

# Not Your Average Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Hannah Kriner (Team Leader)

Emily Saylor

Samantha Stopper

North Carolina State University

# Committee Introduction



**Hannah Kriner**  
Director of Residence  
Life



**Emily Saylor**  
Director of Virtual  
Engagement



**Samantha Stopper**  
Director of Student  
Activities

# Presentation Overview

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# Part 1: The Issue

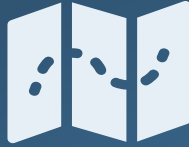
# University Demographics



5,000  
Undergraduates



Public



Rural  
Location



PWI

52.9%  
White

20.9%  
Hispanic

15.1%  
Black

7.6%  
Asian

## Needs Assessment

- Offer a program that is inclusive for all
- Offer an engaging virtual program that simulates actually being on campus
- Facilitate relationships between students based on demographics and interests
- Set the stage for continued, engaging virtual programming



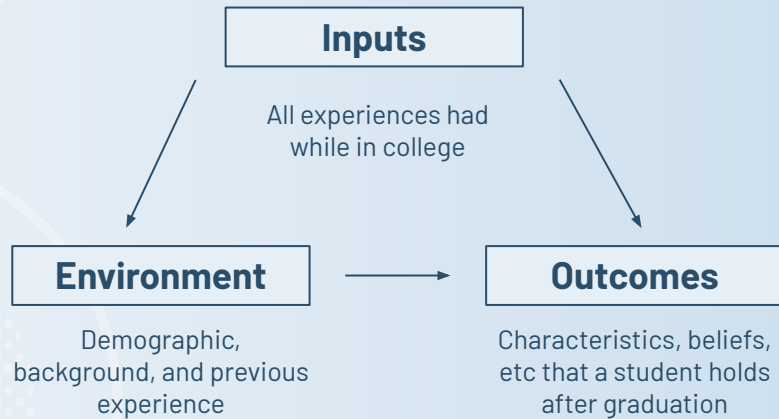
# Assessment of the Issue

- **Unprecedented Experience:** Largely contained to remote learning environments, students, particularly those in their first year, are missing many of the traditional college experiences that feed student development
- **Transitioning from Afar:** Some first-year students have never stepped foot on their college campus and lack any feeling of a sense of belonging towards their university
- **Persistence:** Feeling disconnected from their college campuses and peers, many students are at high risk for mental health issues, feelings of social isolation, and poor academic performance
- **Event Delivery:** There is incomplete information for how to best create an engaging virtual event that could foster the social interactions students are craving

# Student Involvement Theory

Astin, 1999

## I-E-O Model



## 5 Basic Assumptions:

- Requires an investment of psycho-social and physical energy
- Involvement occurs along a continuum
- Involvement has qualitative and quantitative features
- Student learning and personal development are directly proportional to quality and quantity of involvement
- Academics (both policy and practice) are directly correlated with student involvement

This model highlights how student involvement is impacted by the characteristics a student possesses combined with the educational and other experiences they have while at the institution.

# Sense of Belonging

Vaccaro & Newman, 2016

- Sense of belonging is varied for students from different cultural and economic backgrounds
- Students with minoritized identities value intentional activities where they can form authentic relationships that will provide support and allow them to be their authentic selves
- Having a sense of belonging and community improves engagement and retention

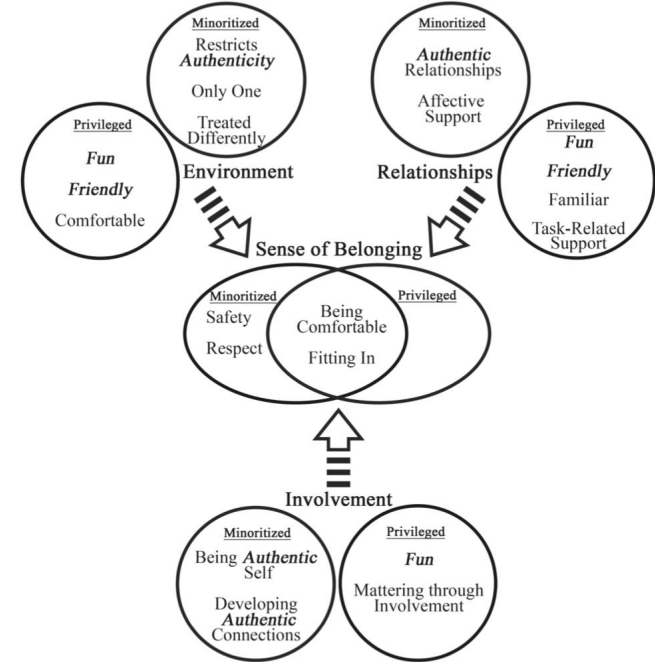


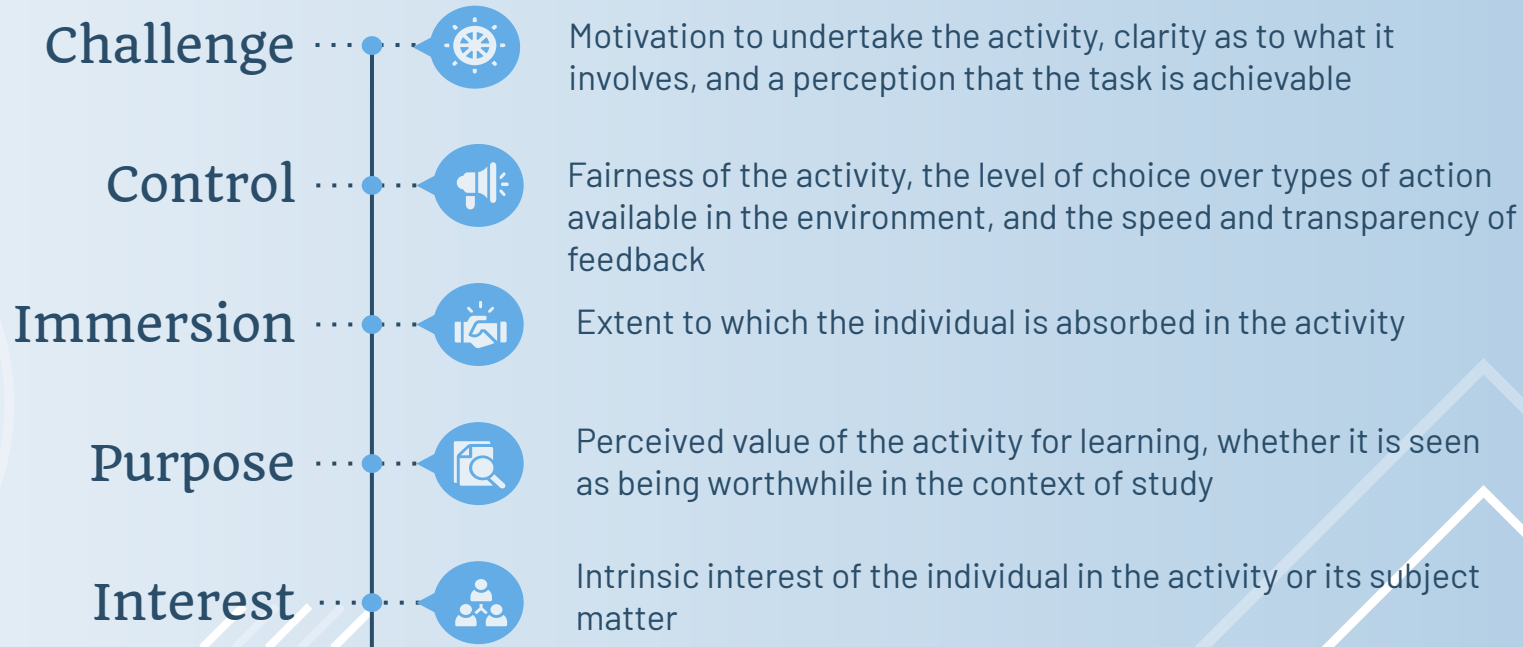
FIGURE 1. Model of Belonging for Privileged and Minoritized Students



# Game Engagement Theory

Whitton, 2011

**Game Engagement Theory** is the assumption that games of computer basis will engage students and promote learning. It is showcased through a 5 factor model.



# Game Engagement Theory - Study

Valenti, Laud,& Wang, 2020

## Design:

- Two groups of students entering their program→ one non-interactive, the other with virtual reality software
- Surveyed to determine effectiveness of the Virtual Reality (VR) tools

## Results:

- 60% of students in study were willing to spend more than 25 minutes in this experience
  - Interactive videos/programs can length attention span of those involved
- Users agreed it was a better way to receive information at their orientation
  - Even felt more knowledgeable about their program
- Study found that the use of VR reduced anxiety in the users
- More optimistic views on technology

## General Considerations:

- VR allows for emulation of physical presence that immersive videos/texts do not
- Aligns with Game Engagement Theory as it creates **interest**, students could clearly see the **purpose** of the experience, and could **control** it for themselves.

# Best Practices for Virtual Engagement

Poll, Widen, & Weller, 2014

Adapt to student needs to increase the likelihood of developing a personal connection to the work and the campus

Build virtual community to create a sense of belonging and bring people together

Promote respect, trust, diversity, and growth among students

Create a student-centered environment

Foster conversation, interaction, and the exchange of ideas and information in and out of the classroom

Identify and utilize intentional online platforms for interaction and engagement

# Our Approach Based on the Literature

- **Education on Campus Culture:** The event will help students gain an understanding of campus culture and traditions, helping to foster a sense of belonging in students who are transitioning from afar
- **Form a Support Network:** Our event will focus on residence halls to help students build a community and connect with their peers, increasing the level of social support available to students
- **Increase Persistence:** Our event will target first-year students and reimagines the traditional college experiences and environment to increase student investment and connection to the university
- **Utilize Innovative Event Delivery:** By operationalizing Game Engagement Theory, augmented reality will be used to mimic the organic social interactions and increase interest in the key components of our event



# Part 2: Our Proposal

# Not Your Average Scavenger Hunt



Students grouped into teams based on their residence hall and floor to establish community



Bingo board icebreaker activity to facilitate initial meetings and group conversation



Partner with Virbela to create a virtual version of campus that allows for increased engagement



Campus-wide scavenger hunt to share vital information, campus resources, history, and traditions

# What is Virbela?

Virbela is a virtual reality site founded by organizational psychologists meant to promote engagement between individuals.

It was created from research conducted by Ph.D. Student Alex Howard. He studied simulated training environments and discovered virtual and in-person trainings/events had comparable psychological effects.

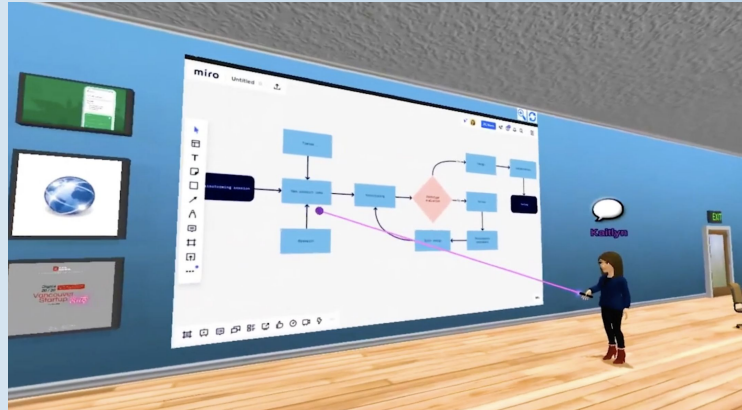


## Virbela

# Uses for Promoting Engagement and Connection to the Campus

## PRIVATE CAMPUS:

Virbela provides many game space options, but the most unique one is the ability to create your own campus designed to your specifications.



## PRESENTATIONS & CONVERSATIONS:

Virbela allows users to share their screen and present like in other video conferencing platforms. Users can move their avatar around freely, interact with other users, and join conversations, simulating real life experiences.



# Bingo Board



B	I	N	G	O
someone from a different state	someone that speaks another language	someone with a different major	someone who went to a different type of high school	someone who plays a sport
someone with the same major	someone who has been out of the country	someone who want to join a similar club	someone who has a different religion	someone who has the same religion
someone who has siblings	talk to someone about their favorite movie	FREE SPACE	talk to someone about their favorite book	talk to someone about their favorite genre of music
someone you have a class with	someone who has a similar hobby	someone born in the same month as you	someone who lives less than an hour from campus	someone who lives more than four hours away from campus
someone who wants to join a cultural organization	ask your RA about their favorite thing about the university	someone who has never left the state	someone who wants to study abroad	someone who has penguin pride

- Students will have 30 minutes to meet and interact with one another within our virtual campus
- To cross off the squares, they must talk with a student who matches one of the listed traits
- Once they have found the person with the correct trait, the student puts the person's name in the corresponding box
- The goal is to cross off as many of the squares as possible before time is up!

# Scavenger Hunt

- Students will participate in a campus-wide scavenger hunt utilizing the Virbela platform
- Students will be immersed in our virtual campus where they will walk the grounds and see all that the university has to offer, mimicking the experience of physically being there
- Participating with their floormates from their residence halls, students will come up with a team name and race against other teams to discover all of the campus locations
- At various locations across campus, first-year students will be met by current students where they will learn about campus traditions, resources, and services
- **This activity will foster communication, collaboration, adaptability, and resourcefulness**

# Scavenger Hunt: Clue Example 1

## Clue #1



Embrace your inner Penguin and head to the center of campus.

This age old tradition is one of great significance.... waddle around this important university symbol to SEAL your position in the Arctic University Family!

- Once at this location, students will learn about the tradition associated with the University Seal as well as the tradition to walk around the Quad during the graduation processional

**Answer: The Quad and the University Seal**

# Scavenger Hunt: Clue Example 2

- At this location, students will learn how the Student Union is built to serve students
- Students will learn about services like: Disability Resource Office, Cultural Centers, Religious Organizations, Student Activities, the Women's Center, and the LGBTQ+ Center

## Clue #2



The next location is the hub of STUDENT life  
and campus UNITY.

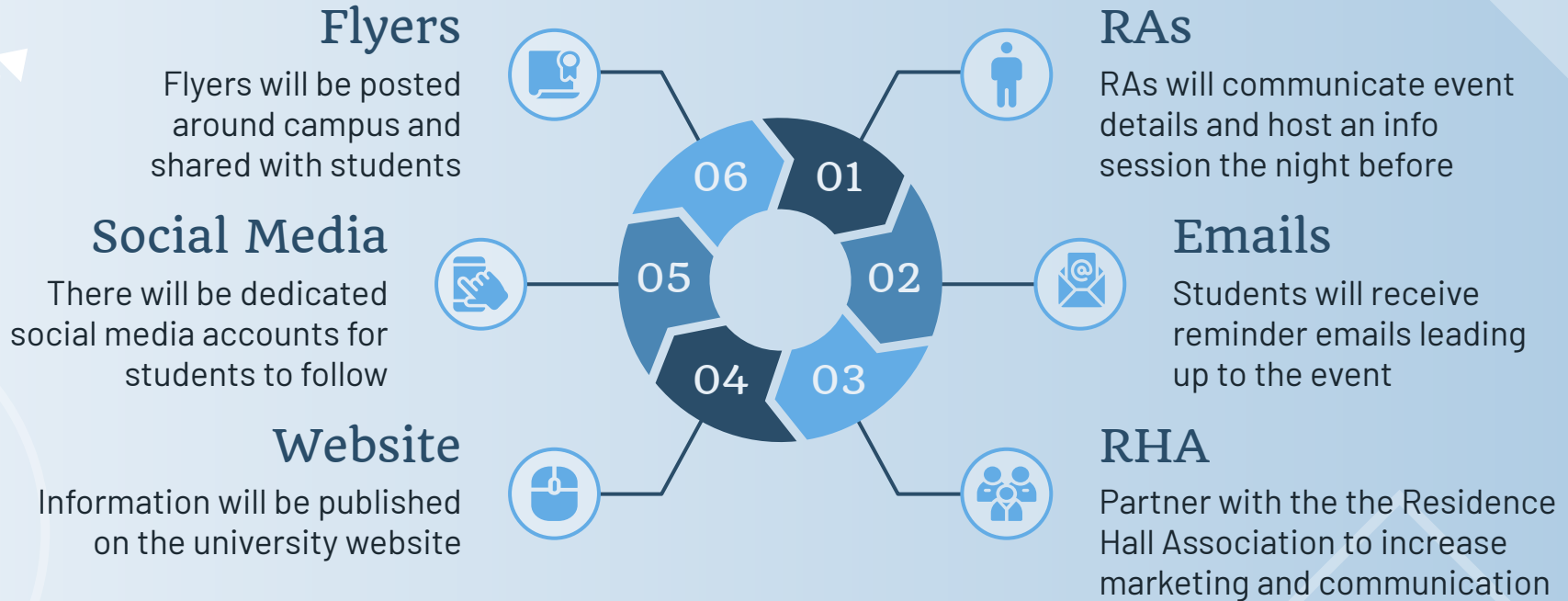
Head to this location to learn all about campus  
involvement and the university community!

**Answer: The campus Student Union**

# Other Campus Locations

- In addition to the first two locations, students will explore other key spots on campus, including:
  - The **Library**, where students will learn about locations and hours as well as the Academic Success Center and working with Academic Advisors
  - The **Dining Hall**, where they will learn about hours of service, where to view the menu, and how meal swipes work
  - Campus landmarks, like the **Oldest Building on Campus** and the campus **Bell Tower**, where they will learn about the rich history of Arctic University
  - The university **Recreation Center**, where they will learn about the gym amenities, building hours, and how to reserve a workout time block
  - **Outdoor campus spots**, where students can gather with one another and partake in university activities and events
- The goal is to acclimate the students to campus in a safe way while they learn about the services and amenities Arctic U has to offer

# Event Promotion



This will be a post-orientation event that students will start hearing about when they complete their pre-orientation modules. They receive multiple communications about the event and what to expect.



# Promotional Materials

## Not Your Average Scavenger Hunt

- the virtual edition -

Calling all first year students!  
You've heard about our famous campus scavenger hunt, well this year we're taking things ~virtual~

**Who:** YOU!

**What:** campus scavenger hunt

**Where:** Virbela virtual platform

**When:** weekend before classes

**Why:** to welcome you to the Penguin Family!



\*stay tuned for  
communication from your  
RA about event specifics

Flyer to be posted around campus  
and shared with students via email  
and social media

## Not Your Average Scavenger Hunt

- the virtual edition -



The scavenger hunts begin  
**TODAY!**

Tag us in your posts and  
stories of you participating  
with your floormates for a  
chance to win a prize!!

Incentive activity to  
promote engagement  
during the event

A button students will get  
when they finish the  
scavenger hunt



**Promotional Video:**

<https://youtu.be/meDiNmg9CxA>

# Limitations



# Solutions



**COST:** A campus-wide Virbela license costs \$4,000 a month



The platform can be utilized for an **endless number of events** throughout the academic year, creating many opportunities for students to feel engaged. Zoom licenses for Arctic U would cost ~1.5 million dollars for a year. Funding can be allocated to Virbela by decreasing the cost for many other large virtual events.



**WIFI:** Wide use of the platform could put undue strain on Arctic University's wifi network



**Virbela Tech Support** is dedicated to helping administrators navigate power strain and accessibility issues. With a campus-wide package, Virbela will provide the support Arctic U needs to kick off our programming!



**ACCESSIBILITY:** Students without computers or devices that can run Virbela would be unable to attend the event



The **Arctic U Library and Office of Virtual Engagement** will partner with our team to ensure all students have access to a laptop or other device.



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- A Virtual World for Work, Education, & Events. Virbela. <https://www.virbela.com/>.