Nearpeer
CASE STUDY

Transforming the Student and Family Experience to Increase Enrollment and Success

Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA)

Under the leadership of President Reynold Verret, Xavier has been on a path to transform how their institution serves and supports students—and their families.

Xavier leadership began by taking a more holistic view of the student journey to ensure they were serving both the academic and personal needs of their students. And, they worked to better engage parents and families of their students, who play a critical role in student enrollment and success.

For Xavier, improved outcomes required an exceptional experience and meaningful connection for students and families.

ABOUT //

Both *U.S. News* and *The Princeton Review* recognize Xavier as a national leader for undergraduate education, social mobility, and value.

It is also internationally recognized as a leading HBCU. Their retention rate of first-time freshmen is 78%.

PRIORITIES //

↗ New Student Enrollment
↘ Melt and Attrition
↗ Parent & Family Engagement

Nearpeer

CONNECTING STUDENTS

As Xavier leaders worked to deliver an experience that both attracted and retained today's students, they knew they needed a different approach.

National reports show that more Black students are beginning to choose an education at an HBCU, but Xavier needed to ensure their experience delivered something unique. They were already a national leader in academics with nationally recognized science and liberal arts programs. They also knew they had untapped potential in delivering on the value of the Xavier network and campus community.

For Xavier to build back their enrollment to pre-Katrina levels, school leaders needed to ensure their prospective, incoming, and current students found a sense of belonging.

In March 2021, Xavier launched a program with Nearpeer to serve admitted students. These students were invited with an email from the Enrollment Management team, which was then followed up with a text message. Xavier leaders promoted Nearpeer on their social media channels and with virtual orientation events throughout the summer.

989

record-breaking new student enrollment

"

"I wanted to make sure our students feel a sense of belonging and know that they are an essential part of the Xavier community.

That's why we set up Nearpeer—a new resource to help our students connect with each other in a meaningful way."

- President Reynold Verret,
Xavier University of Louisiana

OUTCOMES
Nearpeer for Xavier Students

By the time new Xavierites moved to campus in August 2021, more than two thirds of the incoming class was actively using Nearpeer to connect with each other, and 91% of these students used Nearpeer to build new peer connections. In fact, the number of students on Nearpeer was nearly equal to the previous year's entire new student enrollment, and males were even more engaged on the app than females.

This year's class, Xavier's Centennial Class of 2025, set a new record for incoming class size with nearly 1,000 students enrolled. Additionally, male student enrollment increased by 56%—marking a

Nearpeer

> "I'm neuroscience pre-med and I'm so happy to see all these black women in the pre-med group chat [on Nearpeer].
>
> I use Nearpeer because **I would love to know a few people before getting to campus**."
>
> - Darria, Class of 2025

OUTCOMES
Nearpeer for Xavier Students, cont'd.

new chapter of renewal and growth for the Xavier community.

With nearly 700 incoming students using Nearpeer, it was important for Xavier leaders to also know how students were actually using the platform. Group discussions proved to be active and engaging, but perhaps more importantly—their incoming students were connecting directly with each other to build new peer relationships.

On average, these students each made 44 new peer connections and spent 4.5 hours with each other in the app. As a direct result, Xavier's incoming students made meaningful connections with other new students before they arrived on campus or attended classes.

Those students who used Nearpeer were much more likely to show up and enroll. In fact, a thorough statistical analysis showed that Nearpeer users were 2.61 times more likely to matriculate than non-users, and

this impact was statistically significant (p<.001). This analysis indicates that Nearpeer reduced melt among student users by 58%, even after adjusting for other variables, including student type, gender, first-generation status, residency, and more.

In Xavier's words, these students "found their squad" and made new friendships, which in turn ensured they were more confident in their decision to commit to and enroll at Xavier.

67%
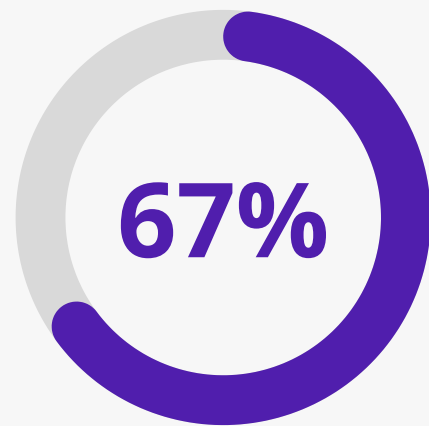
of new XULA students used Nearpeer
(as of November 2021)

> "Nearpeer is helping our students get to know and support each other in different ways. **The worst thing is having a student come to campus and feel alone.** Nearpeer has made our first-year students a lot more engaged.
>
> I was surprised most at how little we had to do. **It was a turnkey program for us."**
>
> - Dr. Curtis Wright
> VP of Student Affairs
> Xavier University of Louisiana

↓ 58%

reduction in melt after adjusting for variables on student type, gender, first-gen status, residency, and more

PARENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

For many Xavier students, the decision to attend Xavier was influenced by important people in their lives. If parents or family members felt confident in Xavier's approach to learning and the student experience, then those incoming and new students were more likely to enroll and stay

at Xavier. Attending Xavier was a decision and an investment often made by both the student and family.

Xavier, already leveraging Nearpeer for their first-year students, wanted to build on that partnership to give parents and families a similar solution to drive engagement and connection. They knew that it was essential to make sure families felt like they were part of the Xavier community, too.

So, together with Nearpeer, Xavier leaders identified a path to build on the community already built in Nearpeer for Students by creating a new, separate space for parents and families to connect.

OUTCOMES
Nearpeer for Xavier Families

Less than two weeks before the fall semester began, Xavier rolled out Nearpeer for Xavier Families. Immediately parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and more began to connect with each other and join small group discussions on how to best support their Xavierites.

To date, more than 40% of eligible students have at least one parent or family member using the Nearpeer for Families virtual community (with two thirds of new Xavier students in Nearpeer for Students). What's more, each parent has utilized Nearpeer to find and connect with, on average, 36 fellow parents and college staff.

OUTCOMES
Nearpeer for Xavier Families, cont'd.

In less than three months from launch, family members logged into Nearpeer an average of 78 times and have already spent an average of 7.6 hours connecting with each other. Xavier leaders intend to continue using Nearpeer for Xavier Families as a way to extend the network of student support and care throughout the year.

"

"Nearpeer for Families has enabled parents to connect with each other, share resources, and truly extend the Xavier community.

It's helped us move from only communicating with parents in moments of crisis or when they need to pay a bill.

We're reducing their anxiety by being proactive, and that makes it easier for our students, too.*"*

- Dr. Curtis Wright
VP of Student Affairs
Xavier University of Louisiana

SERVING STUDENTS & FAMILIES
During & After Hurricane Ida

About a week after students moved in and classes began, Hurricane Ida struck New Orleans. Students were evacuated from campus immediately. Classes were taught remotely at first, with students returning after a few weeks. Throughout the crisis Xavier leaders were able to share updates to students and families through Nearpeer.

In fact, Nearpeer became an unexpected, but reliable emergency communication channel because many students and staff members were without electricity or WiFi, and some servers were down. This meant that website updates and mass emails weren't as feasible. Because sending a message on Nearpeer is so easy, Xavier leaders were able to quickly communicate

SERVING STUDENTS & FAMILIES
During & After Hurricane Ida, cont'd.

with a majority of new students and their families.

After the immediate crisis subsided, students and parents received nudges and in-app notifications about important campus resources, including counseling and wellness services.

Today, nearly all Xavier students have returned to campus. In reflecting back on the crisis, Xavier leadership noted that their students were more connected and engaged because of Nearpeer. Perhaps most importantly, attrition after Hurricane Ida was minimal. Classes and campus activities are back in full swing, and students are more engaged with Xavier than ever.

> **"**
>
> *"I was pleasantly surprised at how quickly and how robust the adoption rate was for both students and parents. Over two-thirds of our student population downloaded Nearpeer and made multiple connections.*
>
> ***The Nearpeer platform [is] one of the reasons we did not lose a lot of students post-Hurricane Ida.*** *I'm incredibly grateful... This has been probably the most seamless vendor experience...and one of the most fun vendor experiences I've ever had."*
>
> - Dr. Keyana Scales
> VP of Enrollment Management
> Xavier University of Louisiana

Nearpeer

Xavier University of Louisiana

4.5

hours spent in Nearpeer
per student

56%

increase in number of male students
enrolled in Fall 2021

44

new peer connections made
per student

67%+

of new Xavier students adopted Nearpeer
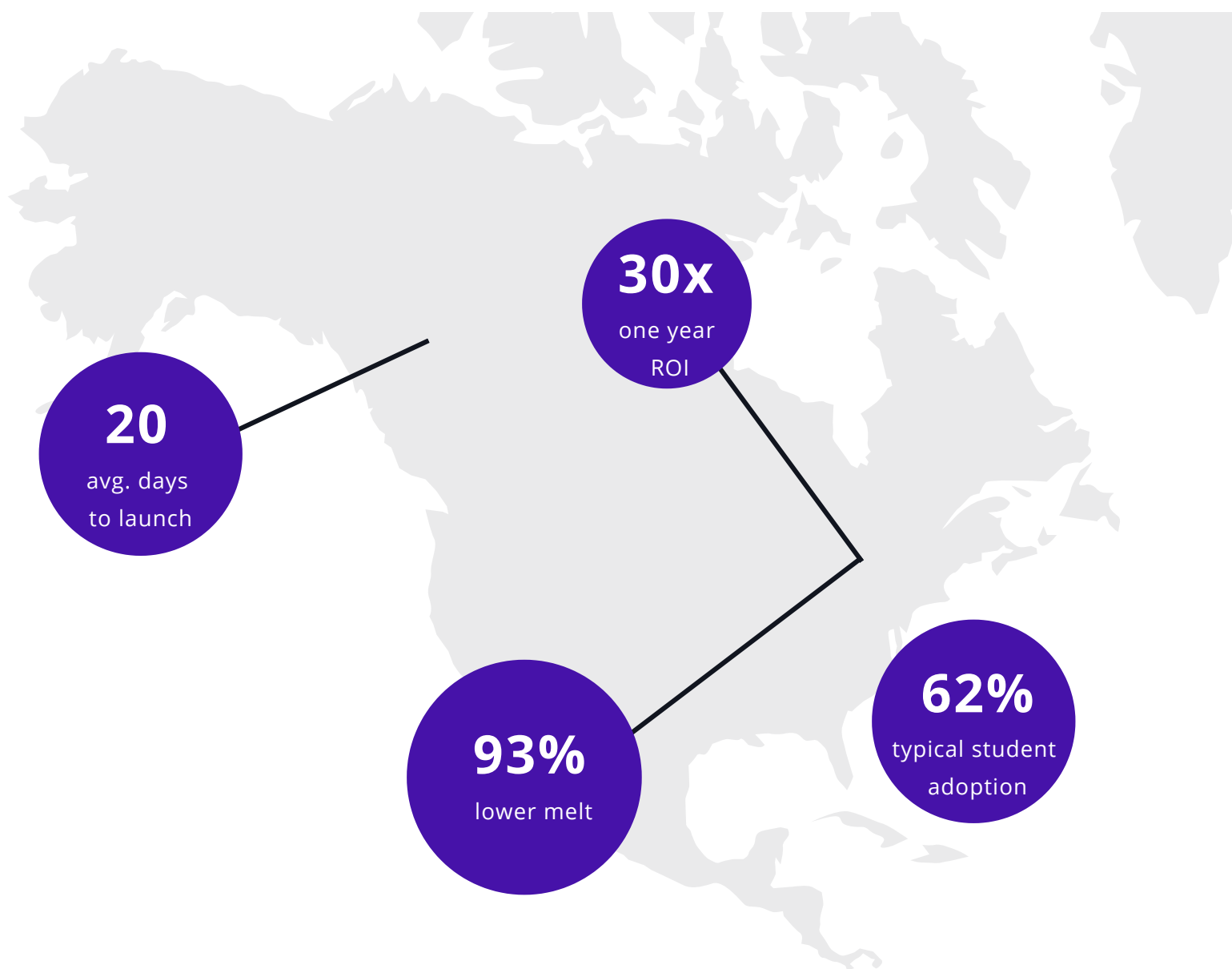before term began

36

average new peer connections made
per parent or family member

6.75

average hours spent in Nearpeer
per parent or family member

OUTCOMES ACROSS OUR PARTNER COMMUNITY

20
avg. days to launch

30x
one year ROI

93%
lower melt

62%
typical student adoption

Nearpeer

For more information, **visit nearpeer.com**.