



PRIVATE // 4-YEAR



# 2-in-3 New Students Say Nearpeer Helped Them Decide to Enroll at Butler University

## WHY BUTLER CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH NEARPEER

The results were better than anyone had anticipated: 67% of Butler University's newest recruits reported that having access to Nearpeer before depositing influenced them to choose Butler over competing institutions where they had also been accepted. The university's hypothesis was that introducing Nearpeer earlier in the admissions journey -- as early as the acceptance letter -- may have some positive impact on their admit pool (particularly with students who were "on the bubble" and weighing multiple admissions offers), but few expected the results to be this profound.

## KEY FINDINGS

Nearpeer was a highly-effective catalyst to help admits -- and then committed students -- connect with their Butler peers, express their authentic selves, and cement their decision to enroll at Butler. Butler's own student surveys reported:



**67%**

of incoming students said Nearpeer influenced them to deposit



**43%**

of incoming first-gen students who reported feeling nervous about starting college said Nearpeer reduced their anxiety



**39%**

of incoming students say Nearpeer not only helped them connect with peers but make real friends

# WHY BUTLER CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH NEARPEER

## BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Indianapolis, IN

Butler University, the “#1 Regional University in the Midwest” and the “Most Innovative University in the Midwest” according to *U.S. News & World Report*, prides itself on providing a student-centered community that can’t be found anywhere else. A mid-sized, private institution located in Indianapolis, Butler University makes “community” central to every aspect of the student journey, from the moment new recruits arrive for orientation until the moment they walk across the stage at graduation. Continuing to innovate, Butler sought ways to introduce this vibrant and supportive community to their future students even earlier. *“How can we help our deposited recruits feel a greater sense of belonging throughout the summer, long before our orientation in late August?”* university administrators wondered.



They also aimed to find out, *“How can we introduce Butler’s close-knit community to our admitted applicants who are still making their college decision? How can they benefit from the energy and enthusiasm of their peers who have already committed to Butler? Could this influence their decision to deposit?”*

### ENTER NEARPEER

After learning about Nearpeer’s enrollment and retention impact at Xavier University of Louisiana, one of the nation’s leading private HBCUs and a school that Butler University recognizes as a peer institution, Butler leaders decided to give Nearpeer a try. Their administration was impressed by the positive impact that Nearpeer had at Xavier (grew enrollment to record highs, increased male recruitment significantly, reduced summer melt, enhanced orientation, etc...), and Butler leaders thought Nearpeer could be the perfect intervention to deliver that “sense of belonging before arriving” at their school, too.

This launched a robust partnership between Nearpeer and Butler University that would be research-driven and results-oriented, all focused around the goal of helping students feel a greater sense of community and inclusion from the moment of admission and on through their first year at college.

# HOW NEARPEER SUPPORTS BUTLER'S STRATEGY TO BUILD STUDENT BELONGING BEFORE ARRIVING ON CAMPUS

Dr. Frank E. Ross III, Butler University's Vice President for Student Affairs, saw Nearpeer as having great potential at the university.

Dr. Ross is recognized nationally for his transformative leadership in student affairs. In 2024, he was inducted as a NASPA "Pillar of the Profession" for his exemplary leadership.

*"We found that first-year students' overall satisfaction with Butler is high, and the supportive campus environment is a strength," Dr. Ross noted; "however, students identified their ability to form connections with other students as a distinct area of opportunity for the university. Additionally, we identified the need to improve communications with first-year students and their families as a priority."*

Dr. Ross also observed that *"incoming college students are eager for opportunities to express their authentic selves and establish lasting connections with their peers. As such, institutions should proactively cultivate a sense of belonging even before students arrive on campus.... [It] is essential to ensure their resilience and success."*

## Dr. Frank E. Ross III

Butler Vice President for Student Affairs



*"Incoming college students are eager for opportunities to express their authentic selves and establish lasting connections with their peers. As such, institutions should proactively cultivate a sense of belonging even before students arrive on campus." - Dr. Frank Ross III*



Realizing this, Dr. Ross led Butler's implementation of Nearpeer across enrollment management, student affairs, and new student & family programs to qualitatively enhance the incoming and first-year experience at Butler. He was joined by Dr. Bridget Yuhas, Butler University's Dean for Student Health & Well-being, who would be leading the research on Nearpeer's quantitative impact at Butler, particularly Nearpeer's ability to improve belonging and reduce loneliness amongst Butler's newest students.




# WHY NEARPEER IS AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SO MANY SOCIAL PLATFORMS

In their first year of partnership, Butler and Nearpeer focused on Nearpeer's ability to help deposited recruits have a more successful, less stressful transition into college by connecting them early in the summer with peers, campus resources, and university staff. Dr. Ross and team identified this as a strategic priority and had long looked for a technology to do this, but nothing in the higher-ed technology space came close to offering this type of experience - traditional social media was too toxic and had few guardrails to ensure a healthy and welcoming environment.

As Dr. Ross observed, ***"Too many social media platforms today prioritize engagement with the platform rather than with the people on the platform.*** Additionally, students' constant exposure in social media to curated, idealized versions of other students' 'stories' can amplify feelings of inadequacy and lead to a distorted sense of reality - all while exacerbating the Imposter Syndrome felt by so many students today." He continues, *"Many colleges and universities use social media platforms to engage and connect students, but all too often these efforts have not yielded the desired results.... Even with robust orientation and student affairs programming, colleges and universities can miss important opportunities to ensure students develop healthy social connections and foster meaningful relationships with other students who share their interests and backgrounds."*

 <b>Social Media</b>	 <b>Nearpeer</b>
<b>Prioritizes engagement with the platform</b>	<b>Prioritizes engagement with people</b>
<b>Exposes students to idealized, curated content</b>	<b>Fosters authentic, meaningful connections</b>
<b>Contributes to feelings of Imposter Syndrome</b>	<b>Builds confidence and belonging</b>

# WHAT BUTLER FOUND IN NEARPEER THAT WAS MISSING IN SOCIAL MEDIA






**Find Your People at Butler University!**

The **Nearpeer** mobile app allows you to meet and connect with other Butler University classmates who share the same **interests, experiences, hometowns, and more!** Nearpeer is a **free, exclusive** app just for Butler University students!

**To get started**

- Go to [nearpeer.net/butler](http://nearpeer.net/butler) or scan the QR code to signup
- Enter your pre-approved **personal or @butler.edu** email, and click "Create Account"
- You will receive an email with a **verification link** - click the link to begin creating an account!
- **Create** a quick profile - and you're in!
- **Download** the Nearpeer app from the **Google Play** or **Apple Store**



For more info contact [butler@nearpeer.net](mailto:butler@nearpeer.net)



Make new friends and find your Butler University community!

Get the Nearpeer app:



Sign up with the email address you used to apply to Butler on the Common App:

**Create Account**

[Log In](#)  
[Trouble Logging In?](#)

Available at participating colleges and universities

Need Nearpeer helpdesk support? Email [butler@nearpeer.net](mailto:butler@nearpeer.net)



Each committed Fall student receives a link via email to join the Butler instance of Nearpeer. Butler leaders also launched Nearpeer on Instagram, via text, and at summer orientation.

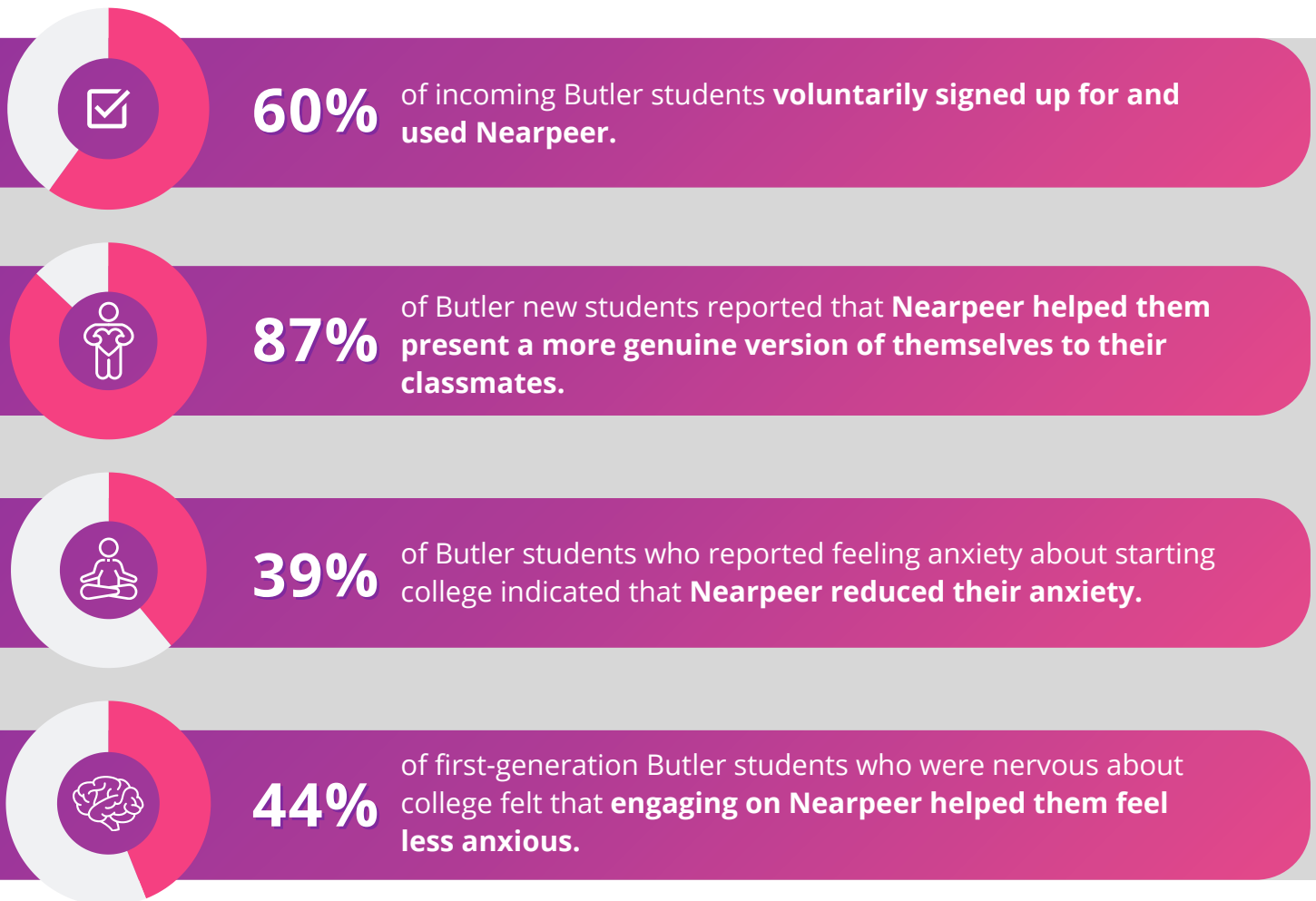
Ultimately, Butler staff wanted to find a platform that could enable social networking but without the "pitfalls of social media." University leaders saw "authenticity" being the key: as Dr. Ross would describe, the school needed an app "that encouraged authentic student engagement and relationship-building among new students, felt inviting even for our introverted students, and would help us connect more students to our support programs."

Nearpeer is custom-built for this purpose with its commitment to fostering healthy community and belonging at its core – and the results from Butler's collaboration with Nearpeer quickly revealed how transformative this type of technology could be.

# RESULTS AND FINDINGS: HOW NEARPEER FOSTERED AUTHENTIC PEER CONNECTIONS, REDUCED ANXIETY AND STRESS

Incoming deposited recruits embraced Butler's introduction of Nearpeer – over 60% of the incoming class decided to voluntarily join the platform to find friends and make connections with their peers months before classes started. Of these students, 87% reported that Nearpeer helped them present a more genuine version of themselves to their new classmates, and 39% of incoming Butler students who reported feeling anxious about starting college said that Nearpeer reduced their anxiety.

That reduction in anxiety was even higher amongst Butler's incoming first-generation students: 44% of incoming first-gen students who acknowledged feeling stressed about transitioning to college reported lower levels of anxiety because they had access to Nearpeer. The results were deemed "extremely encouraging" by Butler staff. This was precisely the type of impact the university was hoping to achieve.



# RESULTS AND FINDINGS: HOW NEARPEER IMPROVED ADMIT-TO-DEPOSIT RATES FOR RECRUITS “ON THE BUBBLE”






Having seen firsthand Nearpeer’s ability to reduce melt and keep deposited students engaged over the summer, Butler University decided to introduced Nearpeer even earlier in its second year of partnership with the platform. Butler’s belief was that if Nearpeer could help more deposited students matriculate, then maybe it could help more admitted students commit to Butler, too.

In an increasingly competitive enrollment market, schools are looking for ways to stand out from competing institutions. Butler wondered if introducing Nearpeer as early as the acceptance letter could enable their accepted recruits to start experiencing Butler’s close-knit community while still deciding which university they wanted to attend. Nearpeer enabled Butler to launch its “Admitted Student Community.” Keeping it casual and inviting, Butler promoted Nearpeer to its admitted recruits as a way to:

***“Meet fellow admitted Bulldogs with common interests. If you are looking for a future workout partner, study buddy, carpool co-pilot, or simply have questions about attending Butler University, Nearpeer can help!”***

- **And help it did** -- especially for the important population of admitted students who were “on the bubble” and still undecided. Butler surveyed their new Fall students, and 67% of them declared that Nearpeer played a role in their decision to commit to Butler. Ultimately, Nearpeer’s simple app did exactly what the university was hoping it would – and then some.
- Further, Butler’s research about their Nearpeer usage revealed some interesting insights. Here’s what they learned...

## How Butler Students Used Nearpeer

-  **51%** used the app to find peers in **their major**
-  **36%** used it to find a **roommate**.
-  **35%** connected with **university resources** (academic support, mentors, counseling services, clubs, etc.) before arriving on campus.
-  **45%** stayed up-to-date on important **announcements, deadlines, and events**.
-  **34%** engaged with university staff or peers to ask questions about the **admissions processes or campus life**.

# WHAT BUTLER STUDENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT NEARPEER

As one incoming marketing student remarked...

*"I knew no one going to Butler, and thinking of having to make new friends, having to make new connections -- it was terrifying to me. I haven't had to do this for literally my whole life. I did it once in second grade and that was it."*

However, he found Nearpeer to be a "miraculous" help to him...

*"It was really easy for me to reach out to a couple of people, and a few other people reached out to me, and now I've already met plenty of people. I've made friends, I already have a gym buddy at Butler before I've even stepped foot on campus, and that's really awesome for me. I even connected with the captain of the volleyball team on Nearpeer, and he already started recruiting me. Now I already have a bunch of info about signup and what's going on with the volleyball team there. **I couldn't see any other way for that to happen without Nearpeer.** Now I'm prepared for volleyball this coming fall."*

He also relayed how helpful the "Incoming Freshmen Group Chat" was to him....



*"That group has been fantastic for me. I had some questions and I couldn't find any answers on the website, but there was [Butler] staff in the group chat, so you just ask a question and get answers easily. Now I feel a little more prepared making my transition into my first year, and **I never would have had the chance to make these connections if I hadn't decided to join Nearpeer.**"*





# WHAT BUTLER STUDENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT NEARPEER



Amanda, an incoming pre-pharmacy student, had a powerful experience with Nearpeer.

*"In the beginning, I was so stressed out. But now, having Nearpeer, I feel less stressed because I'm able to communicate with so many people, and now I actually feel excited. It makes me feel so much better."*

When asked how helpful Nearpeer was compared to other platforms, she said...

*"Nearpeer feels more calm. Other apps can get really chaotic really quickly. With Nearpeer, it's really chill, and everyone is just there to get to know one another. It feels really nice, and that feels so different from other apps."*

An incoming chemistry major, Kasey, had the same opinion of Nearpeer as Amanda...

*"Nearpeer is more personal. On social media, you put on a persona - but Nearpeer is so easy because you just put your major, your bio, the foods you like to eat, the music you listen to, things like that instead of just looking at someone or just talking to someone. Other platforms are just texting or just looking at pictures, but Nearpeer really lets you get to know who a person is. It's so helpful to meet that way and find other people with mutual interests as you."*

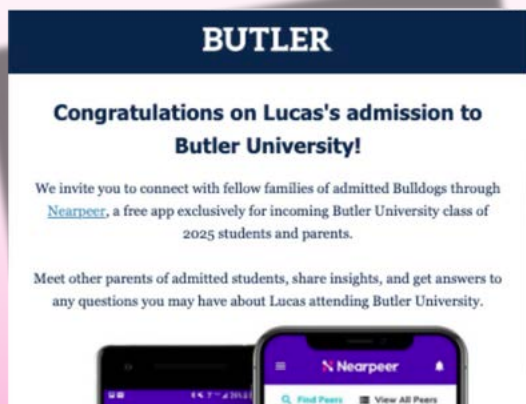
Meanwhile, Allyson, a new undeclared student at Butler, had a different appreciation for Nearpeer: she really valued the app for its ability to serve her as an introvert. The app helped her feel like part of the community while still being able to comfortably exist on the periphery without having to jump into any group chats.

*"I'm nervous. I'm just a nervous person, but Nearpeer has helped me. For me, it's a big relief to just be able to see people and learn their names. Just knowing faces and names of people and seeing there are people I have things in common with. That will really help me with socializing when I get to school."*

And, by the end of her first semester in college, Allyson had already made 76 friends on Nearpeer.

# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

With this kind of transformative impact—strengthening the overall community while supporting students on an individual level—**Butler University has expanded its use of Nearpeer to engage parents and families.**



Parents of committed Fall 2025 students received a link via email to join the Butler Parent instance of Nearpeer.

Building on this success, the university is now exploring opportunities to extend the platform's reach to alumni. This forward-thinking partnership between Butler University and Nearpeer continues to uncover new ways to unite the Butler community while advancing the university's outright commitment to enhancing student well-being.



*"If colleges and universities want to foster well-being and belonging and advance student success, there is great value in considering technology solutions that help to scale the efforts that only humans can do – create authentic, inclusive communities."*

*"[With Nearpeer, universities will be able to] effectively and efficiently scale to reach ALL students, freeing up busy, hard-working campus professionals to spend more time on other programs and student-facing initiatives. No longer do institutions of higher education have to look to social media to reach students or wait until ice breakers during new student orientation for students to start building high-quality relationships. The strategic use of [Nearpeer] leads to meaningful social connections that positively impact enrollment, greatly foster students' sense of belonging, and enhance student success throughout the first year – and beyond."*

*- Dr. Frank Ross III*

# THE Nearpeer® EXPERIENCE



## LAUNCH QUICKLY

Nearpeer is a turnkey solution that can be implemented with minimal lift from university partners. With no system integration or university staffing required, the platform has launched in as little as 24 hours for clients seeking immediate help growing enrollment, improving retention, and supporting greater sense of belonging among students.

## SEE SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

Institutions using Nearpeer can achieve 3X higher yield rates, up to 93% melt reduction, 17% year-over-year retention increases, and 16% higher four-year graduation rates. Students also report reduced anxiety and isolation, along with greater inclusion and belonging, making Nearpeer the top choice for improving student success and mental health.

## TRUSTED PARTNER AND REAL IMPACT

Nearpeer partners with institutions of all sizes to support diverse learners, from undergraduates to adults and early-college students. Nearpeer conducted the largest clinical trial on belonging's impact on student success in higher education, establishing itself as a leader the field. This transformational work is backed by philanthropic leaders like The Lumina Foundation and The Lilly Endowment.

## ENHANCE EXISTING INVESTMENTS

Nearpeer is a powerful standalone tool that seamlessly enhances universities' existing systems, including student information systems, res-life platforms, marketing tools, student success platforms, and resources for tutoring, mentorship, and mental health.

## CONSIDERABLE ROI

Nearpeer is a proven, high-ROI investment for universities, driving increased yield, reduced melt, and improved persistence. Partner schools see a 10x (or higher) return through higher enrollment that increases tuition revenue, with some achieving up to 97x ROI. No wonder *Forbes* calls Nearpeer "A very big deal."

## HIGH ADOPTION

"Will I fit in?" is today's top concern for college students, and without an early sense of belonging, enrollment and persistence decline sharply. Nearpeer addresses this need by helping students form meaningful friendships before orientation, leading to an average 50% voluntary adoption—rising to 95% at some schools.

# Forbes

“ For those in the know, or who follow the razor’s edge world of college recruitment, boosting enrollment is gold. But also boosting retention, as was shown in this study [of Nearpeer], is platinum...

This is a very big deal. ”

# ABOUT NEARPEER

Our peer-to-peer engagement platform acts as a transformative catalyst, fostering meaningful connections and enhancing students' sense of belonging at every stage of their journey. Leveraging advanced matching algorithms, Nearpeer facilitates personalized, meaningful, and healthy 1:1 connections tailored to each individual student. Nearpeer's clients benefit from a custom-built, safe, and inclusive virtual peer-networking platform that has proven to strengthen engagement, commitment, and community throughout the student lifecycle. This unique approach drives measurable improvements in enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates while also proving to reduce student loneliness, anxiety, and isolation. This is why so many schools partner with Nearpeer – and why Forbes calls Nearpeer “a very big deal.”



For more information, visit [nearpeer.com](https://nearpeer.com).