


PUBLIC // MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTION



Improving Enrollment and Transitions for First-year, Transfer, Underserved Students

WHY FRESNO STATE CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH NEARPEER

Fresno State serves a diverse student body, including a large population of first-generation students, community college transfer students, and individuals from underserved backgrounds. In order to improve enrollment rates, enhance differentiation, and ensure a seamless transition for incoming students, Fresno State recognized the need for a more effective way to connect new students with ambassadors, staff, and peers. As part of its commitment to staying ahead in an increasingly competitive higher education landscape, Fresno State also sought to leverage Nearpeer to engage new recruits and showcase the distinctive value of the Fresno State experience.

KEY FINDINGS

Fresno State exceeded their yield expectations from the Preview Days where Nearpeer was introduced. Results include:

**2.85x**

higher likelihood of Fall enrollment for Hispanic students who used Nearpeer

**52,000**

new connections & friendships made

**57%**

lower melt for transfer students who used Nearpeer

CONNECTING STUDENTS

FRESNO
STATE

Fresno, CA

Fresno State (formally known as California State University, Fresno), is a prominent public university that serves a largely regional student body, with a significant proportion being first-generation college students, transfers from nearby community colleges, or individuals from underserved backgrounds.

These groups often face unique challenges, including heightened concerns and anxiety about their college experience. Common questions such as, "Am I right for college?" "Will I fit in?" and "Can I be successful?" are frequently top of mind.

Fresno State's leadership is dedicated to continuous improvement in recruitment and enrollment practices. Their commitment to student success led them to implement Nearpeer for their admitted and deposited students, creating a stronger, more supportive connection as they transition to college life.

In his welcome message to incoming students, Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval, Fresno State's President, acknowledged just how important belonging and community is.

"With Nearpeer, you'll be able to find people in our community who have similar interests, life experiences, and more.

It's a special platform just for you, our students, to get to know each other and forge a stronger sense of belonging."

-Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, President
California State University, Fresno

LAUNCHING NEARPEER WAS EASY

LAUNCH PROCESS

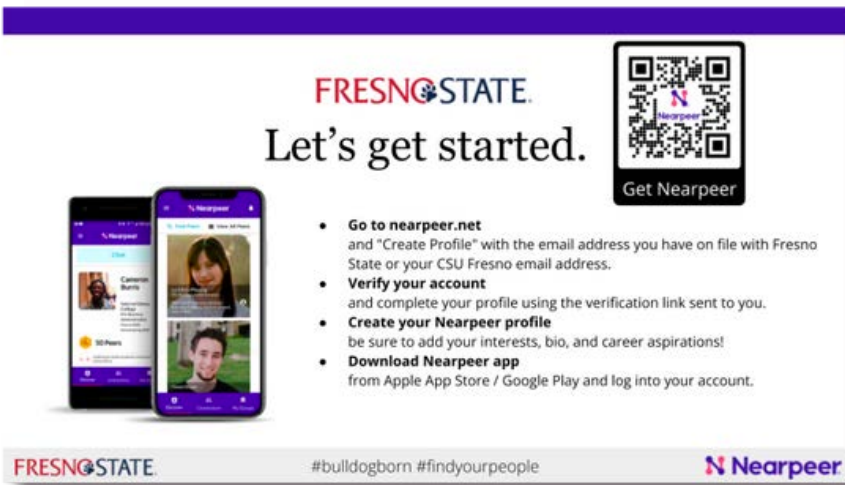
While Fresno State recognized the need to enhance each student's sense of belonging, the admissions team faced challenges in adopting a new initiative mid-enrollment cycle, given their already heavy workload. As leadership explored potential solutions, they prioritized ease of implementation and the ability to lighten staff workload both during and after rollout. Nearpeer stood out as a solution that could support staff efficiency while strengthening connections with incoming students.

Phong Yang, AVP of Strategic Enrollment Management, noted:


"[Nearpeer] is definitely a turnkey solution...no extensive set-up on our end, we provide the information, then the Nearpeer team does all of the set-up for us - that's the beautiful part of it."

Within a few weeks of partnering with Nearpeer, the app was configured and built to support incoming Fresno State students throughout their transition into college.

The admissions team then shared information about Nearpeer with internal stakeholders and prepared to invite committed students with a series of customized emails, text messages, social media posts, and virtual events.



FRESNO STATE
Let's get started.



Get Nearpeer

- **Go to nearpeer.net** and "Create Profile" with the email address you have on file with Fresno State or your CSU Fresno email address.
- **Verify your account** and complete your profile using the verification link sent to you.
- **Create your Nearpeer profile** be sure to add your interests, bio, and career aspirations!
- **Download Nearpeer app** from Apple App Store / Google Play and log into your account.

FRESNO STATE #bulldogborn #findyourpeople **Nearpeer**



Nearpeer

Chat

Cameron Burris
Infernal Demos College
Pre-Business Administration
Class of 2020
Started Learning 2019

50 Peers

Looking for both in-person and online activities

Discover Connections My Groups

Find Peers View All Peers

Le-Minh Phuong
Pre-Business Administration
Class of 2020
Started Learning 2019

Discover Connections My Groups

HIGHER YIELD & POSITIVE MOMENTUM

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO YIELD

Fresno State first launched Nearpeer as a yielding tool, as a new incentive for admitted students to commit—and commit early. All accepted students are invited to attend Fresno State’s “Preview Day,” which is intended to help accepted students get a better sense of potential majors, campus organizations, and student resources.

Their enrollment team uses this engagement to build commitment and student confidence, especially among students who wanted additional confirmation that Fresno State is the right fit for them academically—and socially. So, Nearpeer was first introduced at Fresno State’s Preview Day in March, and students were told that they would receive an invitation to join their community on the app as soon as they officially committed to Fresno State, which created a new motivation for students to commit sooner.

Days later hundreds of students committed and unlocked their Nearpeer access to meet new peers and future classmates.

“Nearpeer creates a momentum [for students]...a sense of belonging, but also a sense of confidence that they are walking into an environment where they feel they already know people...students, staff or faculty.”

- Phong Yang, AVP of Strategic Enrollment Management California State University, Fresno

Once incoming students commit, they are required to attend a series of orientation events called “Dog Days,” named after Fresno State’s mascot, the Bulldog. Nearpeer is integrated into Dog Days and promoted by student leaders to catalyze connections between new students who are also attending that orientation. Often these student leaders will co-host a group on Nearpeer for each orientation cohort, making it seamless for these students to get to know each other before their orientation begins. Students are also able to easily find and connect with other students based on their major, residence hall, interests, and more.



CONNECTING STUDENTS & RESOURCES

CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH STAFF

Through the admissions journey at Fresno State, Nearpeer not only fosters engagement between students but also between students and staff in a comfortable, intuitive virtual space. Students are proactively encouraged to connect with student ambassadors, student leaders, and university staff from across campus.

As part of the Nearpeer program, Fresno State also utilizes easy-to-create Nearpeer groups on focused topics, such as Financial Aid. In these groups students can comfortably ask questions and get the support they need without increasing the burden on staff.

“Something I really love about Nearpeer is that I’m able to bridge the gap with students ... I connect with them all year long... It’s amazing and I love Nearpeer.”

- Alejandro, current student and Fresno State Student Ambassador

The financial aid team answers questions one to two times per week on Nearpeer. This reduces the volume of inbound calls and emails because students are able to see if their question has already been asked by another student and answered.

So, instead of answering the same question via email multiple times for dozens of individual students, the team only gets the question once—and then the students have the information they need.

HIGHER ENROLLMENT WITH NEARPEER

OUTCOMES: OVERALL + TRANSFER

Fresno State was highly successful in serving first-year and transfer students with Nearpeer to improve enrollment and foster a smooth transition to their university.

Nearpeer was broadly adopted across the incoming cohort. More than 2,000 of their new students actively used Nearpeer to make connections with their new Bulldog family.

These students not only joined the Nearpeer platform but they returned repeatedly to find and connect with their peers. On average, each student included 11 interests, returned to Nearpeer 49 times, and made 24 one-to-one connections with other students.

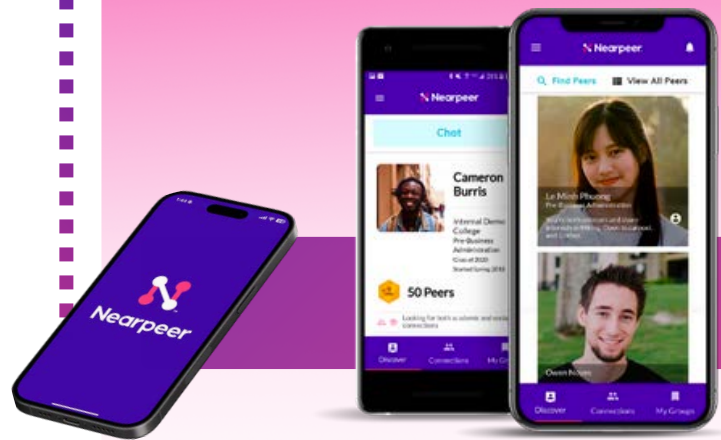
As a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), it was particularly important to measure and understand Nearpeer's impact on Hispanic students. Data analysis showed that Hispanic students who used Nearpeer were 2.85 times more likely to enroll ($p < .001$), compared to those who did not use Nearpeer. On average, these students each made 44 peer connections and spent 3.9 hours with each other in the app.



2,000+ incoming students actively used Nearpeer

2.85x higher likelihood of enrollment for Hispanic students who used Nearpeer

24 1-to-1 peer connections made on average



SUPERSERVING TRANSFER STUDENTS

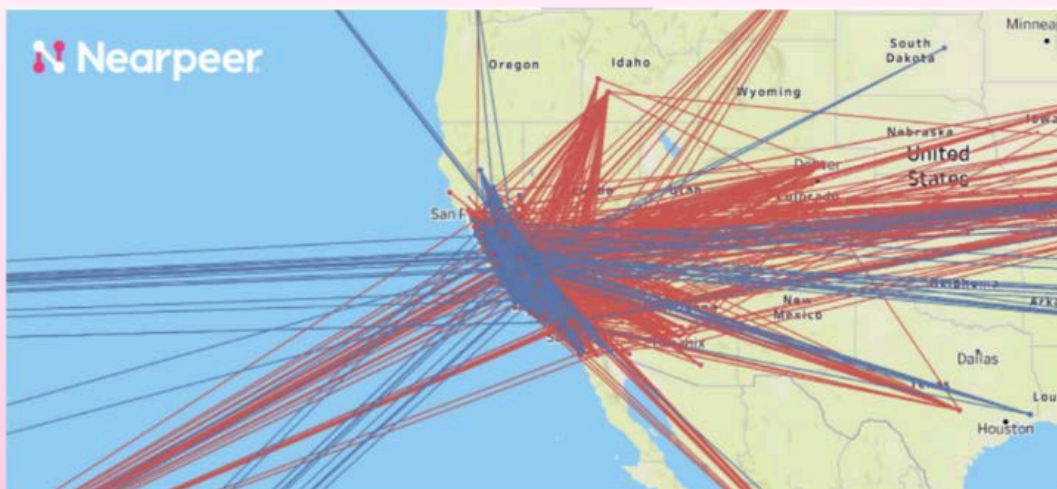
MELT REDUCTION AND ENROLLMENT INCREASES

Fresno State exceeded their yield expectations from the Preview Day where Nearpeer was introduced to encourage early student commitment. They also improved conversion specifically for transfer students. For example, transfer students who used Nearpeer were 2.67 times more likely to enroll than non-users, which is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Transfer students who used Nearpeer had a 9.2% melt rate, 57% lower than the 21.4% melt rate for transfer students who did not use Nearpeer.

In addition, Fresno State's community college transfer partners understand and appreciate the impact of Nearpeer on successful student transfer and transition within their ecosystem. For example, peer engagement had a measurable impact on graduates from West Hills Community College. Among the West Hills graduates who committed to transfer to Fresno State, the students who used Nearpeer were three times more likely to show up for the start of fall classes at Fresno State. Specifically for these students, there was a 8.1% melt rate for Nearpeer users vs. 24.9% for those who did not use Nearpeer.

FIGURE 1: 52,000+ NEW PEER CONNECTIONS, SHOWN ACCORDING TO STUDENT HOMETOWN

Fresno State leadership values the way Nearpeer helps new students—freshmen and transfers—make connections across a wider geographic area, as shown below in red, where peer connections initiated by transfer students are shown in blue.



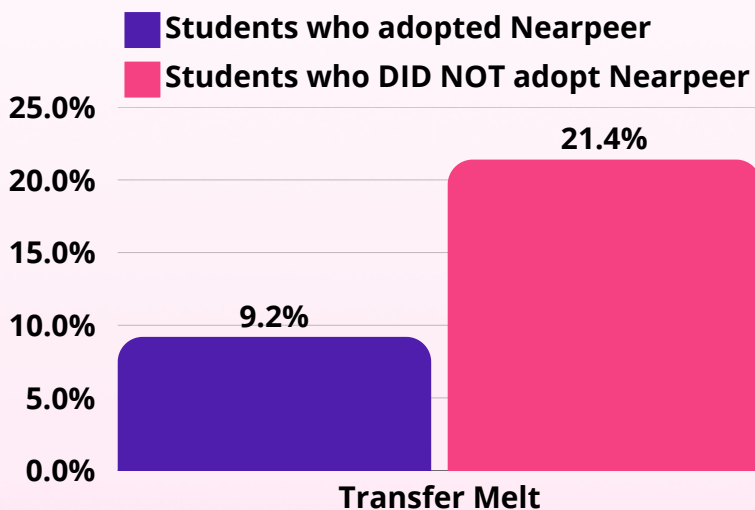
Key:

Blue lines represent connections initiated by first-time first-year students.

Red lines represent connections initiated by transfer students.

A DEEPER DIVE ON TRANSFER STUDENTS

MELT COMPARISON: Incoming Transfer Students Who Adopted Nearpeer vs. Those Who Did Not



↓ **57%**

Lower melt rate
for incoming transfer
students who used
Nearpeer

Transfer students who used Nearpeer had a 9.2% melt rate, 57% lower than the 21.4% melt rate for transfer students who did not use Nearpeer.

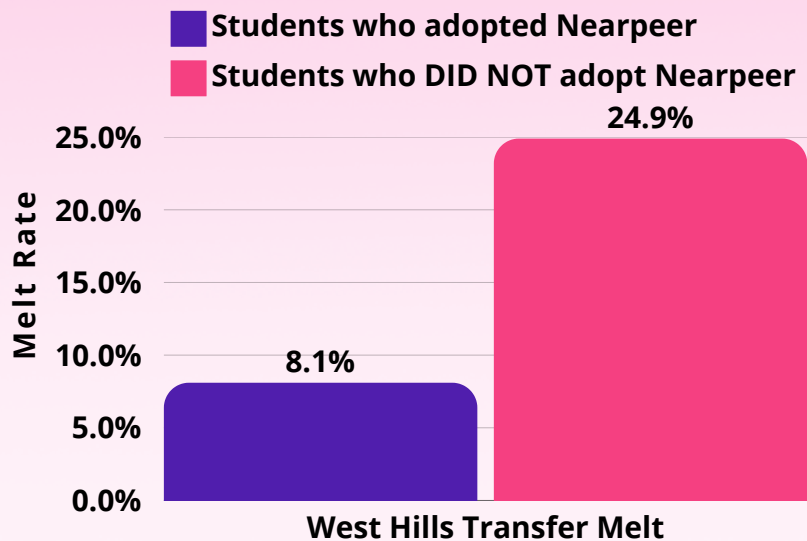
"They have a lot of responsibilities at home...to connect with others who might live in their community to carpool to Fresno State is a benefit to students."

- Dr. Kristin Clark, Chancellor
West Hills Community College District

A CLOSER LOOK AT ONE TRANSFER PATHWAY TO FRESNO

MELT COMPARISON: Incoming Fresno State Transfer Students Specifically From West Hills Community College District (WHC) Who Adopted Nearpeer vs. Those Who Did Not

Fresno's transfer students from WHC who used Nearpeer had a much lower 8.1% melt rate, relative to a 24.9% melt rate for those who did not use Nearpeer.



EXPANDING NEARPEER'S REACH

After several successful years with Nearpeer, the Fresno State enrollment team has expanded use of the platform to further improve yield and first-year persistence. Now, students are invited to join Nearpeer from the moment they receive their acceptance letter, allowing Fresno State to stand out from competing institutions. Students continue to leverage Nearpeer until the end of their first year at the university, boosting persistence rates, too. Other campus departments are also looking at the opportunity to leverage Nearpeer to increase engagement in the classroom, build community in their residence halls, and improve the student experience with new insight on their expectations and preferences.

WHAT FRESNO STUDENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT NEARPEER

For new students across different populations, Nearpeer is reducing anxiety about making new, genuine connections with others. This peer engagement starts in the recruiting cycle and continues on through their first-year experience to foster a sense of belonging.

Current student Alejandro said,

"Through Nearpeer I was able to help [a student] at orientation... and then we were able to actually meet up. We connected and became really close friends... that would have never happened without Nearpeer."

Allison, an incoming non-traditional transfer student continued,

"I've made some connections in my major, but I also have two kids. [In Nearpeer,] I was able to connect with other people who are also parents. I was able to join a group with other students who are also parents. It makes me feel better about going to a new school."

Malac, another transfer student, said,

"Even though all of my classes are online, I'm still able to connect with other students who are majoring in business and talk to them about that. I also really like the fact that [Nearpeer] shows you the types of students that have interests together. It builds a connection right away."

Nearpeer also helps students find a best-fit roommate, which is valuable at Fresno State to supplement their existing housing solution, StarRez.

Eric, a new student from Los Angeles, said,

"I wouldn't have found a roommate if it weren't for Nearpeer...I was also able to meet other musicians, people who have the same musical interests and play the same instrument as me."

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.