NavNextSteps

A "one-stop-shop" for the college application process

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Abstract

We are NavNextSteps. Our mission is to assist high school students in navigating the higher education application process through a college matchmaker and personalized schedule builder. Students often describe the college application process as "lengthy" and "overwhelming." While some families have the financial resources to spend thousands of dollars on private counselors and tutors, not every aspiring college student has the funds for these resources. The admissions process as a whole is very messy. Students have to dig for the information they need, but they lack direction regarding what to do with what they've found. By conducting in-depth focus groups with high schoolers and current college students and interviewing admissions counselors, NavNextSteps is building a free online platform to make the process simply make more sense. In such an overwhelming period in life, NavNextSteps clears the way, creating a step-by-step plan for tackling college applications.

Problem Statement

NavNextSteps has identified three factors that debilitate an aspiring student's ability to pursue higher education in an efficient manner.

Filtration

There is no "one-stop shop" that exists for students applying to institutions of higher education. While students have access to an influx of information online, there is no real instruction on where to begin, causing students to become overwhelmed.

Functionality

The problem we have identified is that there is no fully functional, user-friendly and cohesive allocation of resources when it comes to applying to college.

Guidance

Counseling for college essay writing and prep is not exactly the most affordable and accessible option for some families. High school college counselors are overburdened with hundreds of students and cannot necessarily guide high schoolers step by step. Students are not walked through the process nearly as enough as they could be and usually find their way through trial and error.

Research Methods

During the research and implementation phases of the project, NavNextSteps took a multi-pronged approach to find solutions for filtration, functionality, and guidance. We conducted a period of customer discovery as well as intensive research based on our ideal targeted audience of high school students. We did this by benchmarking over 10 of the current leading companies in the college and higher education fields, including Chegg and The Common App. We also connected with a variety of stakeholders and current experts in the field including a dozen high school counselors from Cranbrook Schools and Eleanor Roosevelt High School, and college counselors from across Southeastern Michigan and New York City. We interacted with successful education based start-ups including Diagknowstics and AdmitAlly. Lastly, we also conducted 2 focus groups. One was with high school students over the summer from the high schools we partnered with. This past fall, we conducted a second focus group compiled of ten University of Michigan students across all years and schools, ranging from College of Literature, Arts and Sciences to College of Engineering. From this research, we gathered valuable data and input regarding the design of our website. Based on our first focus group, we identified a strong need for our product and were able to construct a survey that high schoolers fill out after making an account on our website. From our second focus group, we tested the validity and accuracy of the questions in our survey.

Intervention and Data Analysis

When asked about the college application process, out of the 15 high school students we interviewed,

2/3 of these students claimed it was "confusing" and "overwhelming"

These students also agreed with the statement that they **"lacked mentorship and guidance"** for approaching this process.

Figure 1

concise
easy
help
step-by-step
individualized
clear
credible
accessible
not confusing
accountability
resources
tabs
organized
clarity
first impression
overcome
use
pages
high advantage
trust
information
allocation
much
process
school
definitions
counselors
college
financials
obstacles
less pressure
guidance
overcome
reliability
tabs
allocation
easy
step-by-step credible
concise
clear
organized
mentorship
mentorship
clarity
advantage
not as stressful
high
tabs
abstract
information
less overwhelming
process
school
definitions
counselors
process
information
impression
first
credible
college
obstacles
trust
use
college
pages
use
reliability
pages
organized
easy
first
credible
body
college
concise
obstacles
overcome
overcome
guidance
allocation
tabs
reliability
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