

Easing Critical Transitions in UW Transfer Students' Academic Career

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Research

Primary Question

How do transfer students experience their transition to UW and into their major?



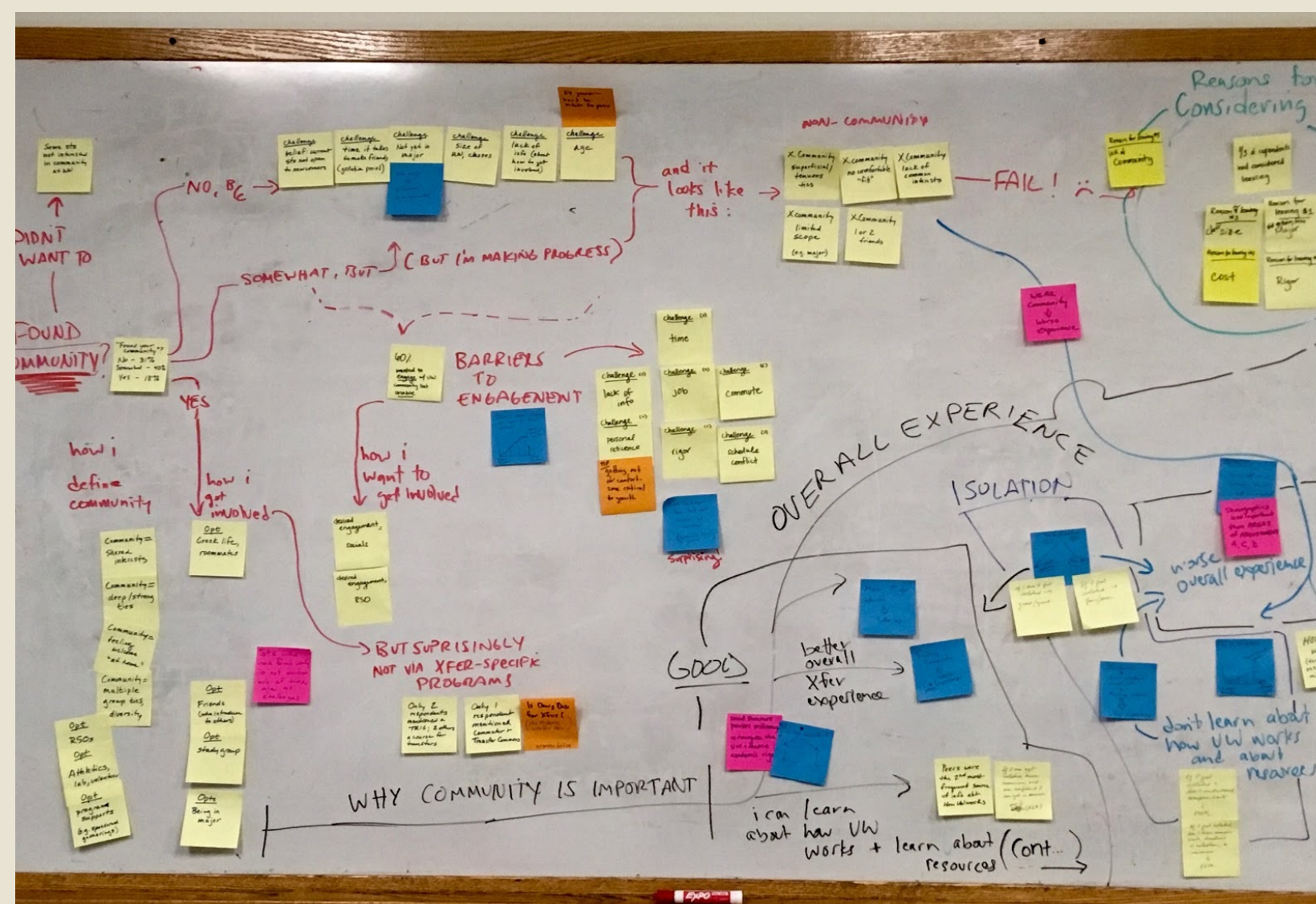
UW-IT's Academic Experience Design & Delivery unit supports student success by using a user-centered design methodology to identify unmet needs and offer technology solutions to meet those needs.

Our process included iterative rounds of data collection and assessment through interviews, surveys, focus groups, prototype testing, and piloting our solution.

We had a **interdisciplinary team** that allowed us to conduct **both qualitative and quantitative analysis** and form a rich understanding of how transfer students experience their transition.

Team members included:

- Educational Psychologist
- Data scientist
- Human-centered Designer



Findings

Key Finding

The type of information and social network support transfer students receive in their first quarter at UW has a significant impact on whether they persevere and graduate.

Factors influencing transfer transition:

"Good" experience

"Poor" experience

Perceived community/isolation



Feel connected and engaged with UW community



Feel isolated, unsupported in transfer transition

Institutional knowledge



Some knowledge about UW, strong capacity to find needed resources and answers



Lack of knowledge about UW, including timelines, milestones, resources, academic expectations, etc.

Differences between CCs and UW

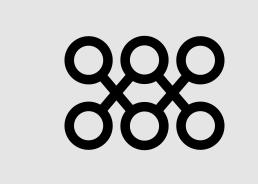


Proactively prepared for differences between community college and UW

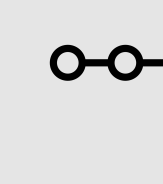


Overwhelmed and unprepared for differences between community college and UW

Multiple touchpoints

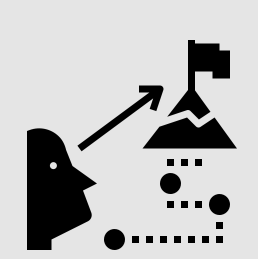


Early and repeat interactions with general and department advisers, faculty, staff, peers, online resources



Limited interactions with a few members of campus community

Getting into Major



Planned transfer early; aware of requirements for applying to major; prepared with back-up plan



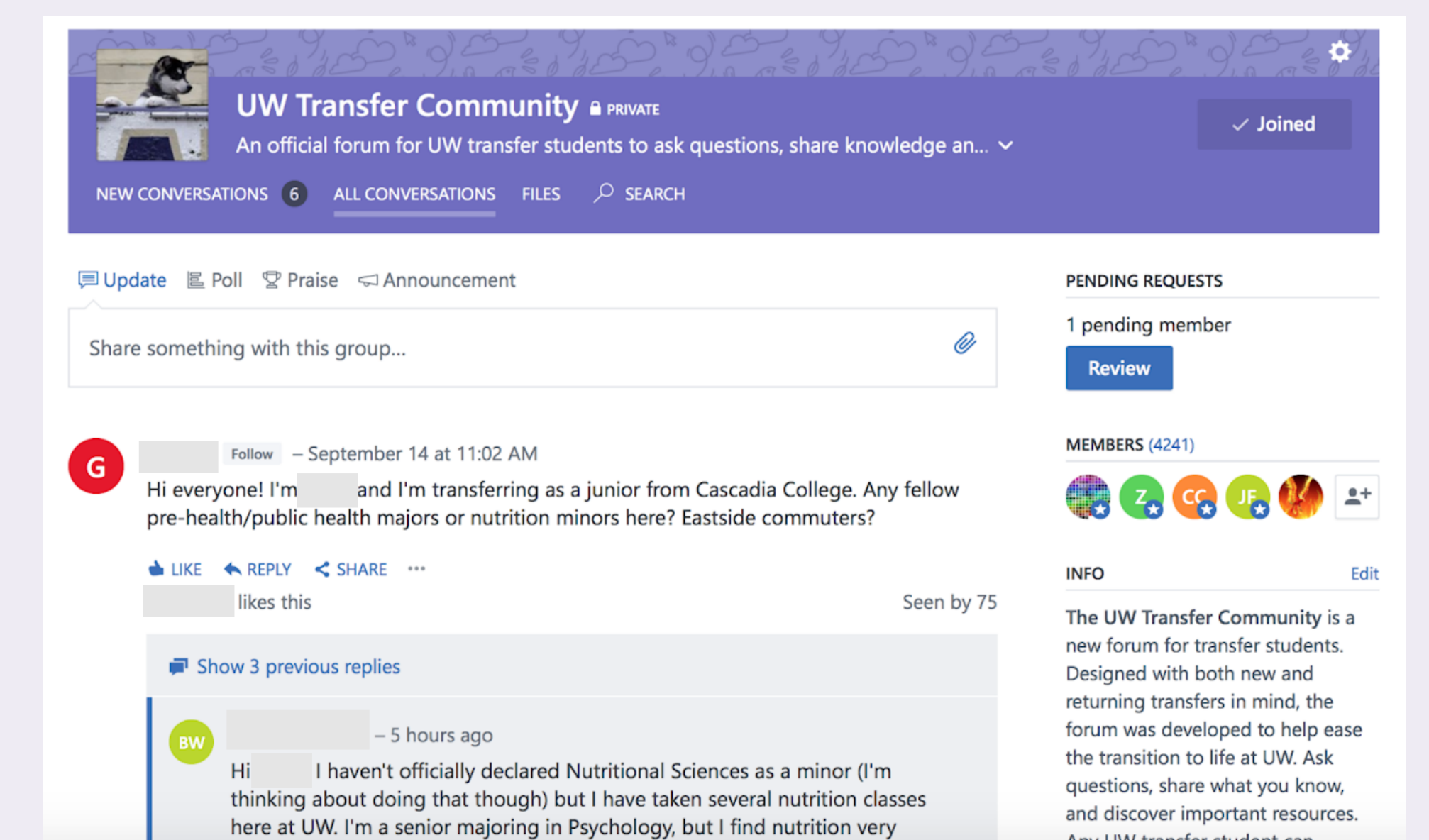
Unaware of separate admission to UW and to major; set on a capacity-constrained major; no back-up plan

Design

Targeted brainstorm

How might we increase transfer students' experience of community and access to informal knowledge?

Proposed solution:



Private, peer-to-peer online forum for new and previous transfers

Year 1 results

Transfers used the forum as we hoped, to exchange information and share experiences

Pattern of use suggests need for forum community is tied to transition support

Need sustained marketing in multiple channels, beginning before orientation

Mobile Yammer app improved participation, but community desired more features from platform

Transfers used the forum most in the weeks leading up to and during their first months at UW.

