



Improving Authenticity and Connection to Increase Enrollment, Equity

Augusta University

Augusta University (AU), like so many institutions across the country, set high targets to increase enrollment. According to recent IPEDs data, 34% of admitted students enrolled. Augusta leadership believed that they could improve enrollment, and to do so they would need to make sure their institution felt different and special compared to other universities in their region.

AU leadership also wanted to better serve their priority populations, such as first-generation students and Black students. They knew that improving equity for these students began by making sure that they found a sense of belonging and connection early.

ABOUT //

Augusta University, part of the University System of Georgia, serves as Georgia's primary health, sciences, and medical college.

The university also offers more than 150 areas of study to 9,565 students. The six-year graduation rate is just under 50%.

PRIORITIES //

- ↗ Increase New Student Enrollment
- ↘ Reduce Summer Melt
- ↗ Improve Outcomes for Priority Populations

TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH

To achieve greater outcomes, Augusta leadership knew that they needed to take a different kind of approach to enrollment management. Previously, they deployed known best practices but relying on past results for future growth risked stagnation or decline in higher ed's overall battle for new student enrollment. It was clear that part of what made Augusta special was the people and the campus experience, but today's prospective and incoming students want more than just access to campus ambassadors and staff. They need to find authentic connections and truly experience their future campus community.

Augusta also believed that to effectively reach their priority populations (including often overlooked introverted students) they needed to have a more focused approach to facilitate 1:1 peer connections and conversations. And for students who were less confident about being accepted or navigating college, they wanted to make sure it was easier for students to ask staff questions without the formality of a phone call or email.

LIMITED RESOURCES

However, these strategies needed to be accomplished while balancing limited team bandwidth and resources. Everyone was already busy with existing priorities. They couldn't hire more staff or students to help, so instead they decided to let students help each other. Staff and student ambassadors could then facilitate small-group discussions on special topics as needed and answer questions once, rather than multiple times by disparate phone calls or email inquiries.

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*"We really wanted to serve an important **need for authentic student-to-student connection**, and had to be mindful of our limited staffing and budget constraints.*

*Nearpeer's team and platform served us really well. **I really appreciate how easy Nearpeer made it for us to achieve really great results.**"*

- Dr. Alexis Pope
AVP of Enrollment Management
Augusta University

IMPROVING CONNECTION TO IMPROVE COMMITMENT

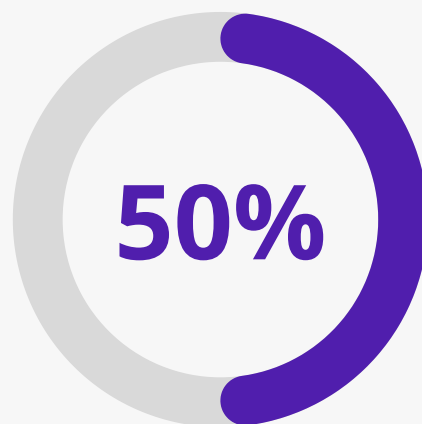
At the core, Augusta's approach centered on improving incoming students' sense of belonging. If they could meet students where they already are (on their phones) and show them what was special about Augusta, they would improve student commitment and increase enrollment conversion. So they turned to Nearpeer to ensure incoming Fall 2021 students could "find their people" and know they truly belonged at the university.

Augusta would use Nearpeer to help incoming students connect with other students with similar backgrounds, experiences, and locations so that they would become confident in Augusta as their best-fit institution, academically and personally.

ROLLING OUT TO STUDENTS

In the summer of 2021, Augusta rolled out Nearpeer's peer-to-peer engagement platform to incoming students. After sending just two emails and one text message, nearly 50% of their student population adopted the app and spent hours connecting in a healthy way, making new friends before setting foot on campus.

On average, students used Nearpeer 35 times that summer and early fall. The lift to implement Nearpeer was minimal, and students still adopted—and used—the app at a rate higher than Augusta expected.



appx. 50% of new students using Nearpeer @ Augusta after sending two emails and a text message

8.5%

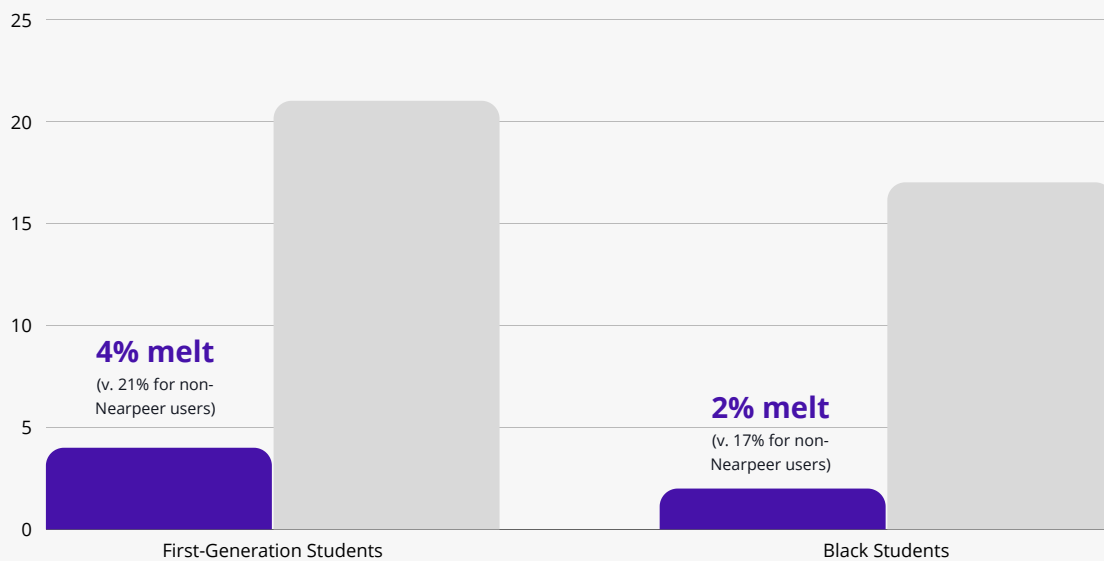
record-low melt rate for incoming students

OUTCOMES

Based on the timing of the initial summer rollout, the university focused on melt reduction. With Nearpeer use for Fall 2021, Augusta reported a record-low melt rate of 8.5% for new students—and they achieved even lower melt rates for their priority populations within the incoming class.

For example, first-generation students who used Nearpeer had a 4% melt rate, while first-generation students who did not use the app had a melt rate five times higher (21% melt). There was a 2% melt rate for Black students who used Nearpeer vs. a 17% melt rate for non-Nearpeer users. (See Figure 1 on the following page.)

FIGURE 1: NEARPEER IMPACT ON PRIORITY POPULATIONS



OUTCOMES, cont'd.

To support current new students and the first-year experience, Augusta's Student Affairs team is able to make programming decisions that align with student interests, as self-reported in Nearpeer. The marketing and recruitment team is leveraging the student interest trends to emphasize specific campus organizations and resources prospective students care about most.

With the program already live, Augusta University has launched earlier in the enrollment cycle to incoming Fall 2022 admitted students to achieve higher admit-to-confirm yield, as well as lower melt.

In addition, Nearpeer's insights on student's interests from their Nearpeer profile has provided powerful new perspectives for both Enrollment Management and Student Affairs teams. This Augusta-specific information will help them improve recruitment marketing, and signal demand for future clubs and student activities on campus.

IMPACT //

Augusta University

50%+

new students used Nearpeer

35X

avg. number of unique (repeat)
Nearpeer uses per new student

4%

melt for first-gen students using Nearpeer
(vs. 21% for first-gen students
who didn't use Nearpeer)

2%

melt for Black students using Nearpeer
(vs. 17% for Black students
who didn't use Nearpeer)

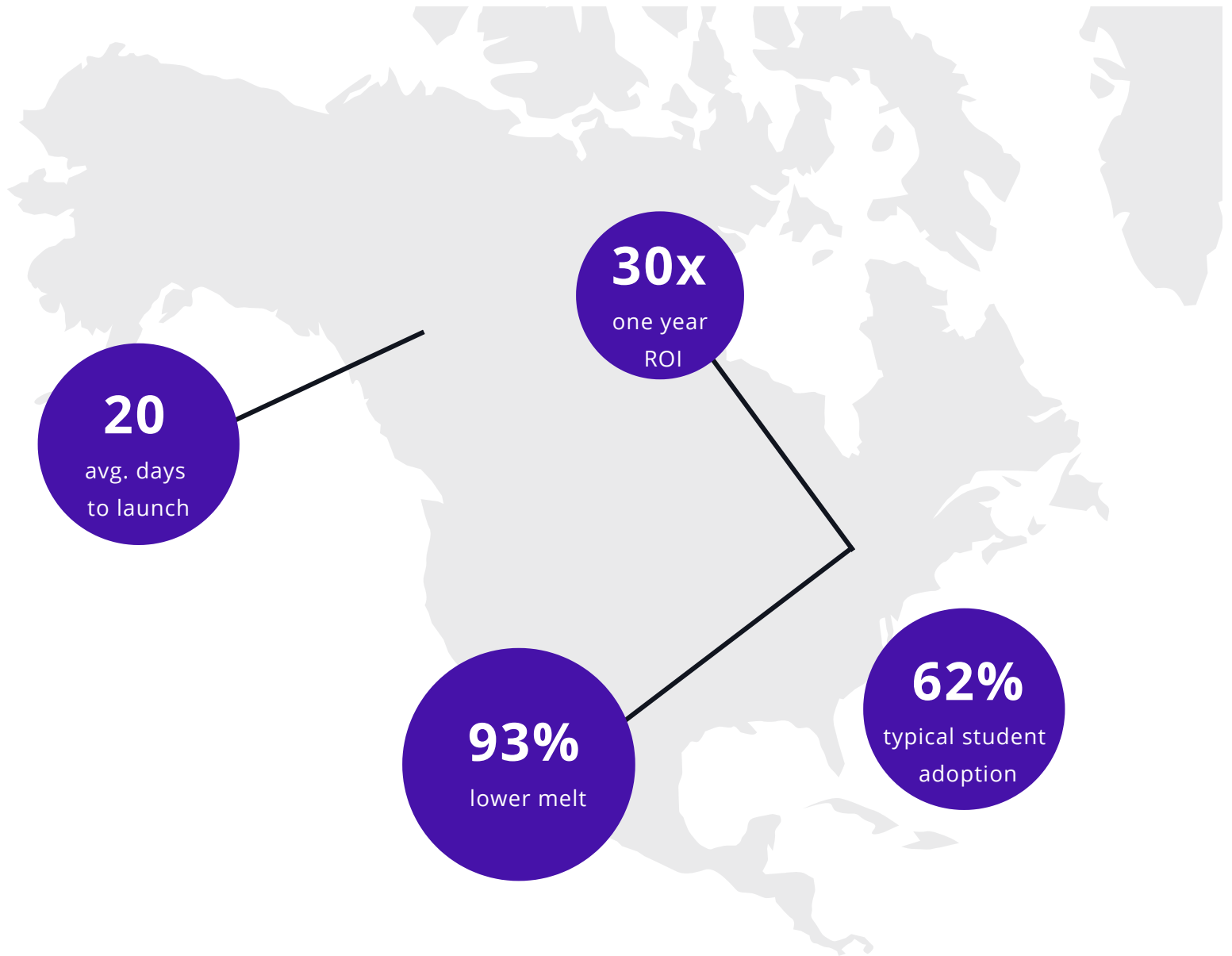
8.5%

record-low melt for all
incoming Augusta students

89%

of incoming students using Nearpeer
made at least one new connection before term

OUTCOMES ACROSS OUR PARTNER COMMUNITY



For more information, visit nearpeer.com.

CASE STUDY: AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

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