

## The Future of Mobile in Campus Life

Improve recruiting and institutional advancement through an enhanced student experience.



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For higher education institutions, implementing a sound mobile strategy for the future requires a lot more than simply getting students online from any type of device. Your mobile strategy plays a primary role in how your institution interacts with and engages prospective and existing students, as well as faculty, alumni, parents, and even guests. There will be a lot riding on mobility, so thoughtful strategic planning and careful articulation are essential first steps to any institution's mobile strategy.

According to a 2014 report by EDUCAUSE, 86 percent of undergraduates owned a smartphone and 47 percent owned a tablet.<sup>1</sup> From these numbers, it's easy to see that nearly every student has one or more mobile devices, meaning your institution's mobile strategy has the potential to transform campus communications and engagement.

Forward-thinking institutions are using the campus ID/credential as the centerpiece for their mobile strategy.. The student ID/credential becomes the virtual "front door" of the institution, empowering an all-in-one mobile strategy that is quickly and easily embraced by the student body. The student credential ensures the right students get the right services at the right time. Implemented correctly, a comprehensive mobile strategy leveraging the student credential can elevate your institution's brand, improving both recruiting and institutional advancement.



The mobile channel: a fully-integrated suite of campus services optimized for mobile devices.

## Is an all-in-one mobile app in your institution's future?

Let's further explore the possibilities of an all-in-one mobile strategy using a mobile credential as the epicenter for interaction with a university or college.

First, we have to stop thinking of the campus ID credential as only a plastic student ID card, and instead, start envisioning the ID credential as also being a mobile application, or "app."

According to John Meriano, associate vice president of auxiliary services at Quinnipiac University, "When we started the card program many years ago, we called it the passport to life at Quinnipiac. It really was their passport. It was their access to just about everything they did. They would eat with their card. It's their room card, their library card. And when the opportunity came along to bring that primary ID card—their passport—to their cell phone, it seemed like a natural transition."<sup>2</sup>

Your institution's mobile app would be readily available on your website and could be downloaded from the Google Play and The App Store (Apple). Opening the app invites the mobile user to step into campus life and virtually explore the institution.

In that sense, the use of your app will not be limited to current students; it will also serve as your institution's first liaison to K-12 (future) students. Jeff Staples, vice president of market development for Blackboard Transact predicts, "We will see students begin their student experience well before arrival on campus by leveraging the integrated campus app that delivers capabilities for both learning and living."<sup>3</sup>

When new students arrive on campus, they'll already be familiar with the institution from their mobile experience, which will ease the transition into campus life. "They will arrive as a more informed freshman, go straight to their residence hall, open the door with their mobile and begin their college experience in earnest," said Staples.<sup>3</sup>

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For current students, the mobile credential powers many aspects of student life.

- › Just like physical student ID cards, the mobile credential provides secure access to campus buildings and events.
- › Students use their mobile devices loaded with their ID credential to conduct transactions for dining services or other products and services using financial aid or personal money at many on- and off-campus locations, including bookstores, vending machines, local merchants, and more.
- › Mobile credentials can also make fast work of taking class attendance.
- › The credential can also be used for securing tickets to campus events, gaining access to buildings or parking facilities, or securely adding money to their student accounts.

says Steve Fischer, The Ohio State University's director of web and mobile. "Creating a single app also saved the university the money that would have been spent maintaining multiple campus platforms."<sup>4</sup>

Your all-in-one mobile platform should be designed to engage current students, prospective students, alumni, parents, and others. Depending on a user's profile, the app will be provisioned to deliver different services, tools, and information.

Therefore, each of these groups will enjoy different functionality and tools that create a tailored mobile experience. This unique flexibility—only achieved through a mobile platform—enables your institution to create relevant content and experiences that elevate your brand and encourage lifelong engagement.



The trick is to create a comprehensive mobile strategy from the start, so that different departments don't create their own disconnected credentials and applications. Having lots of disparate campus credentials and applications adds confusion, rather than simplicity to student life.

"We knew that if we didn't do something centrally, we could see it proliferating and becoming very fragmented,"

The mobile credential in use with a Blackboard contactless vending reader at Quinnipiac University.

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## Key Elements of a Mobile Strategy

An institution's mobile strategy should be anchored around user experience. Several key elements will be core to the success of any institution's mobile strategy.



### Mobile should be designed with purpose

Ninety-two percent of higher education CIOs surveyed reported having a university mobile application, such as a directory or eCommerce application.<sup>5</sup> But looking toward the future, institutions need rich, multi-function mobile apps to create the types of campus experiences students expect. It takes much more than just a directory or eCommerce tool—you'll need to provide a comprehensive experience.

Some people pursue technology for technology's sake, but that's not how you build an effective mobile strategy at a college or university. Instead, smart institutions will study groups of mobile users and seek to understand what they need from a mobile app. If you don't have a thorough understanding of student needs and expectations, you won't be able to develop a useful and meaningful solution for them. Understand the jobs that mobile will do, and then plan how to accomplish those jobs in the most effective, efficient manner.



### Mobile should create a “wow” experience

For any audience—including students, faculty, visitors, parents, and alumni—the mobile experience should draw people into campus life in a profoundly personal and meaningful way. Your mobile credential should not just be a technology version of a student ID card. It should provide an effortless, intuitive, and personal experience.



**Prospective students already interact with your institution through mobile devices, according to recent surveys. Nine out of ten high school seniors have access to a mobile device, and 70% of seniors have looked at colleges on their mobile devices. So have 45% of their parents.<sup>6</sup>**





## Mobile should reduce friction

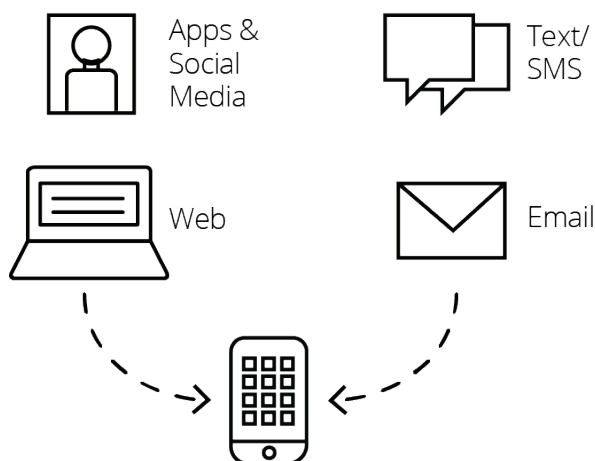
To encourage student adoption, the mobile experience should be as easy as possible. For example, cashless transactions should be fast and secure while helping students avoid waiting in lines. Students should be able to access the information they need on campus quickly and easily. Faculty should be able to collect accurate attendance without calling roll.

Anything about the technology that stands in the way of accomplishing those goals will create a point of friction. Friction slows users down and makes technology less desirable to use—two things that do not lead to strong adoption. When planning your mobile credential strategy eliminating—or at a minimum, adding no new—friction is key. Test for points of friction by asking these questions.

Does it require opening an application?	If students have passcodes on their phones, first they have to put it in. Then they have to find the app on their menu screens, and finally launch it. All of those steps add up to significant unnecessary friction and impedes the usability of the technology.
Does it require logging in?	Again, all those steps in the first item, and then adding a login in order to use the application adds additional friction and is counter to a sound mobile strategy.
Must one search and enter a location number to execute a transaction?	If you have to find and select the right copier or printer, or find a code for a soda machine, you've just required your students to do something extra which take students in the opposite direction of how they use their current physical card, again, adding unnecessary friction.
Does it support architecture redundancy?	Occasionally a host or servers will go down. This shouldn't cause the student to lose functionality or access. The mobile device and reader must be able to work offline and still communicate using the credential to ensure continuity of service.
Will it work for both financial transactions and door access?	Near field communication (NFC) standard protocol is essential to ensure a seamless experience and interoperation. A student should not have to navigate multiple cards or credentials to engage with the campus environment. This is the definition of friction and frustration for the student. The student must be able to utilize a single credential regardless of form factor to acquire the necessary services or required access.

**“The future of student recruitment will be social media/mobile technology-transparent information—two-way communication rich. Compared to previous generations, current high school students are more technologically-savvy and have come to expect interactions with their potential college or university to resemble their interactions with platforms such as Twitter and Facebook: simple, relevant, fast, and personal.”<sup>7</sup>**

#### Recruitment Communication Channel Consolidation



## The Impact of Mobile on Institutional Recruiting

The mobile credential should serve as the virtual front door to your institution, and that is never more important than during institutional recruiting. Mobile can help you ensure the right visitor receives the right services at the right time to create an unforgettable campus experience.

Prospective students already interact with your institution through mobile devices, according to recent surveys. Nine out of ten high school seniors have access to a mobile device, and 70% of seniors have looked at colleges on their mobile devices. So have 45% of their parents.<sup>6</sup>

Higher education management consultant Wayne John Brown writes, “The future of student recruitment will be social media/mobile technology-transparent information—two-way communication rich. Compared to previous generations, current high school students are more technologically-savvy and have come to expect interactions with their potential college or university to resemble their interactions with platforms such as Twitter and Facebook: simple, relevant, fast, and personal.”<sup>7</sup>

Connect young mobile users with a well-planned mobile credential strategy, and your institution can fundamentally transform and reshape the classic higher-education recruiting funnel.

With mobile technology, you have the opportunity to consolidate all of your recruiting and marketing channels into a single mobile channel that includes web, email, text, mobile apps, and social media. Further, it provides continuity of engagement and new levels of service/access once a prospective student and parent(s) arrive on campus.

By reshaping your recruiting funnel to engage prospective students and nurture them, you’ll easily identify the students most interested in attending your institution. Both before and after their campus visit, this allows you to more effectively focus your recruiting resources on the best prospects and reduce recruiting costs.

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## A New Level of Interaction

To illustrate the power of mobile channel consolidation in institutional recruiting, let's consider one prospective student, Carly, in her interactions with two universities—one that lacks a comprehensive mobile strategy (let's call it "Old School") and the other with an all-in-one mobile credential program (we'll call it "Mobile U").

We know Carly's first step in researching schools will likely be to visit their websites. At Old School, she fills out a form to request a digital "information packet." She provides contact information which Old School uses to fulfill the packet request and also send a few follow-up emails. An invitation to visit the campus is mailed or emailed to Carly and it's likely a recruiter will also call.

When Carly visits the Mobile U website, she's immediately presented with an opportunity to download the mobile app. If she chooses the traditional route of filling out a web form, she will be offered the app again in future emails. Whenever the student first engages with the app, a totally new and different type of experience begins.



- › To begin using the app, Carly can choose to link her authentication to her Facebook login or create an institution-specific login.
- › Once authenticated via Facebook, Carly authorizes Facebook to share profile information with the institution's application. This allows the institution to make connections between Carly's interests and campus activities, as well as helping to pre-populate an application for admissions and/or completing a schedule request for a campus visit.

- › Through social tools, the app helps her connect with groups of prospective students related to her interests and/or location, existing students, or even faculty that would be engaging for her.
- › Carly continues to receive relevant campus news and invitations to special events, so she begins to understand what campus life would be like at Mobile U.
- › She receives targeted messages encouraging her to sign up for a campus visit, delivered via social groups, text, email, and/or phone call.



- › When Carly and her parents visit the campus, the institution provisions her mobile credential to provide access to the appropriate parking location, campus facilities, sports venues, and other events during the visit. Funds are even loaded on the phone so the family can enjoy the full campus experience at dining halls, vending machines, or the book store. And, at the end of the day, all permissions and financial credits are revoked until such time as Carly matriculates.
- › In the meantime, the mobile application/credential remains on Carly's phone so she can remain engaged—even including free tickets to campus events as part of the institution's continued recruiting efforts.
- › After the visit, Carly has the chance to take a free online course, to try out the digital academic experience and earn credits toward her degree if she attends the university. This can play a big part in her final decision.
- › Carly continues to have meaningful, two-way communication with Mobile U staff and other prospective students she met on her campus visit and in social groups until she makes her final decision.

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With the right mobile strategy and leveraging the mobile credential, institutions can create a symbiotic, frictionless experience for prospective students and their parents that could not be replicated in the non-mobile traditional experience. It's an entirely different level of interaction, a powerful recruiting tool, and clear representation of the institution's brand.

## How Mobile Can Elevate Your Brand

The right mobile strategy, leveraging a single mobile credential, can create an experience that elevates your institution's brand from the earliest stages of new student recruitment, all the way through the student years—and beyond. Tech-savvy Millennials and future generations use smartphones as an extension of real-world experience, a digital companion to any activity. It will differentiate your institution from peer institutions creating a compelling competitive advantage.

Just as a credit card company receives brand exposure each time a customer pulls the card from his wallet, your students will see your institution's logo on the home screen of their smartphones throughout the years during the recruiting stage, while on campus, and in the alumni years following. In the credit card industry, this is referred to as being “top-of-wallet.” In mobile, an institution wants to be “top-of-phone.” A relevant mobile experience will enhance your institution's “wow factor” with technology enthusiasts and provide shareable content for wider distribution.





**“The objective is to enhance the student experience and deliver better outcomes, resulting in more engaged and supportive alumni who will continue to leverage the campus mobile solution for everything from event attendance to donations for the rest of their lives.”<sup>3</sup>**

## The Impact of Mobile on Institutional Advancement

Institutional advancement focuses on engaging alumni in three (3) important ways: Works, Wisdom, and Wealth. When you’re thinking about the impact of your institution on your alumni—and vice versa—you want to engage in these three areas, but there are different ways to engage based on where alumni are in their alumni lifecycle—Early Career, Mid-Career, or Mature Stage of their career.

There’s no reason for your students’ mobile experience to end with graduation. With the incorporation of social tools in your mobile platform, the app can continue to engage alumni through networking, campus events, and other communications as long as the content and value to them is relevant and meaningful.

The right mobile strategy can keep your institution more connected to alumni than ever before. By staying connected with the app through social networking features, your institution is more likely to have current information about each student’s work experience, interests, and level of engagement. This information makes it easier to keep alumni updated about news and events. You can also reach out to alumni with fundraising campaigns that are most relevant to their interests based on the activities they engage in while enrolled at the university as well as real-time post-graduation information.

Works	Just fresh out of school, your alumni are energized about their new career with more recent emotional ties to the university. Engage them with offers to speak to students on campus about their new professions, assist with university events, or become an alumni advisor for a group on campus. They are the likely types of contributions at this stage and focus on performing Works for the university.
Wisdom	Ask for them to serve on a board, help drive engagement in fundraising activities through their volunteer time and experience, offer value based on their interests to keep them engaged in campus life.
Wealth	You’re still interacting with relevant events and requests for time, but you’ve now moved to fundraising requests as well. Continue to send information about their passions, and make it easy for them to donate to them at the point of interest.



## Conclusion

The right mobile strategy can help higher-education institutions deliver a more relevant and engaging experience to students, prospective students, parents, visitors, and alumni alike. But it's important to plan carefully and not adopt technology for technology's sake. Thoughtfully considering the placement and uses of the credential in your mobile strategy is essential to achieve the desired level and richness of engagement.

Your mobile strategy must be informed by a clear understanding of the “job” prospective and current students—as well as alumni—are trying to do, and then architect your mobile solutions to that end, eliminating all friction with the goal of achieving an exceptional and frictionless experience. This will ensure adoption and satisfaction. Do not fall into the trap of “Mobile-for-Mobile’s Sake” as many institutions and companies now find themselves.

A well-thought-out mobile strategy enables institutions to reshape the recruiting funnel in ways that will more effectively focus recruiting efforts, generate improved yield-rates, and reduce the pressure on institutional discounting. Beyond recruiting, a highly-usable, relevant, and personal mobile experience will engage students during their years on campus and provide a vehicle for engaging and advancing the institution with alumni long after graduation.

<sup>1</sup>Eden Dahlstrom and Jacqueline Bichsel, ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>John Meriano, “Quinnipiac University Pilots Blackboard Transact,” March 19, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Hudson, “Next-gen apps merge campus ID and student life,” CR8oNews.com, March 18, 2015.

<sup>4</sup>Sherrie Negrea, “Apps move up on campus,” University Business, July 2014.

<sup>5</sup>Brendan MacGowan, “Higher ed CIOs list their top tech priorities,” CIO, March 10, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Noel-Levitz, LLC. “2014 E-Expectations Report: The Online Preferences of College-Bound Seniors and Their Parents,” 2014.

<sup>7</sup>Wayne John Brown, “How IT Can Support Student Recruitment (and Why It Should),” Educause, January 27, 2014.