



michigan community college association

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



The Digital Front

Door Project

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MCCA Student Success Summit

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Agenda Overview

- Activity: Step into a Student's Shoes
- Group Reflection on the Experience
- Problem statement
- Our recommendation: the Digital Front Door
- How to implement at your institution
- What to think about
 - How to implement
 - How to measure
- The what it could be
- Three Big Takeaways



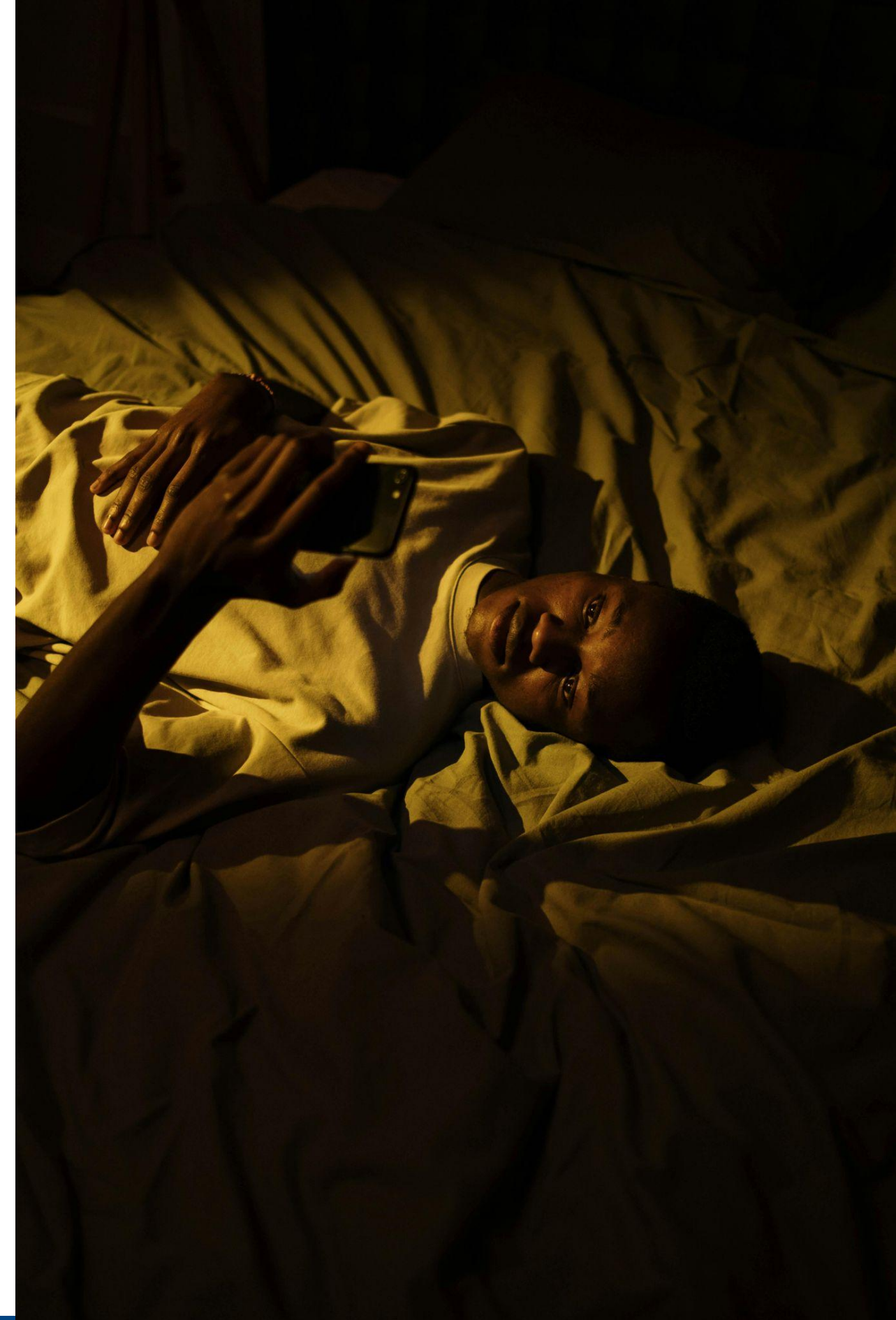
Engagement Activity

Meet Alex. He's 22, he just got home from his shift; it's 1:43 a.m., and he has decided he's *had it* with his job in customer service.

He wants to enroll at your institution in a healthcare program.

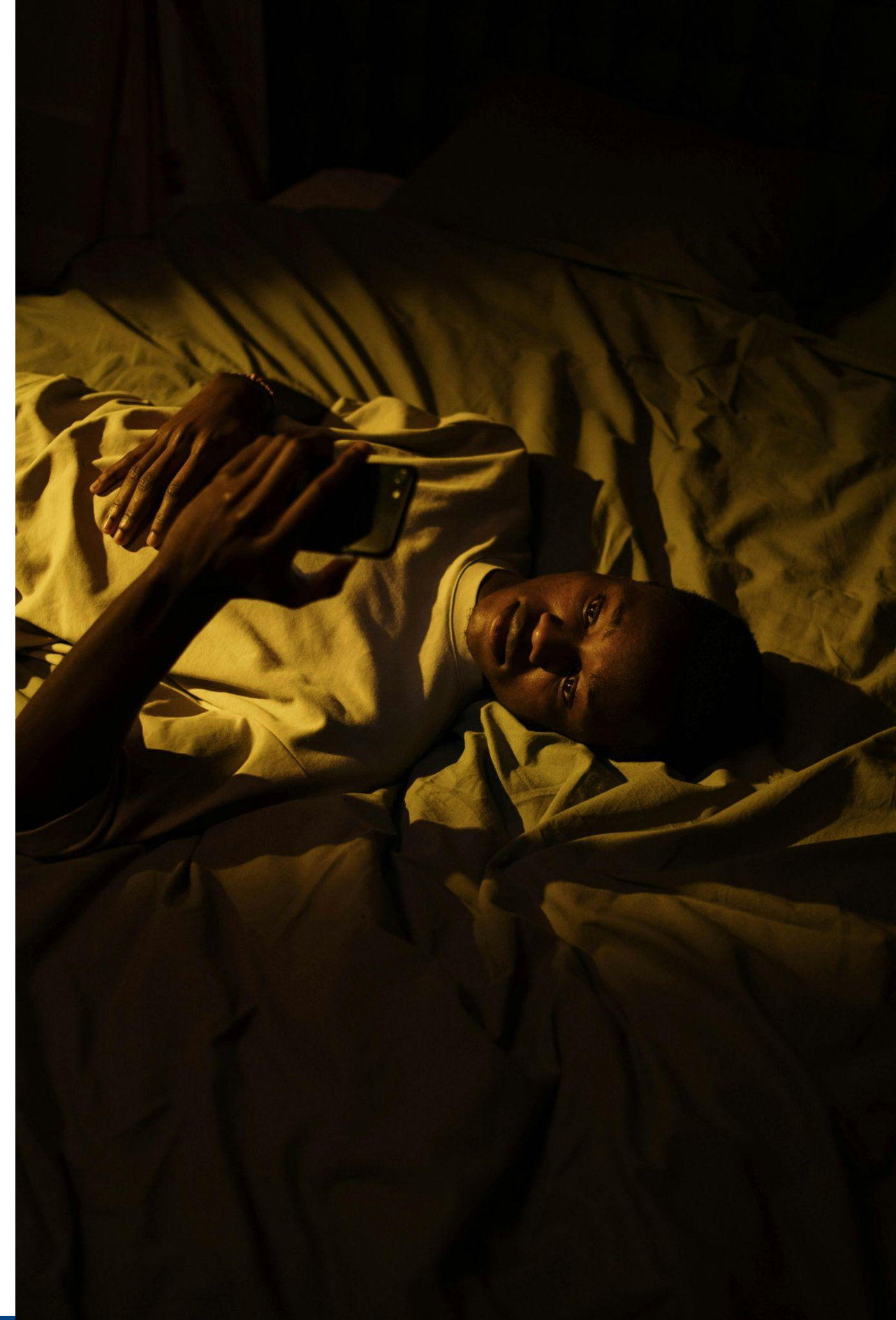
For the next few minutes, you are Alex.

- Your goal is figure out the first step towards enrollment before going to bed.
- Oh wait... your laptop is at 2%... you need to do this all from your **cell phone**.



Engagement Activity

- As Alex, choose a healthcare program on the website, identify the courses for your first semester.
- What other questions do you have at this point in the process?



slido



What words best describe your feelings right now?

Problem Statement

Community college students often face a complex and fragmented array of technology tools and resources.

This makes it challenging to find the support they need to succeed, leading to frustration, disengagement, and decreased student success.



The Current Digital Landscape

*Interviews conducted with 14 institutions
(Community Colleges, 4 years, in state and out of state)
about their student-facing technology tools.*



Pain points

- Lack of comprehensive/ ongoing training.
- Baseline Data to assess effectiveness of new initiatives missing.
- Missing voices during the decision making - leading to redundancies and resistance to new initiatives.

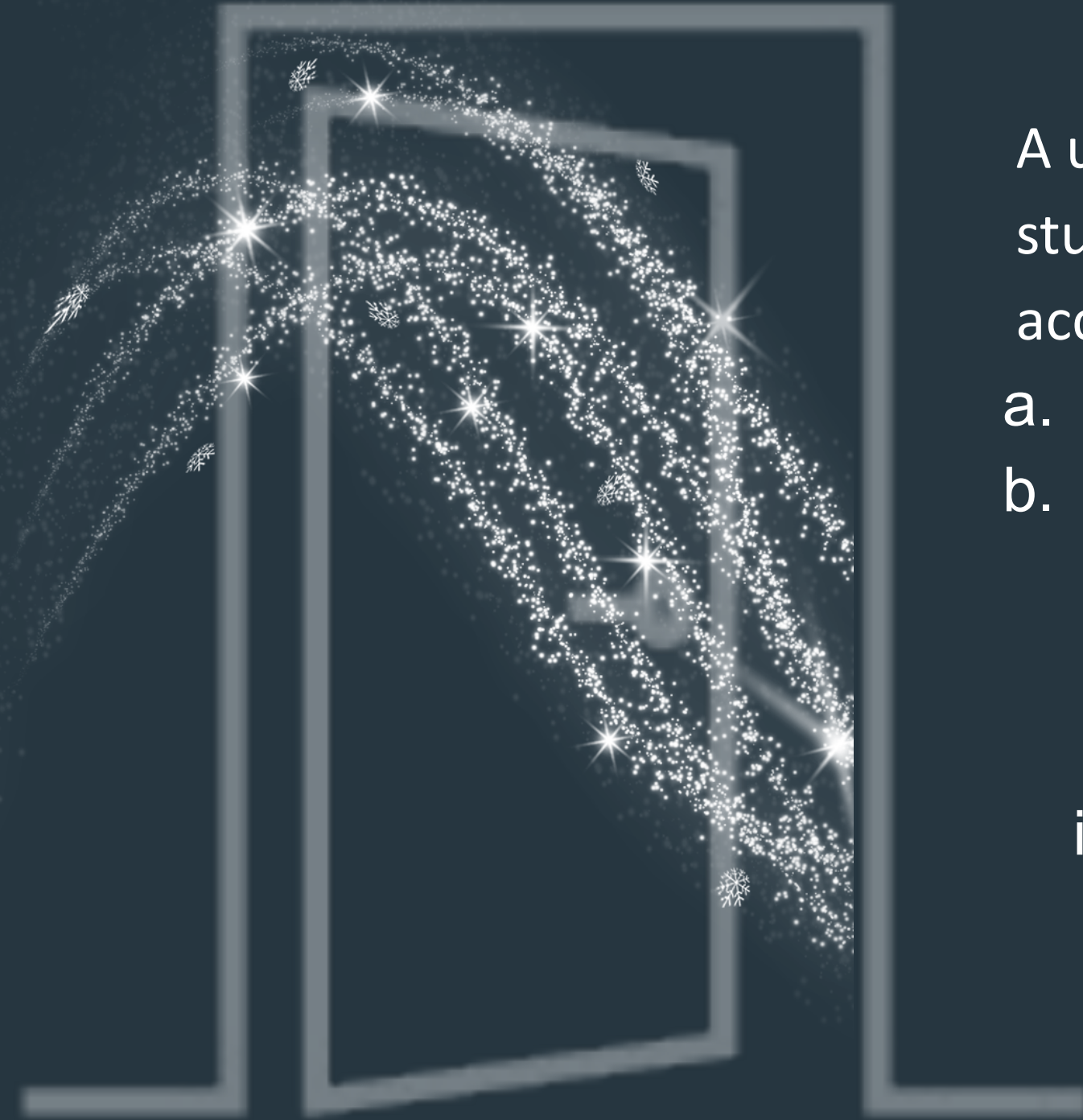
Emergent Themes

- Institutions who have recently implemented new tools recognized, and sought out, opportunities for **cross-service/campus wide utilization of the software**
- Teams who reported the most success and satisfaction in their implementation also reported flexibility and trust from administration to problem solve and **try new ideas for continuous improvement**
- All technology/ digital tool implementations discussed were ALL either freshly implemented as a response to COVID, or additional features were quickly put in place to address in-person barriers in the pandemic

Introducing... The Digital Front Door

A unified platform for all touchpoints where prospective students, current students and alumni can digitally interact with the College to drive better access, engagement, and experiences.

- a. Benefits include increased engagement, access and loyalty
- b. Assumption: If we improve our digital journey, students are more likely to persist.
 - i. Saves time
 - ii. Removes barriers
 - iii. Decreases cognitive load



What do we already know?

- The **website** is the first impression most potential students have with your college
- A **strong web and digital presence** enables us to engage our students where they are by improving access and reach, 24/7, and earning their trust by providing accurate and relevant information
- Students and Staff are **confused and overwhelmed** with so many technologies and where to find things
- **Inconsistent language throughout journey**



Student Journey

Student-centric digital initiatives that improve end-to-end College experiences

We strive to attract, engage and retain students by providing an exceptional digital experience that allows them to engage with our college where, when and how they prefer to complete their program.

STRATEGIES

Digital Presence

Stay connected with our students by creating digital experiences that are easy, reliable, and meaningful

JOURNEYS



DIGITAL INITIATIVES

- SEO/SEM Optimization
- Campus location listings
- Online Ratings and comments
- Voice search optimization
- Social Media

- Online Chat
- Contact us
- Website Accessibility
- Website personalization
- Site surveys

- Emails
- Texts
- Call backs
- Referrals
- Event registration
- CRM Integrations

- Submit Application
- Financial Aid
- Placement testing

- Instructions
- Policies
- Counseling
- Online orientation
- Title IV training
- Student Portal

- Registration form
- Schedule
- Payment schedule
- Wait List

- Communicate with Professor or Counselor
- Student learning portal
- On-campus Wayfinding
- Tutoring

- Transcripts
- Transfer to a four-year institution or graduate from program
- Surveys
- Development



The current student experience:



Hi! Want to chat about this college? If you have a question, don't be shy. Can you tell me exactly what you're looking for?

Write a message



Data Analysis

- Your college's website is the **top source** used to learn about your college
 - **93% of students** use the college website to **get information**
 - **87%** use the college website to **make a decision** about attending
 - **58%** of students **use a search engine** to find a college's website
 - Most students access via their **mobile device** when in the planning journey (Requesting Information, calculating cost, etc.)
 - 56% expect to see **personalized content**
 - Preferred way for a student to **contact you** is through a form on your website
 - **97%** of all students are open to **receiving text messages** from their institutions
- Students are **open to taking surveys** related to their digital experience if they believe it could improve their experience

Example Goals for Improvement

Leading Indicators of Success:

- . Increased student engagement with the digital front door (e.g., number of visits, time spent on site, number of conversions, etc.)
- . Increased student satisfaction with the digital front door (e.g., survey results, focus group feedback, etc.)
- . Increased student enrollment

Lagging Indicators of Success:

- . Improved student outcomes (e.g., retention rates, graduation rates, time to completion.)
- . Reduced student loan default rates
- . Increased student satisfaction with the college experience



Measures of Success

- Continuously monitor your digital properties.
- Develop data dashboards to see when key conversions are trending up or down.
- Pay attention to your audience.



How do we get there?

- Consider your strategic plan
 - How does technology intersect with the student experience/student success?
- Inventory your technology
 - What do you have already?
 - What do these pieces do and how do they intersect with the student journey?
 - Where do they overlap?
- Network across silos
 - Create expectations of communication across departments/divisions
 - Give teams voices to share their successes and pain points
 - Who is on that team? Communications, Student Affairs, Instruction, IT
 - Develop opportunities to converge overlap between services/departments to streamline
 - Create realistic timelines for collaborative efforts/experiments



Recommendations

1. Digital Expectations are extremely high. Think Amazon, Google, etc.

Student Quote “Website needs button to quickly change program of study. I don't have time to sift through pages and fill out forms, time is better spent on actual education.”

2. Build a cross-functional team!

Schools need to adopt a Digital Front Door Model or Committee with a focus on accountability; audit your tech; identify duplication; increase communication

3. Commitment to increase Self Service capabilities

Self-schedule counseling & financial aid appointments

Convenience

Apply for graduation

4. Increase student centered content with local SEO focus

5. Single sign on

6. Portal



Takeaways

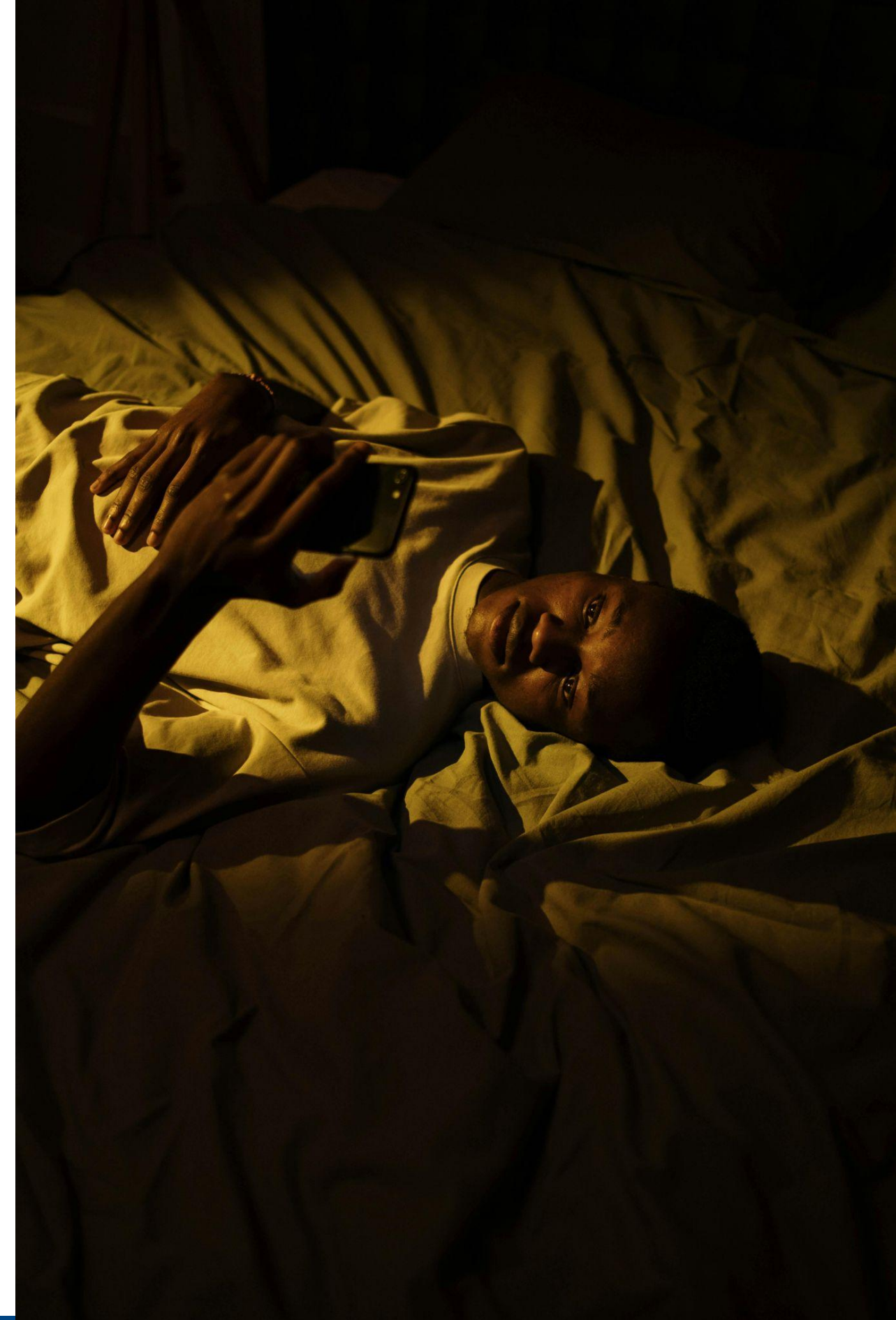
- Commit to **User-centric** approach
- Remove barriers to create **frictionless** experiences
- **Progress** over perfection
- Develop reliable **processes** to promote **consistency** and **standardization**
- **Engage** and **partner** with key college stakeholders; developing a **Digital Front Door Committee**
- Continuous employee **education** and **development** on digital landscape



Remember Alex?

- The feeling of frustration or confusion? What does our Digital Front Door future look like?

Let us introduce you to:



The Digital Front Door Experience

Vision for Emma

- Hears a College ad while listening to music on **Spotify**
- Decides she wants to go back to school and starts to **research** programs close to her home from her phone when she gets home from work at 11pm
- Lands on the Paralegal page on College's website and **fills out a form** for more information
- Receives a **text notification** on her Apple watch from College to register for a campus tour
- Goes back to the web site and clicks the link to **Apply** to College before heading to work
- **Schedules** a counseling appointment online for a time that fits her schedule
- Searches and **Registers** for classes on Student Portal on Saturday
- Sets up a **payment plan** through Student Payment Center Portal



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