

## PROMOTING NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT USING A SCAVENGER HUNT APP

A major goal of the Chemical Engineering Summer School (ChESS) is promoting connections between chemical engineering educators. At ChESS 2022 a mobile scavenger hunt app called Eventzee™ was used to support this task. Using their mobile phone, participants earned points by completing challenges including taking selfies with attendees that met specified criteria, recording teaching tips, scanning QR codes at plenaries, taking short quizzes, and responding to reflection prompts.<sup>[1]</sup>

Scavenger hunt apps help introduce participants to new scenarios and help build a sense of community and belonging.<sup>[2-4]</sup> They can be used to support classes and synergistic extracurricular activities. Applications could include, but are not limited to:

- **Hosting a student chapter meeting of a professional society:** If your students are hosting a student chapter meeting of a professional society like AIChE, SWE, NSBE, or SHPE, scavenger hunt apps can help students from multiple institutions and backgrounds connect and collaborate to solve challenges. Activities could include taking selfies with new people or attending specific events. This application is akin to the use of Eventzee at ChESS 2022.
- **Providing orientation opportunities to new students:** While your institution likely provides some sort of orientation for first-year students, it's possible that your home department may have limited interaction with these new students in the first 1-2 semesters. Using an app-based scavenger hunt for new students can help them learn more about your department and feel like a part of the community at an earlier juncture.
- **Encouraging connections and collaboration within a class:** It can be difficult to organically foster student collaboration and peer-to-peer learning in large classes. As these apps can help develop interpersonal bonds, having tasks that encourage students to work with new people, or ones who aren't in the same class section, can help students build a support network.
- **An avenue for creative student engagement:** The open-ended format of several of the in-app challenges allows both you and your participants to creatively express their participation or understanding. A challenge could relate to a student demonstrating a class topic using some form of performance or taking a photo or video of a class topic that manifests in the real world. These types of activities can be highly memorable, building stronger mental connections with class topics.

With myriad apps on the market, it's critical to select an app that uses your intended activities. Some apps focus specifically on visiting locations (Adventure Lab®, Let's Roam®), while others offer a large array of multimedia activity options (Eventzee, GooseChase™, Scavify®, Loquiz™). The cost of these apps will vary depending on the duration and number of participants, but generally a one-week event of 100 people will cost on the order of magnitude of hundreds of dollars. You may also want to check your own institution, since several learning management software packages have similar activity options.

Once you have chosen an intended use and app platform, here are a few suggestions for designing an experience in one of these apps, based on my experiences at ChESS 2022:

- **Create a tutorial:** Sample activities of each type you plan to use should be available for the event's duration. Tutorials help participants practice game mechanics and provide early information about what activities may not function as intended.
- **Use bonus timers:** In some apps, quizzes can be set to give an amount of bonus points that steadily decreases until an answer is selected. This timer gives every participant a unique final score and minimizes ties.
- **Have a diverse activity set:** Sometimes people don't want to take selfies. Using other activities, like QR code scans, trivia questions, or GPS location check-ins will potentially engage with a wider variety of people.
- **Add new activities daily:** To sustain participation and maintain novelty across a multi-day event, new activities should become available at multiple times during your event.

## REFERENCES

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