

College tours re-imagined

Leveraging virtual reality
to increase match and fit



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Overview

- Match and fit challenges
- Virtual reality and artificial intelligence as a solution
- Early qualitative focus group and user testing results
- Demo of GEAR UP VR





GEAR UP

NORTH CAROLINA

- State grant in NC is operated by the University of North Carolina system.
- 20,000 students
- Seven years
- Rural high schools
- 60% FRL on average

Challenges of college match and fit

- Information asymmetry
- Low school counselor availability
- High need high schools
- Rural locations
- College application and financial aid is a complicated process



Potential solution – Virtual Reality

VR has the potential to “democratize education” by bringing learning opportunities to learners who otherwise would not have access to them.

- (Bailenson, 2017).



VR – interactivity and exposure



As a learning tool, immersive VR presents **a number of innovative elements** including three-dimensional simulations, **interactivity, and exposure to novel situations.**

(Castaneda, Cechony, Bautista, & Pacampara, 2017).



Use technology to address distance, time, and cost.

Create direct connections to campuses.

Curate college choice process.

Empower individual exploration.

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EDUCATION

Graham High First School To Take Virtual Reality Tours Of All 16 UNC System Schools

It's the first time for Graham High School, a rural school in Greensboro, N.C., to take virtual reality tours of all 16 UNC System schools.



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- ABOUT OUR SYSTEM
- OUR 17 CAMPUSES
- LEADERSHIP AND POLICY
- RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY
- SERVING LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY
- STRATEGIC PLANNING

ALL-INCLUSIVE CAMPUS TOUR: 300 STUDENTS EMBARK

GEAR UP NC LAUNCHES SECOND STAGE OF AMBITIOUS VR INITIATIVE

Carlito Torres is a junior at Graham High School with his sights set on studying criminology. He knows he is interested in North Carolina State University, and he also realizes he should have at least one backup plan. Luckily, 11 other universities in the UNC System offer programs in criminology or criminal justice.

There's just one hitch: visiting college campuses requires adult support, money, and time away from school. Raleigh is 54 miles from Graham. Visiting his top choice alone would eat up most of a day, once Carlito tallies up the time spent on campus, consulting with admissions representatives, and travelling. Should Carlito automatically rule out options that are further afield, or should he just blindly guess which other schools he might like to attend?

Sensitive to Carlito's predicament, the UNC System devised a plan to give him a free campus tour. He won't visit just one institution ... he will get to see all 16 universities in the System. And Carlito is not the only one who gets to go. On October 26, the UNC System took 300 students along for the ride. Virtually.

"...the UNC System took 300 students along for the ride. Virtually."

On a rainy Friday morning, UNC System Vice President for Academic Affairs Kimberly van Noort and admissions representatives from constituent institutions converged on Graham High School, in

LATEST FROM ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Making the Connection with Ameena Batada, Winner of the Board of Governors' 2019 Award for Excellence in Teaching for UNC Asheville
06/25/19

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06/21/19

Honors College students read to school children through 'Book Buddies' project



By Carol Cutler White, The Conversation

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Opinion: Virtual reality tours give rural students a glimpse of college life

Education Nov 25, 2018 3:45 PM EDT

The first time that Nyah visited the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for a campus tour, there wasn't much of a chance to see what takes place inside the classrooms.

"We just walked by buildings and the guide talked about what goes on inside," Nyah recalls of the campus tour this past spring.

But during a second "tour" of UNC Greensboro this fall, Nyah, now a senior, got to see students in a science lab, even though she never left her high school in Roxboro, North Carolina, a small city of about 8,400 more than an hour from the Greensboro campus.

Rather, Nyah got to "see" UNC Greensboro through cardboard goggles and an immersive 360-degree virtual reality college tour app that I'm helping to develop and test for the University of North Carolina System. The project is being funded through a federal grant for North Carolina's GEAR UP program. GEAR UP – an acronym that stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs – is a federally funded program to



Left: Cecelia Johnston, 7, interacts in the virtual reality "Job Simulator," virtual reality simulation video game created by Owlchemy Labs, at Teknopolis, a participatory arts-tech exhibit at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) in Brooklyn, New York, U.S., February 25, 2017. Photo By Ashlee Espinal/Reuters

Go Deeper

- artificial intelligence
- college
- higher education
- students
- the conversation
- virtual reality



First in the nation
high school VR
for college
access launch

[Graham High School GEAR UP VR launch](#)

Early qualitative findings: Student sense of connection for match and fit

“Being there” in their words:

*“I would say way being able to see the students up close made me **feel like I was there**. Since I haven't been on a college tour, it made me feel like I was there.”*

*“It made you **feel like you were actually there**. Sometimes you cannot get there physically.”*

*“We were able to see action on campus **without going there**. Better than online pictures. ”*

User feedback

“I like this better than the campus tour. All we did was walk by buildings. I got to see inside buildings on the VR tour.”

Focus group response

“I thought the app was all around kinda fun. It's VR. It's something that few get to experience, you know? It's kind of a new thing in the modern world. I thought this was a great way for exploring college. It's fun, it's new. Everybody can do it. And since it's cardboard, it's most likely really cheap compared to a big VR headset.”

Two way benefits for match and fit

- Helped students decide which campus to tour (if able)
- If students had toured a campus, helped remind students of what they liked.



Significance and Implications

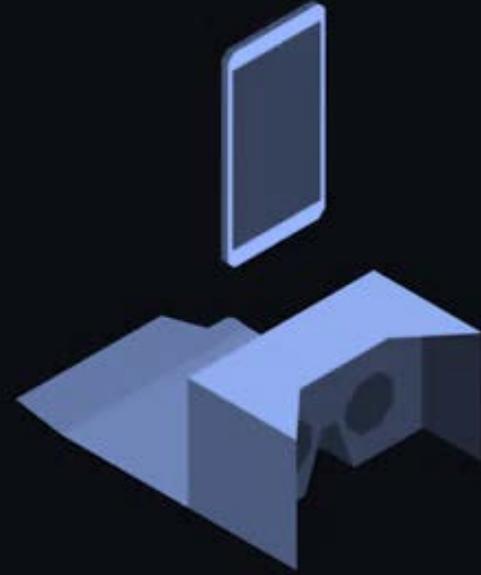
- Information, campus connections, and the capacity of virtual reality to “**transport**” **students for an experience** is now in the palm of a student’s hands.



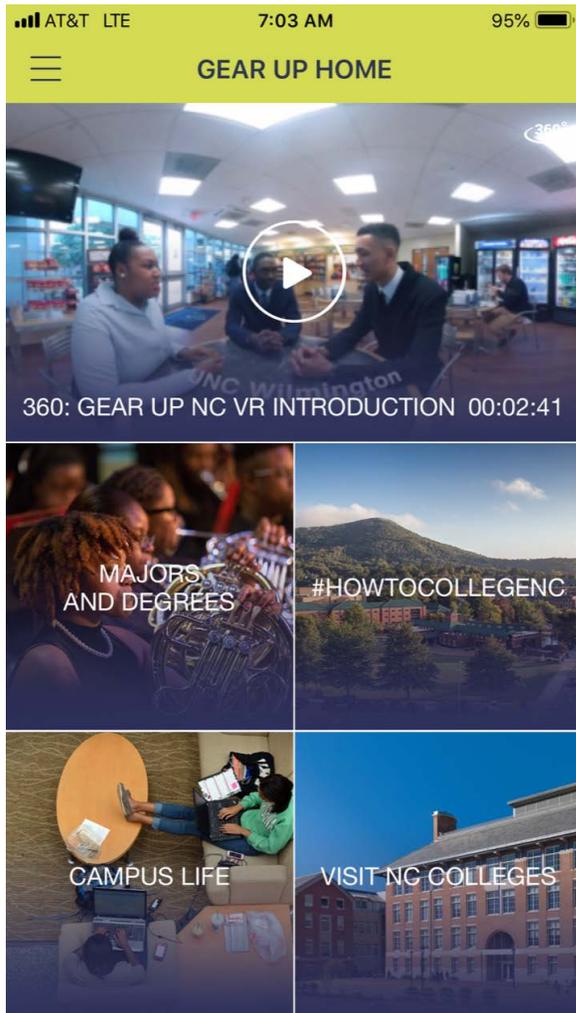
Significance and Implications

- The early user testing indicates there is **promise in utilizing the VR technology** in the college access space and when combined with artificial intelligence to revolutionize the college choice process.





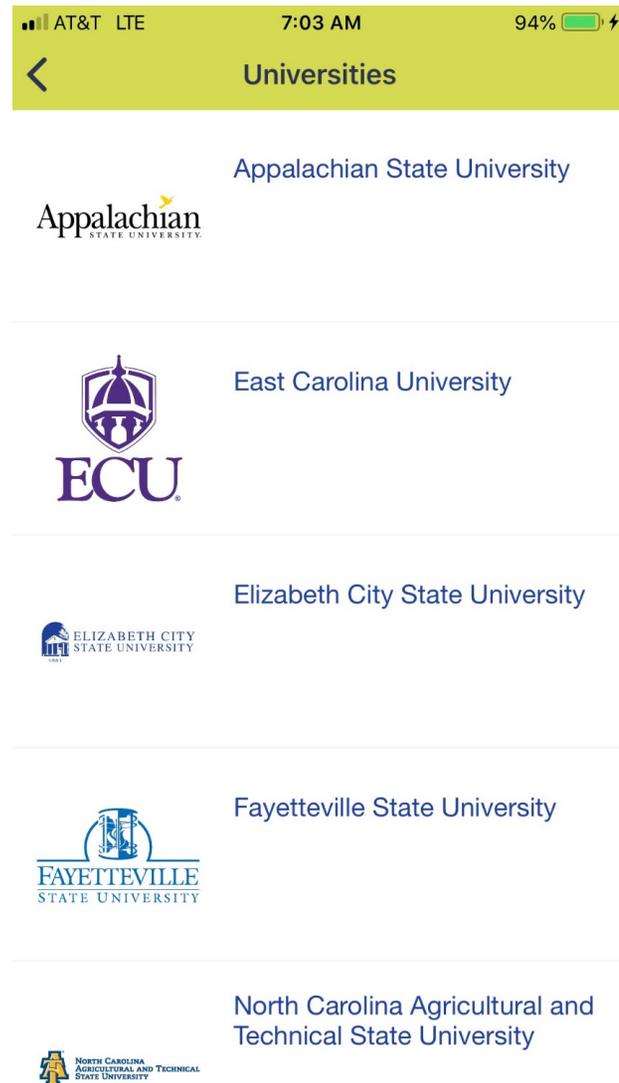
gearupapp.org



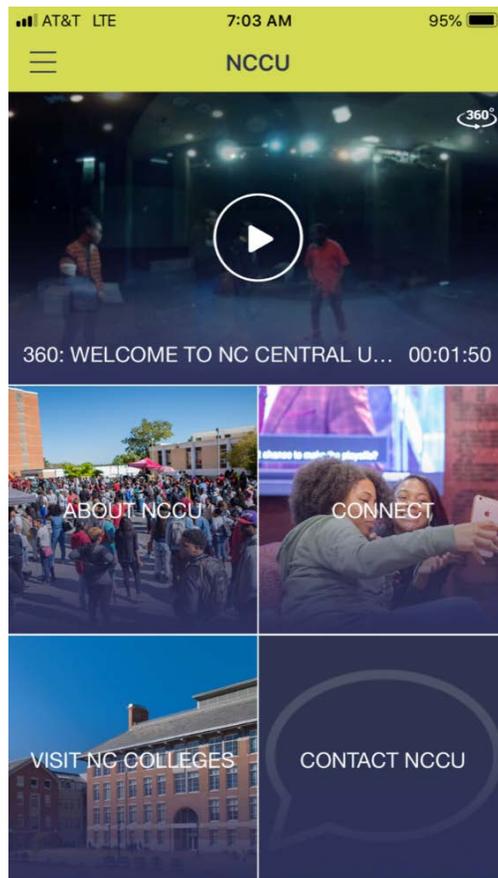
GEAR UP VR Home page

- Messaging targets first generation students
- Majors and Degrees
- #howtocollegenc
- Campus Life
- Visit NC Colleges

University of North Carolina System campuses - 16



Campus specific tour



- Highlights unique campus.
- Outlines degree and major opportunities.
- Connect (social media).
- Encourages match and fit.
- Contact button connects students through email or AI chatbot.

“Hardware”

- Cardboard goggles
- Earbuds Included



User initiated improvements

- Orientation for new users
- Search feature
 - Cost of attendance
 - GPA and ACT/SAT admissions requirements
- Add community colleges
- Curriculum for school staff

Repurpose the app's infrastructure

- The app can be repurposed for a variety of uses.
 - Individual colleges
 - College systems
 - Career exploration
 - Etc.





What are your thoughts on
how the app can be
improved for college match
and fit?



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