First generation	751 (11.19)	331 (10.54)	
Continuing-generation	3631 (54.12)	1484 (47.25)	
Not reported	2327 (34.68)	1326 (42.22)	

*The university only reports female and male gender at this time

[a]The university only collects race and ethnicity from domestic students

46.83% of first years opted in

Who did this program appeal to?

- Females
- International students
- White students
- Multiracial students

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Main Findings

Engagement

Check-Ins	Chat	Referrals
17,032 check-ins 2,947 students	**13,456** messages to peer mentors 1,798 students	**756** referrals 458 students

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Main Findings

Engagement

Check-Ins	Chat	Referrals
17,032 check-ins 2,947 students	**13,456** messages to peer mentors 1,798 students	**756** referrals 458 students

Number of Check-Ins significantly correlated with GPA

$r(2945)=0.04$, $p = 0.043$

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Survey Responses

What insights college support staff can gain regarding student functioning?

- **Check-in Scores**
- **Student Adjustment Survey Responses**

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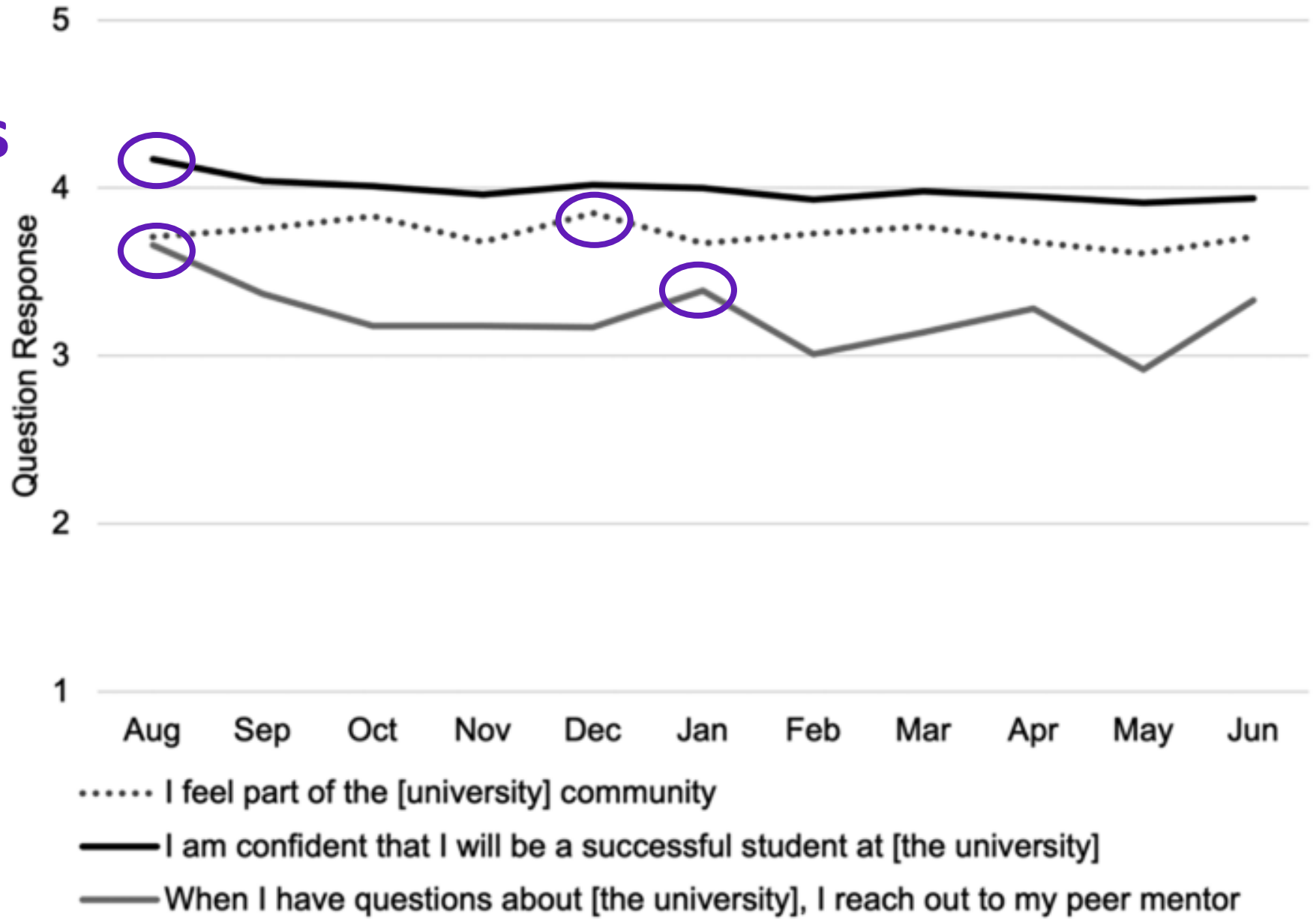
Survey Responses



Note. Mean responses by month of the questionnaire items.

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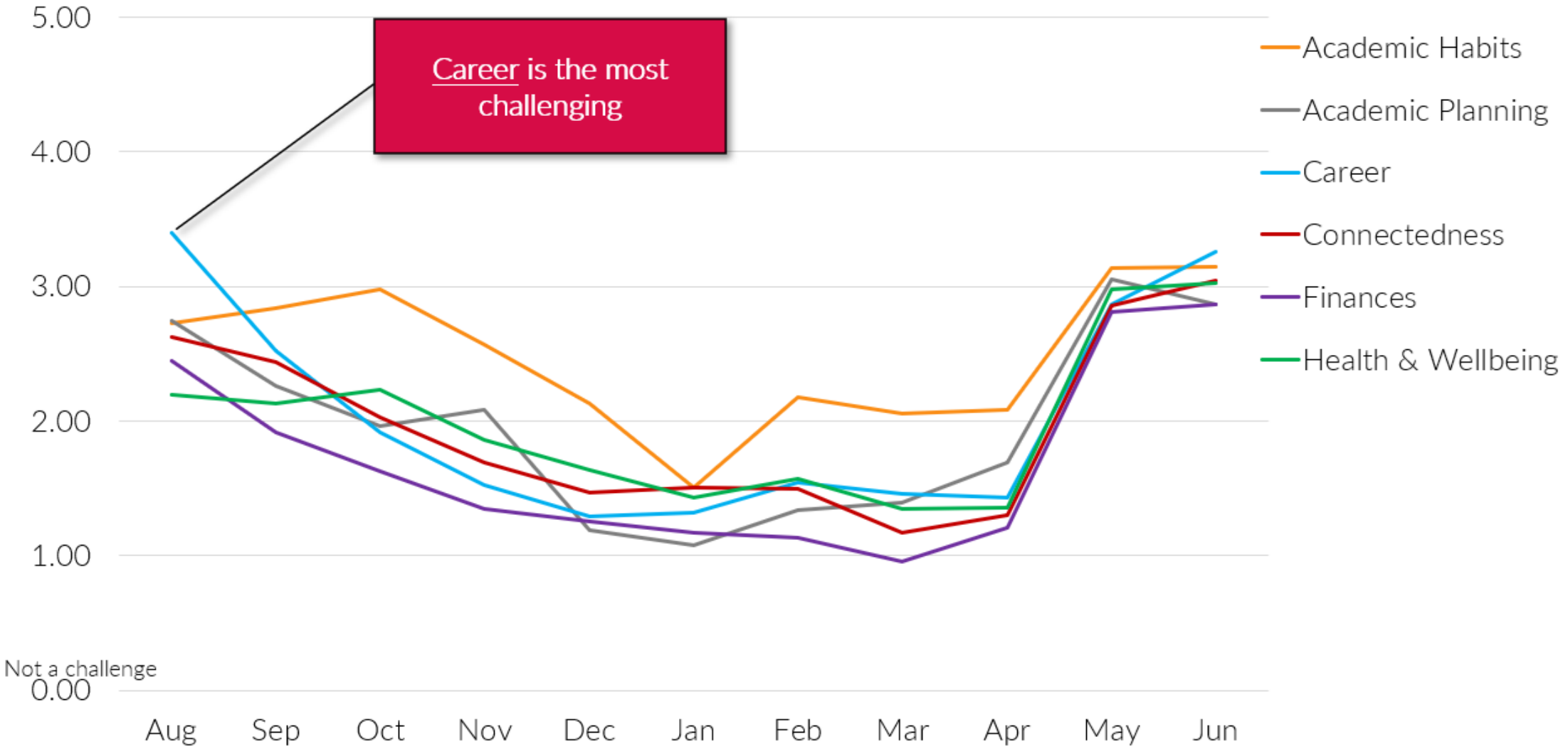
Check-Ins



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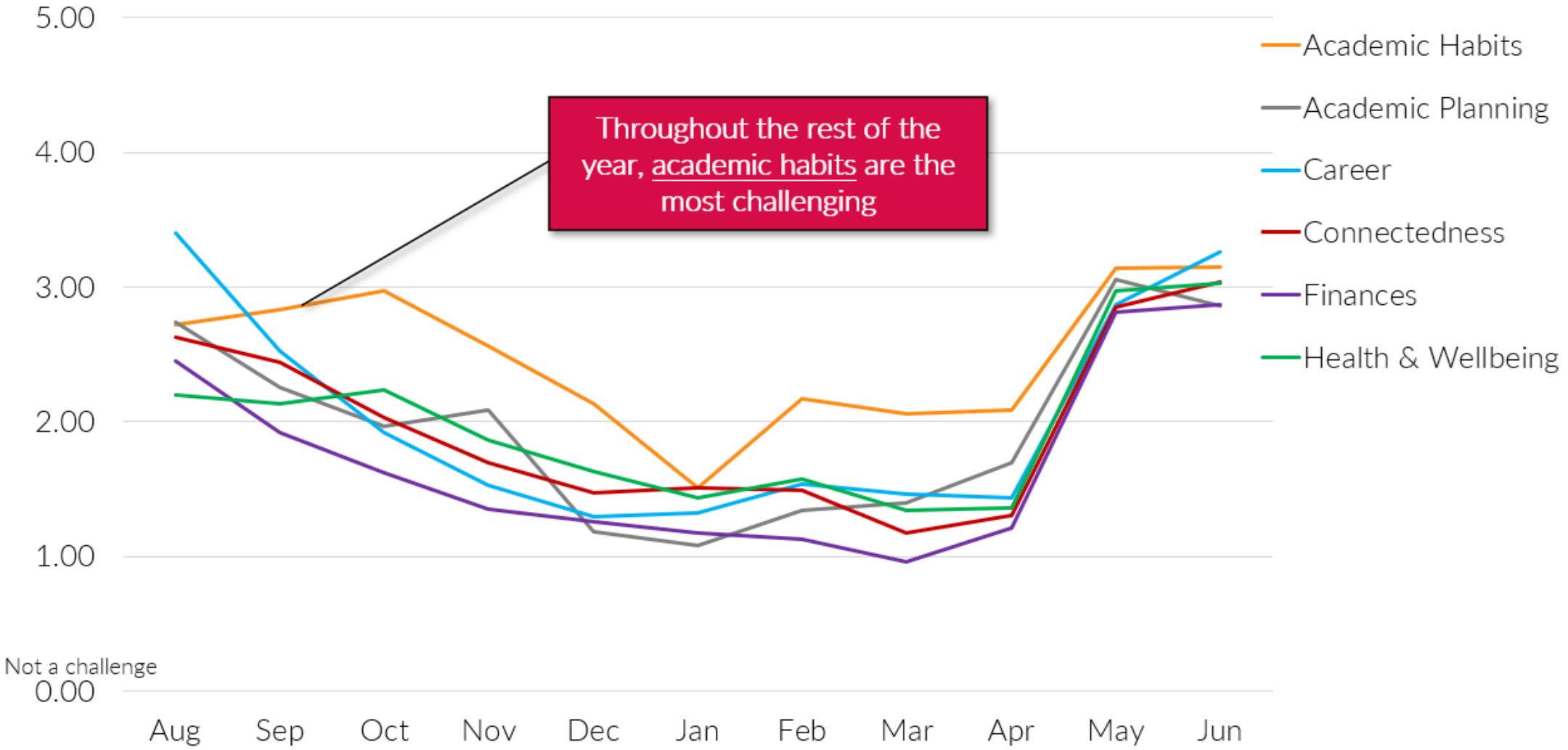
Check-Ins



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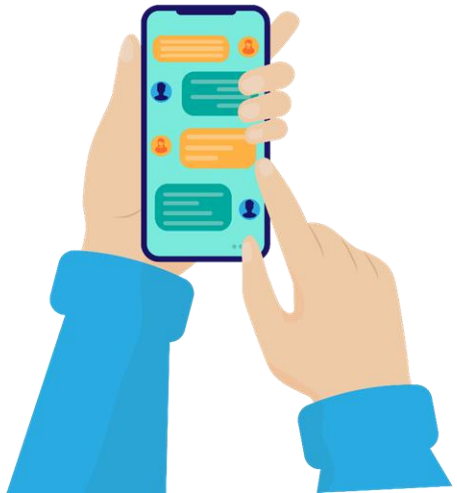
Limitations

- No true baseline data for all students
- No control or comparison group
- Change in Check-In procedure



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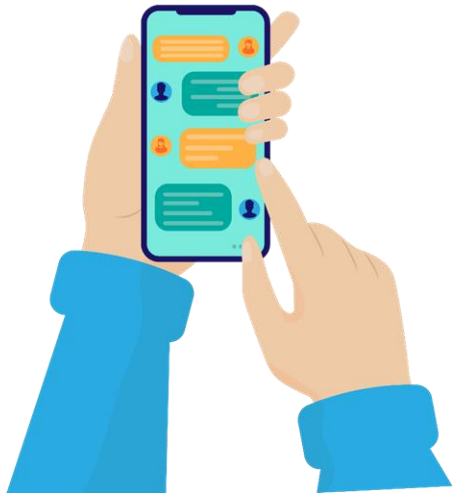
Discussion Points

- Pilot year demonstrated acceptability and feasibility.
- Referral engagement lower than we anticipated.
- Check-Ins and Surveys can inform university staff on what challenges students are having, and when they might need the most support.
- Future work



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Thank you!!

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CENTER *for* EVIDENCE-BASED MENTORING

PUTTING RESEARCH *into* ACTION

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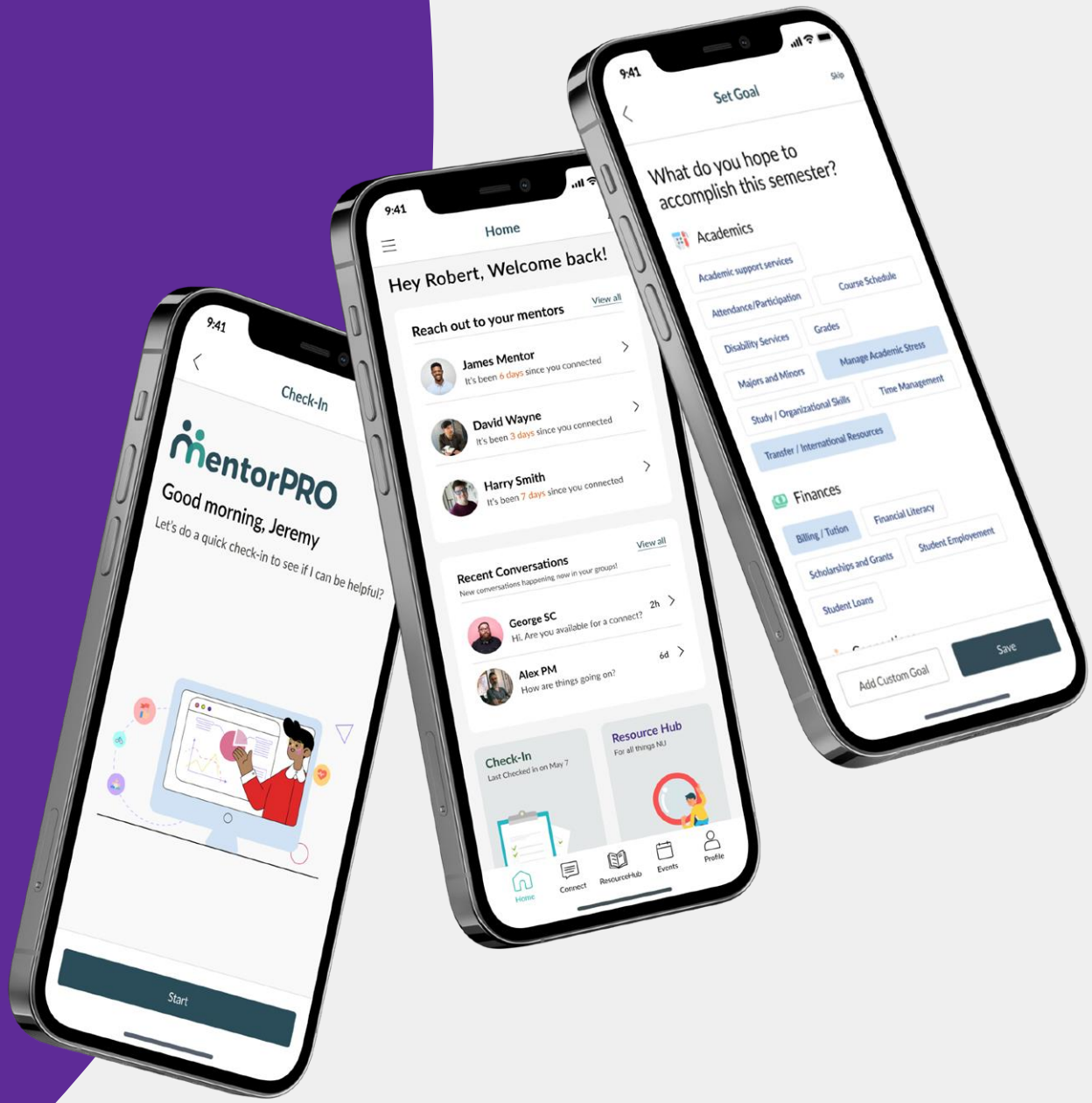
Q+A


9:41
Check-In
mentorPRO
Good morning, Jeremy
Let's do a quick check-in to see if I can be helpful?
Start
9:41
Home
Hey Robert, Welcome back!
Reach out to your mentors
View all
James Mentor
It's been 6 days since you connected
David Wayne
It's been 3 days since you connected
Harry Smith
It's been 7 days since you connected
Recent Conversations
New conversations happening now in your groups!
View all
George SC
Hi, Are you available for a connect?
2h
Alex PM
How are things going on?
6d
Check-In
Last Checked in on May 7
Resource Hub
For all things NU
Home
Connect
ResourceHub
Events
Profile
9:41
Set Goal
Skip
What do you hope to accomplish this semester?
Academics
Academic support services
Course Schedule
Attendance/Participation
Disability Services
Grades
Majors and Minors
Manage Academic Stress
Study / Organizational Skills
Time Management
Transfer / International Resources
Finances
Billing / Tuition
Financial Literacy
Scholarships and Grants
Student Employement
Student Loans
Add Custom Goal
Save