

Middlesex University transforms student engagement with campusM

Middlesex University
Case Study

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We take our students on journeys
that transform their lives.
We empower them with the tools,
attributes and opportunities they
need to turn their potential into
real-life success.

Middlesex University Strategy -
<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategy>



Putting students at the heart of its strategy, Middlesex University used campusM from Ex Libris to build a customized campus app that has enhanced student communications

The Challenge

For students, having all of their university services available on their mobile device is not a nice convenience to have, it's a must. They are used to having every aspect of their lives on their smartphone, from streaming music and movies, to ordering food and transport, and they expect the same experience from their institution.

While they are away from campus, and particularly when commuting on public transport, they want to be able to view learning materials, check their emails and get vital information on the go, using their mobile devices.

Middlesex University in London had previously had a library-focused app, but it was out of date and difficult to maintain.

There had been growing demand for mobile access to an array of services, with successive Student Union presidents asking for an app. The results of a student communications survey gave further support to the need for a mobile solution.



When asked for the top three things they would use an app for, the survey results were timetable (86%), university email (76%) and library services (64%).

https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/331497/Student-Communications-survey-mobile-apps.pdf

It was clear that Middlesex students were demanding a rich and dynamic mobile experience.

The university created a cross-departmental group with members including Marketing, IT and Student Support. The team was tasked with working collaboratively to develop, publish a new Middlesex University app. Developed using the campus student engagement platform from Ex Libris, the MDX app was live in just four months, and the team went on to win an award in recognition for their collaborative approach.



Students expect their university app experience to be just as good as the other apps they are using every day – and that means being able to access everything they need when on the tube, bus, train or even just walking to campus.

Mary McLaren, (Student Communications Officer)



The app has proven popular with students, with over 23,000 registrations since its launch in July 2017. Access to email has been particularly popular, with 3 million in-app hits on that tile alone.

Students are also accessing the virtual learning environment more often, with a significant increase in usage as students can easily access learning resources on the go.

Overall, students seem to be more engaged with their studies, as evidenced by a 3% higher attendance record for students who have the app. For foundation year students, this number rises to 6%.

A Vibrant Student Experience

One of the cornerstones of the University's institutional strategy is delivering a transformational journey for students. With help from the campusM student engagement platform, Middlesex has been able to revolutionize student communications, leading to positive outcomes.

campusM pulls data from an institution's email system, student information system, learning management system, library automation system and other sources. It delivers this information to students through a single, customizable mobile and web portal experience. Students can access the information and complete transactions by clicking on interactive tiles.

The cross-departmental team at Middlesex knew it would be difficult to launch an app with everything in place from the very beginning, so they focused initially on the features that students said they wanted the most — including course timetables, email and virtual learning environment. Eventually, they would like students to be able to book rooms, manage attendance and access their ID card using the app.

The student voice was vitally important in developing the app, and Middlesex gave students many forums for expressing their desires — from in-app feedback to focus groups. The Students Union has representation on the app Steering Group and has decommissioned its own standalone mobile app to give students a single point of access for all information.

In some ways, the app has shone a light on institutional practices. For example, when students asked why their timetable was not showing in the app, the answer was because their course was not part of the central timetable system. Once the University was aware of this problem, the Middlesex team were able to address it.

Even the Vice-Chancellor, Tim Blackman, identified an opportunity for the app to enhance student life, suggesting that students could book study space around campus directly from their mobile devices.



We've had so much positive feedback, and from the students the main feedback was 'at last'.

David Gilani, (Student Communications and Engagement Manager)



MDXapp

Welcome

Enrolment

Key Contacts

My Learning

Sport

UniHelp

Maps

Transforming the “Welcome” Journey

Last year, the cross-departmental team developed a dedicated section of the app to service the needs of students coming to the university for the first time. New students have very specific needs and are more susceptible to dropping out of their registered classes in the first three weeks as they struggle to adjust to new surroundings and academic requirements.

At Middlesex, there was a lot of duplicate content aimed at this group of users. This increased the possibility of errors – for example, email, portal, intranet, and even paper copies of timetables were available for students, but in the event of a last-minute change to a lecture schedule or venue, students did not have a single, reliable source of timely and accurate information.

The team saw the campus mobile app as a way to gather all information into a single source and present it to students in an engaging and efficient way via their mobile device, which is especially critical during the first few weeks of term (the “Welcome” period).



The Welcome tile was very popular – almost 5,500 hits during its’ first three months of launching and second only to email as the most popular tile. This was especially impressive considering it was only accessible to new students.

Mary McLaren, (Student Communications Officer)



Using campusM, the Welcome team delivered...

- A personalised timetable for welcome events
- Relevant content and supporting information to new students
- Social/Students' Union information and events
- Targeted push notifications

The initiative not only made students' lives easier, but also made it much simpler for the student communications team to provide more consistent, timely and reliable information, using a single channel – the mobile app.

This transformation led to an 80% reduction in calls to the helpdesk during the Welcome period, freeing up staff members to conduct other tasks.

Success Identifiers

- App went live in four months.
- 23,000 registrations since its launch in July 2017 (19,000 students).
- Significant increase in virtual learning environment usage.
- Increase in email open rates, with 3 million in-app hits.
- 80% reduction in helpdesk calls during Welcome period.
- The Students' Union decommissioned their own app and instead added content to the University app.
- Project Team won an award for its collaborative work.
- Middlesex saw that campusM not only provided a solution for their immediate needs, but offered a solution that will allow them to build for the future.



From last year to this year, I can't believe how much better it was in helping to support students who didn't know where they were going. I made sure students downloaded the app.

Student Ambassador





About Middlesex University London

For nearly 140 years Middlesex University London has been home to innovators and change-makers. We are a progressive London university that puts our students first and provides expert teaching informed by inspiring research and practice. In 2019, we were named the top modern university in the UK in the Times Higher Young University Rankings.

We boast a diverse, multinational and multicultural community of 19,400 students from 144 different countries based at our modern north London campus. We also have campuses in Dubai, Mauritius and Malta, bringing our total number of students to almost 37,000 and staff over 1,900. Middlesex University London generates more than £300 million a year for the Barnet economy, supporting some 4,000 local jobs.

A university for skills, we work with employers to make sure that what our students learn is what employers need, and we strive to transform the lives of our students so that they have an excellent experience while they are with us, and a solid foundation for inspiring careers when they leave us.

For more information go to www.mdx.ac.uk.



Ex Libris is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions for the management, discovery, and delivery of the full spectrum of library materials, as well as mobile campus solutions for driving student engagement and success.

Ex Libris solutions are in use by over 5,600 institutions in 90 countries, including 43 of the top 50 universities worldwide and more than 40 national libraries.

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