Preliminary Proposal

Capstone Group W!LD

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Need and Problem

For this capstone project, we are partnering with The Wild Center's Youth Climate Program (YCP) to strengthen connections within the Youth Climate Summit Network. YCP currently faces a challenge: without a comprehensive digital platform, it lacks an effective way to connect alumni across different summit years and locations, track their achievements, and keep them engaged with The Wild Center. This absence of a formal alumni network makes it difficult to understand where past participants are, and how they can connect with each other. Without sustained alumni engagement, The Wild Center may miss valuable opportunities for collective climate advocacy and broader community impact.

Our goal is to develop a digital platform with tools such as a dedicated website, a searchable alumni database, a YCP LinkedIn page, and a storytelling hub with "where are they now" features. These tools will support efficient tracking, engagement, and recognition of alumni contributions, directly addressing the current disconnect. By creating this platform, we aim to help YCP strengthen the connection of its own community.
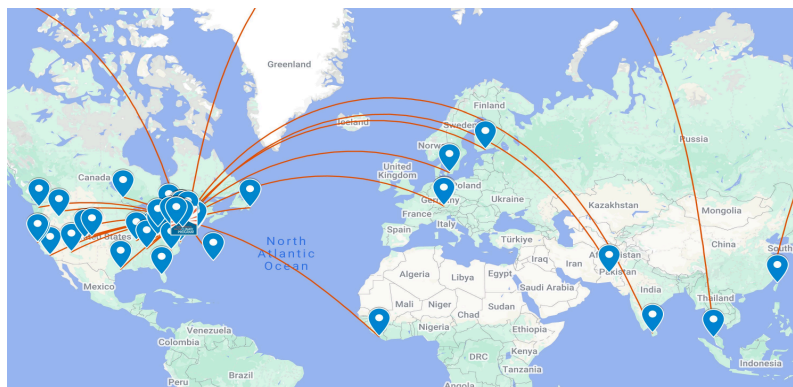
Reference: The Wild Center

Design Basics

Why(it matters)

The Wild Center's YCP has created a vast network of young leaders passionate about climate action, with over 200 Youth Climate Summits held across 10 countries and 24 U.S. states as of 2024. These conference-style events offer high school students invaluable opportunities to learn about climate science, climate justice, and actionable solutions. Through networking with peers and experts and creating Climate Action Plans, students are empowered to drive local climate initiatives in their schools and communities. However, despite these impressive milestones, The Wild Center currently faces significant gaps in alumni engagement.

With over 2,000 alumni from the Adirondack Youth Climate Summit alone, The Wild Center has a rich base of young leaders who could continue to inspire and drive climate action if given the proper support and infrastructure.

Currently, there is no formal system for tracking or cataloging alumni, making it challenging to maintain connections. This lack of organization results in an underutilized network where many alumni lose touch with the program and each other, reducing the potential for collaborative action and shared learning.

Our project aims to build a centralized digital platform where alumni and youth leaders can stay connected, share experiences, and access resources to enhance their climate action efforts. This platform will enable YCP to reconnect with its growing network of alumni, fostering a community that amplifies individual and collective actions. By providing alumni with essential resources, mentorship opportunities, and storytelling channels, this initiative will create a ripple

effect—transforming individual awareness into impactful, sustained climate action within and beyond the YCP Network.

What (it does)

Our primary goal is to create a digital engagement platform that builds a vibrant, lasting network for The Wild Center's YCP alumni. By addressing specific engagement needs, this platform will serve as a comprehensive resource to connect alumni across summit years and locations, track their achievements, and keep them actively engaged in climate actions. The platform will establish structured ways for alumni to connect based on shared interests, summit years, or regional locations, fostering meaningful alumni connections and networking. By creating channels for peer-to-peer networks, alumni will have opportunities to collaborate on climate projects, share valuable resources, and seek guidance from those with similar experiences. This feature will encourage a strong, interconnected alumni community that spans geographic boundaries and promotes cross-generational mentorship, reinforcing bonds within YCP's network.

A centralized alumni database will allow The Wild Center to effectively track, organize, and reconnect with its 2,000+ alumni from across its programs. This searchable database will enable alumni to create profiles and share updates on their climate initiatives, providing The Wild Center with a comprehensive view of its alumni's ongoing efforts and impact. This feature will facilitate continuous engagement, highlight alumni achievements, and help The Wild Center YCP build a detailed picture of the network's collective contributions to climate action.

The platform will also offer ongoing engagement opportunities through a central location for regular updates, event invitations, and new resources. This sustained interaction between The

Wild Center and its alumni will be supported by virtual and in-person events, workshops, and collaborative project opportunities. By fostering an environment of continuous engagement, alumni will feel inspired and involved in YCP's mission beyond their initial summit experience, maintaining a meaningful, long-term connection.

Recognizing the power of storytelling, the platform will feature a Storytelling Hub and "Where Are They Now" section, dedicated to showcasing alumni journeys and accomplishments. This space will allow alumni to share their experiences and climate action projects, building a sense of community identity and inspiring both current alumni and future participants. The storytelling hub will include multimedia content, such as videos, written articles, and project highlights, celebrating the diverse ways alumni are contributing to climate action and reinforcing the impact of YCP.

Finally, the platform will integrate professional networking opportunities to enhance career development for alumni. By connecting alumni with a professional space to showcase their climate-related work, they will gain visibility, strengthen ties with peers in the environmental sector, and explore collaboration opportunities. This feature will also support networking with external partners and stakeholders, broadening the reach of alumni initiatives and increasing opportunities for career growth and collaborative impact.

By implementing these features, the platform will transform The Wild Center YCP alumni network into an engaged, accessible, and active community. This digital space will empower alumni to stay connected, amplify their impact, and contribute to lasting change in climate action.

Who (will use it)

The primary users of this platform are alumni—former YCP participants who want to reconnect with The Wild Center and stay active within the climate action community. Through the platform, alumni will access resources, mentorship opportunities, event information, and updates on fellow alumni's climate work. They will be encouraged to share their own stories and projects, contributing to a dynamic network of climate advocates and helping to strengthen the community's collective impact.

Another key user group includes current students who are engaged in or interested in climate action, particularly those seeking leadership experience and mentorship from alumni. The platform will provide these users with educational materials, project ideas, and a pathway to connect with alumni, fostering a network where they can learn directly from experienced peers. This opportunity for knowledge exchange will enhance students' skills and inspire them to take meaningful steps in their climate advocacy journey.

The Wild Center's YCP Staff will also benefit from the platform as the primary facilitators. Staff will use it to monitor alumni achievements, collect data on the network's impact, and facilitate ongoing engagement. Additionally, staff can leverage the platform to share program successes, communicate updates, coordinate mentorship opportunities, and organize future events, ensuring that the platform remains vibrant, engaging, and aligned with The Wild Center's mission. Through these efforts, staff will help maintain an active, supportive network that empowers alumni and students alike.

How (it works)

Our digital platform will feature several integrated components, each designed to align with The Wild Center YCP's goals and address the needs of its alumni network. Platform development and design will center on creating an interactive website as the main hub for alumni engagement. This website will be user-friendly, accessible, and scalable, allowing sections to grow as the program expands. Working closely with The Wild Center, we will incorporate established visual elements and branding to ensure consistency. Additionally, we will include a professional networking space where alumni can showcase their climate-related work and connect with peers.

Content creation and storytelling will play a central role in the platform's success. We will develop storytelling videos, and project highlights for the Storytelling Hub, enabling alumni to share their journeys, insights, and ongoing climate initiatives. This content will be crafted in various formats, both short and long, to appeal to a diverse audience. By capturing the breadth and depth of alumni experiences, we aim to inspire new action and reinforce the program's impact.

To support ongoing learning and skill-building, the platform will house a resource and training library featuring climate action guides, leadership resources, and recordings of past Climate Summits. Additionally, we will offer live and recorded training sessions on key topics, including climate policy, project management, advocacy, and effective communication. This dynamic, evolving library will empower both alumni and current students with practical tools for advancing their climate work.

Survey and needs assessment will be integral to ensuring the platform remains relevant and aligned with user needs. Initial and periodic surveys with alumni and current students will allow

The Wild Center to evaluate which resources, connections, and support are most valuable. This ongoing assessment will enable the program to adapt its offerings as alumni interests and challenges evolve.

Project Plan

We'll begin with initial research on successful alumni networks and conduct surveys with alumni and students to understand their needs. This phase, scheduled during our visit to The Wild Center's Youth Climate Summit, will allow us to collect insights directly from participants. Survey results will help refine our platform design to closely align with user expectations.

Using insights from the research and survey results, we'll start building a user-friendly website as the primary engagement hub, focusing on key features like a searchable alumni database, networking tools, and a storytelling hub. Development will include regular usability testing to ensure smooth navigation and functionality. Running parallel to development, we will conduct follow-up interviews and seek feedback from alumni to continually refine content relevance and accessibility. This phase will take approximately 4–6 weeks.

For the testing phase, we'll conduct beta testing with a selected group to identify areas for improvement. Their feedback will inform refinements, optimizing the platform's usability and functionality for launch. Following necessary adjustments, we will officially launch the platform with an outreach campaign targeting alumni and students, tracking sign-ups and engagement levels to assess the success of our launch.

Post-launch, we'll implement regular check-ins and feedback forms to ensure the platform remains relevant and valuable, gathering insights from users to guide future updates. We will gauge progress by tracking engagement metrics and gathering feedback from alumni.Throughout the project, we'll document our experiences and key learnings, culminating in a final report.

Reflections and outcomes will be shared with The Wild Center, and a project summary will be presented to the UR community, serving as a resource for future alumni engagement projects.

The completed platform will be a dynamic, central hub for alumni engagement, connection, and professional networking, empowering The Wild Center YCP's alumni to amplify their impact in climate action. We will share the platform with the UR community and promote it through UR's channels for broader visibility.

Current Similar Platforms

The Meliora Collective (University of Rochester Alumni Network)
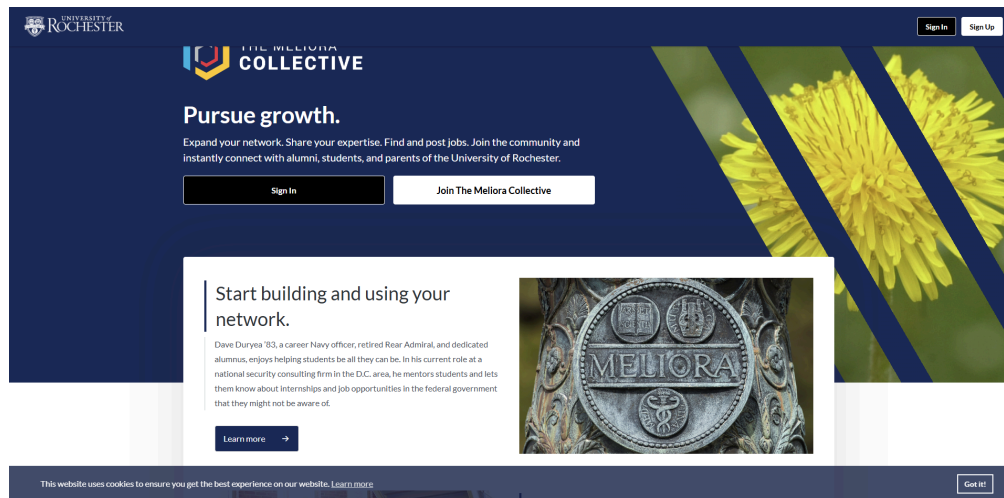
(Referenced Image: Meliora Collective Portal)

Strengths:

The Meliora Collective excels in building a cross-generational mentorship network, enabling alumni at different stages of their careers to connect and share insights. For the Wild Center, setting up mentorship pairings between senior and junior alumni could enhance the support system within the network. This would foster growth and guidance for recent graduates interested in climate work.

Social and Professional Integration:

The Collective also integrates professional development with social causes, allowing alumni to connect over shared interests in community projects. The Wild Center could adopt this approach by facilitating climate-related volunteer opportunities or community projects that allow alumni to make a tangible impact while staying connected to each other and the organization's mission.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Support:

The Meliora Collective encourages entrepreneurial ventures and collaborations by offering a platform for members to pitch ideas and seek collaborators. The Wild Center could similarly create incubation opportunities for alumni climate projects or an innovation fund to support climate-focused entrepreneurial efforts among alumni.

ECO Canada Environmental Professional (EP) Alumni Network

Strengths:

ECO Canada's EP Alumni Network effectively supports its community of environmental professionals with structured, career-focused development. This includes certification programs and professional courses that keep members current on industry standards, which could serve as a model for the Wild Center's Youth Climate Alumni Network. By offering certifications in climate-related fields, the Wild Center could ensure alumni remain engaged and motivated to further their expertise in environmental sustainability.

Networking and Community-Building:

ECO Canada fosters networking through online forums, webinars, and LinkedIn updates that bring alumni together to share ideas and discuss trends. This strengthens the professional network and provides an accessible space for knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Similarly, the Wild Center could use a dedicated LinkedIn group or regular webinars to facilitate interaction among alumni focused on climate initiatives.
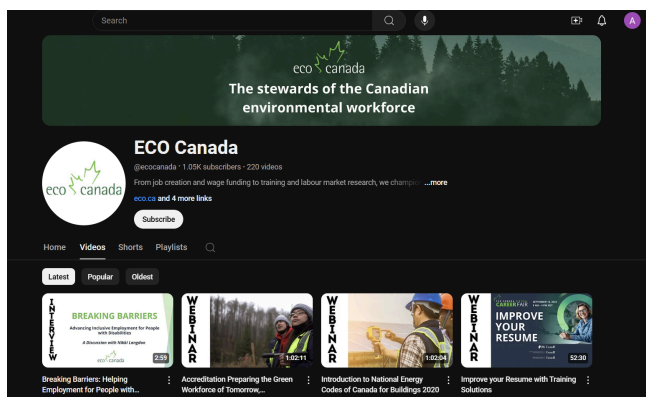
(Referenced Image: ECO Canada's LinkedIn and YouTube screenshots)

Recognition and Storytelling:

ECO Canada emphasizes recognition by sharing alumni achievements and success stories, which serves as both motivation and celebration of contributions within the community. The Wild Center could adopt a similar approach by creating a storytelling platform or a series of alumni spotlight features on social media. This would allow alumni to feel valued and inspire others to actively contribute.

*(Referenced Image: ECO Canada's Instagram post highlighting alumni events and achievements)*

Schwarzman Scholars Alumni Network

Strengths:

The Schwarzman Scholars network focuses on lifelong learning and global connections, providing alumni with resources like exclusive workshops and talks with global experts. For the Wild Center, this model suggests the potential
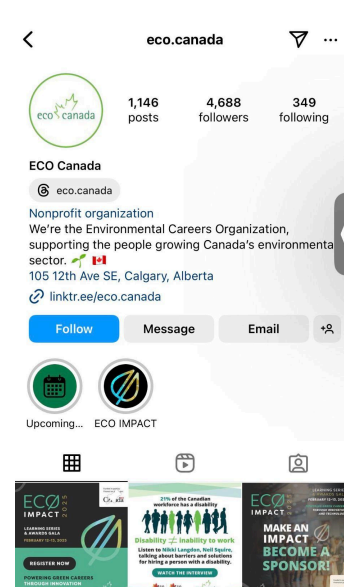
value of inviting climate experts for virtual talks or organizing global summit events that foster continuous learning on climate-related topics.
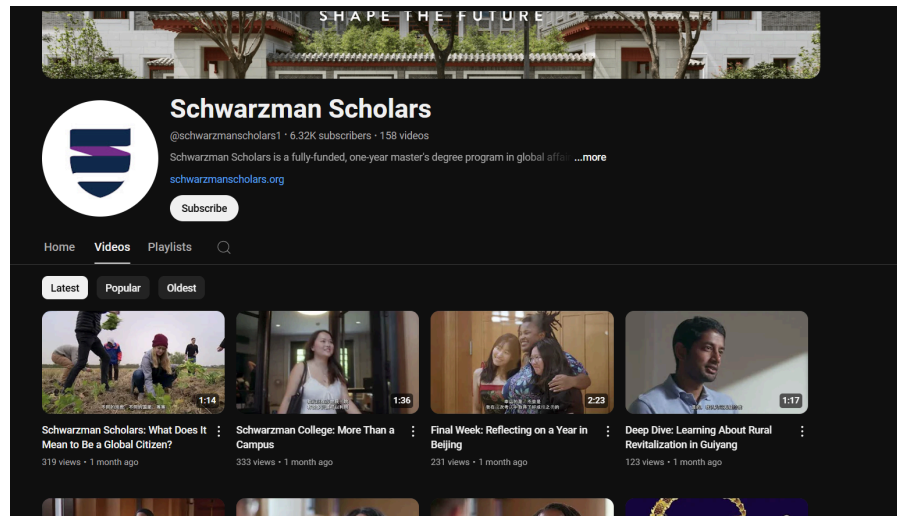
(Referenced Image: Schwarzman Scholars' YouTube channel showcasing educational resources and expert talks)

Global Networking and Collaborative Projects:

Through in-person and virtual events, the Schwarzman Scholars network allows alumni to join interest-based groups (e.g., sustainability) that encourage project collaboration and solution-sharing. The Wild Center could replicate this with project-based teams or regional climate action groups where alumni can work together on climate initiatives.

Recognition and Storytelling:

Schwarzman Scholars is particularly successful in showcasing impactful projects and sharing alumni stories across various platforms, including YouTube and LinkedIn. This storytelling approach not only celebrates alumni achievements but also demonstrates the impact of their

contributions to broader audiences. The Wild Center could use similar tactics, such as alumni spotlights in video format to highlight impactful climate work done by past summit participants.

Summary and Recommendations

By analyzing the strategies used by ECO Canada, Schwarzman Scholars, and the Meliora Collective, the Wild Center's Youth Climate Alumni Network can integrate the following best practices:

- **Offer climate-related certifications and expert-led workshops** to maintain professional development opportunities.
- **Facilitate both online and in-person networking events** that allow alumni to collaborate and discuss climate topics.
- **Establish mentorship programs and project-based groups** to create deeper connections and foster leadership within the network.
- **Utilize social media and video storytelling to highlight alumni achievements** and showcase their impact on climate action.

Users and Stakeholders

Users

The primary users of this platform are both alumni and current participants of the Youth Climate Summit—individuals who have participated in past summits or are currently engaged, and who are looking to connect or reconnect with The Wild Center to stay active in the climate action community. These users will access resources, mentorship opportunities, and updates on climate projects, with a platform that encourages them to share their stories and work, thereby creating a dynamic network of climate advocates. To design a platform that meets their needs, we'll gather feedback on user preferences, interests, and desired features through surveys and interviews conducted during the Youth Climate Summit. This research will guide us in structuring the platform's design and functionality to best serve alumni interests and foster engagement.

Stakeholders

The Wild Center's YCP Staff will serve as primary facilitators and stakeholders. They will use the platform to monitor alumni achievements, track the network's impact, and coordinate ongoing engagement activities. The staff's role in managing content, sharing program successes, and organizing events is crucial for the platform's success, so we'll work closely with them to align the platform's functionality with their operational needs. This collaboration will ensure that the platform is not only vibrant and engaging but also aligned with The Wild Center's mission.

Detailed Working Plan

Skills and Resources

To develop a platform that meets The Wild Center YCP's needs, we will leverage essential skills in research, marketing, web design, content creation, and user feedback. These skills are crucial to creating a solution that is data-driven, engaging, and user-centered.

Our research and analytical skills will lay a strong foundation based on alumni needs and engagement trends. We will start with benchmarking research on similar environmental alumni networks to identify best practices in community-building and mentorship. In addition, UX research through surveys and interviews will help us capture alumni preferences and pain points. By using tools like Google Analytics, we'll gain insights into website traffic and content effectiveness, allowing us to make data-driven improvements that align with The Wild Center's goals for alumni engagement.

Marketing and engagement skills will be essential to reaching and connecting with the YCP alumni network. We will implement a multi-channel strategy across LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, tailoring storytelling posts, event announcements, and calls to action to maximize engagement on each platform.

Creating a seamless, user-friendly platform also requires strong web design and development skills. We will design an intuitive interface that is visually appealing and easy to navigate, with a responsive layout that ensures functionality across devices. Using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, along with backend technologies, we will create a smooth, adaptable platform that supports

future growth and allows users to access resources, connect with others, and engage with content effortlessly.

In addition, content creation and storytelling will be central to building a connected alumni community. Through high-quality videos, articles, and interviews, we will highlight the stories and accomplishments of YCP alumni, showcasing their impact and inspiring others.

Graphic design will be a key skill as well, ensuring all visuals align with The Wild Center's branding and maintain a cohesive, professional look.

Roles and responsibilities

Simon Gu - Group Leader, Video Director, Marketing Strategist

As the Group Leader, Simon coordinates project activities and ensures alignment with The Wild Center's goals. With expertise in video direction and marketing strategy, Simon oversees the creation of impactful visual content and manages the overall marketing approach. He leads the storytelling aspects of the platform, ensuring that alumni stories and climate projects are effectively showcased to engage and inspire the community.

Marin Zhang- UI/UX Designer & Web Developer

Marin is responsible for designing a user-friendly, visually engaging platform that meets the needs of alumni and current participants. By conducting user experience research and applying best practices in UI/UX design, Marin ensures the platform is intuitive and accessible. Additionally, as a Web Developer, Marin collaborates on building and maintaining the technical framework, ensuring a smooth and responsive user experience.

Iris Han - Content Creator, Research Analyst, Web Developer

With her background in marketing and research, Iris contributes to both the promotional and development aspects of the project. She conducts market research and surveys to better understand alumni engagement needs and informs the team's strategies based on data analysis. In her role as a Web Developer, Iris supports platform development, focusing on implementing interactive features to enhance alumni connection.

Albert Zhang - Videographer, Audio Designer, Marketing Assistant

Albert brings expertise in videography and audio design, creating multimedia content that highlights alumni achievements and projects. By producing engaging video and audio elements, Albert enhances the storytelling hub, allowing alumni stories to resonate with viewers. Additionally, as a Marketing Assistant, he supports the promotion of the platform through social media and other digital channels to increase visibility and user engagement.

Nana Gu - Content Creator, Web/ Mobile app Developer

Nana focuses on developing a mobile-friendly version of the platform, ensuring alumni can engage with the network on multiple devices. Her skills in both mobile app and web development allow the team to create a versatile, accessible platform. Nana also collaborates on backend development, optimizing the platform's performance and ensuring a seamless user experience across all devices.

Six-Month Schedule for Research, Design, Production, and Marketing/Promotion

October - Research and Preparation

Define team roles and responsibilities to maximize skill sets. Conduct preliminary research on successful alumni networks, focusing on similar environmental and climate initiatives to identify best practices for engagement, mentorship, and community building. Prepare interview questions and survey materials to gather in-depth insights from alumni and students during the upcoming Youth Climate Summit.

November - In-Person Engagement and Initial Design

Attend the Youth Climate Summit to conduct on-site interviews with alumni and current students. Gather firsthand insights into their engagement preferences, networking needs, and content interests. Use this feedback to start shaping the platform's design framework, with initial sketches and concepts for key elements like the alumni database, storytelling hub, and professional networking tools.

December - Platform Design and Content Development

Translate insights from the Summit into concrete platform designs and begin building the primary website structure. Develop initial content, including alumni stories, video segments, and event highlights, to populate key sections of the platform. Conduct basic usability testing within the team to refine the interface and enhance user experience.

January - Beta Testing and Iterative Refinement

Complete the platform's primary features and begin beta testing with a small group of alumni

and students to gather feedback on functionality and content. Use this input to make refinements, ensuring the platform meets user expectations and provides a seamless, engaging experience.

March - Final Preparations for Launch

Incorporate all feedback from beta testing, finalizing the platform's design and content. Plan a pre-launch marketing campaign, including email and social media outreach, to build awareness and encourage alumni and student engagement upon launch. Set up tracking systems to monitor key metrics like sign-ups and user engagement.

April - Official Launch and Continuous Improvement

Launch the platform and implement an outreach campaign across targeted channels to engage alumni and current students. Monitor initial usage metrics, gather user feedback through surveys and polls, and establish a feedback loop to keep the platform responsive to user needs. This feedback will inform continuous updates and improvements, supporting long-term engagement.

Updates for November 19th

Progress Summary

First in-person visit to the Wild Center & The 14th Annual Adirondack Youth Climate Summit

From November 6th to 8th, we attended the 14th Adirondack Youth Climate Summit, where young participants gained valuable knowledge and tools to address climate change within their communities. The summit opened with foundational sessions, such as "Climate Science 101" by Dr. Curt Stager, and "Think Globally, Act Locally," emphasizing the importance of translating global insights into local actions. The workshops covered various topics, including waste management, sustainable food systems, and climate-smart nutrition, with engaging sessions like "Transforming Trash to Treasure" and "Farm to Table to Farm." Participants left with actionable steps, such as forming "Green Teams" to lead environmental projects in their schools and communities. The summit also highlighted creativity and culture in climate advocacy, with sessions like "Climate and Artivism" that demonstrated the power of visual arts and storytelling to raise environmental awareness. Youth leadership was encouraged through student-led presentations and initiatives, with sessions like "Dreams into Doing" showcasing successful youth climate projects. Many of the workshops aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), linking local efforts to global climate objectives. Outdoor activities further deepened attendees' connection to nature, while social events fostered a supportive network of climate advocates.

The knowledge and inspiration gained at the summit underscored the need for a dedicated alumni network tailored to support the ongoing climate efforts of Wild Center participants. Currently, high school students typically communicate through email and Zoom, often under a mentorship model where senior members guide new recruits as older members graduate. However, adult members of the Wild Center may prefer platforms like LinkedIn for professional connections, and these different communication habits highlight a gap that a dedicated alumni network could bridge. Developing a customized platform will address these varied needs by integrating both student-friendly communication tools and professional networking options for older alumni. By fostering mentorship, sharing resources, and supporting ongoing climate action projects, a dedicated alumni network will empower participants to stay connected with the Wild Center and each other, strengthening the collective impact of their climate advocacy.

Summary of interviews to Alumni during the Summit

We conducted interviews with alumni serving different roles: Anjalee, who has been involved with the YCP as a counselor and staff member since 2022 and also helps co-lead the Finger Lakes Youth Climate Summit; she is a current senior at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Astrid, YCP alumni, '22, and a current Paul Smith's College student. Brittany, who leads the Mass Audubon Youth Climate Program and summits, which have a similar setup to our year-round program and summits. Gaia, a former UPenn graduate student who worked on an alumni project. Tammy, a Lake Placid High School teacher who is leading a composting workshop with Astrid. Garret, the youth climate leadership coordinator for the Wild Center.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement of YCP

Despite YCP's successes, interviewees identified several challenges. Maintaining alumni connections was a common issue. Astrid shared that while she stays connected with peers she met at summits, she finds it difficult to keep track of all alumni, particularly those from different years. She suggested a centralized portal or regular newsletters to help alumni stay in touch and updated. Garret echoed this concern, noting that there isn't a clear system for alumni to re-engage after college or other life transitions.

Brittany and Tammy both pointed out the need to improve connections between regional summits. Brittany suggested that creating a more cohesive network among summits in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire could enhance collaboration and collective impact. Tammy added that district-to-district engagement could inspire younger students by connecting them with alumni who share their local roots.

Another challenge lies in bridging generational differences in communication preferences. Gaia noted that high school students often prefer platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, while older alumni rely more on email and LinkedIn. Astrid also highlighted this shift, sharing that she transitioned from using Instagram to primarily using email as she moved into professional roles. This generational gap underscores the importance of a platform that accommodates diverse communication habits.

Balancing in-person and virtual engagement was also identified as a key area for improvement. Tammy and Garret emphasized the unique value of in-person events for building deep connections, while Gaia pointed out that virtual options increase accessibility. A hybrid model

that combines the strengths of both approaches was suggested as a way to ensure inclusivity and impact.

Opportunities for a Website-Based Alumni Network

Several interviewees advocated for a website-based platform to address the program's challenges and enhance its strengths. Astrid and Garret both suggested that a centralized portal could facilitate alumni networking, event updates, and resource sharing. Astrid noted that such a platform would allow alumni to connect across generations, while Garret emphasized the importance of creating a clear avenue for alumni to re-engage with the program.

The platform's features should cater to diverse user needs. Gaia suggested integrating tools that feel "natural" for high school students, such as interactive and social-media-like elements, while still supporting professional networking through email or LinkedIn-style options. Astrid also proposed incorporating a directory to help alumni easily find and connect with one another.

A storytelling hub to showcase alumni achievements was frequently mentioned as a valuable addition. Brittany shared how watching young leaders grow into confident organizers inspires her work. Highlighting these success stories on the platform could motivate alumni and current participants alike, fostering a sense of pride and community.

Expanding regional and global networks was another opportunity identified by Brittany and Tammy. Brittany suggested regional groups within the platform to connect participants from different summits, while Tammy emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for

collaboration between districts. These features could help unify the program's widespread participants and amplify its impact.

Results and takeaways from questionnaires collected among current student in the summit

We designed a questionnaire to collect insights from 26 current students at the Youth Climate Summit regarding their networking and content preferences. It included questions on demographics (age and role), how they first learned about the Wild Center Youth Climate Program, and which platforms they currently use for networking (e.g., Instagram, LinkedIn). Respondents were asked if they would be interested in a dedicated platform for summit participants, and about their content preferences, such as success stories or skill-building workshops, along with preferred storytelling formats like podcasts or articles. The questionnaire also explored preferences for receiving newsletters or notifications, including the desired frequency, and whether they had experience with similar networking platforms. Finally, students indicated their preferred device (mobile app or desktop) and whether they would be comfortable using LinkedIn or would prefer a customized platform. This data aims to inform the development of a more personalized alumni network experience.

The questionnaire responses reveal specific preferences and interests among the students who attended the Youth Climate Summit. Out of the 26 respondents, 11 are between the ages of
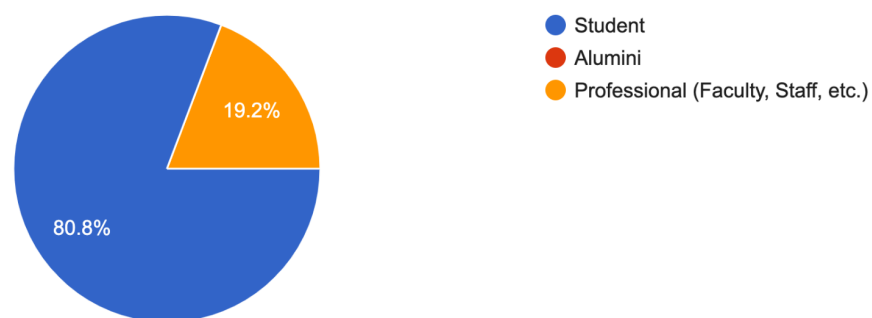
12-16, 9 are aged 16-18, 5 are 21 or older, and 1 respondent is between 18-21.

Your age
26 responses

- under 12
- 12-16
- 16-18
- 18-21
- 21+

34.6% 19.2% 42.3%
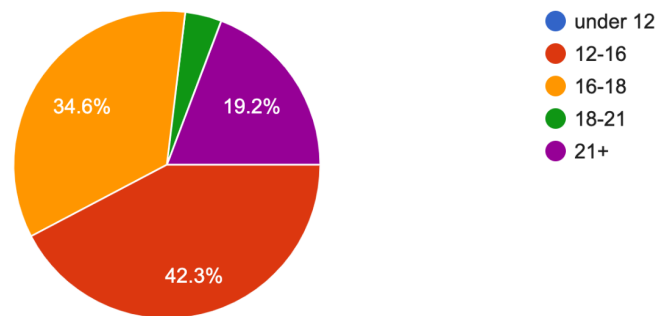
Nearly all participants (21) are students, with only 5 identifying as professionals, such as faculty or staff.

Current role
26 responses

- Student
- Alumini
- Professional (Faculty, Staff, etc.)

19.2% 80.8%

When asked how they first learned about the Wild Center Youth Climate Program, 17 respondents mentioned they heard about it through their school, making it the most common source. Six students learned about it through friends, while smaller numbers found out through a club outside of school (1), social media (1), or an advertisement (1).

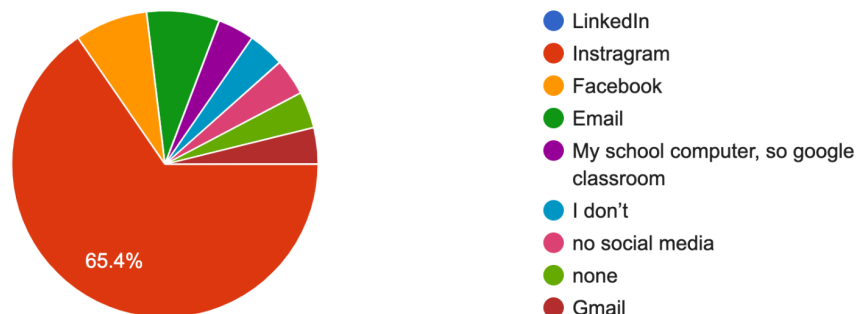## How did you first learn about Wild Center Youth Climate Program?
26 responses

- School
- Club outside of school
- Friend
- Social Media
- Advertisement

65.4%
23.1%
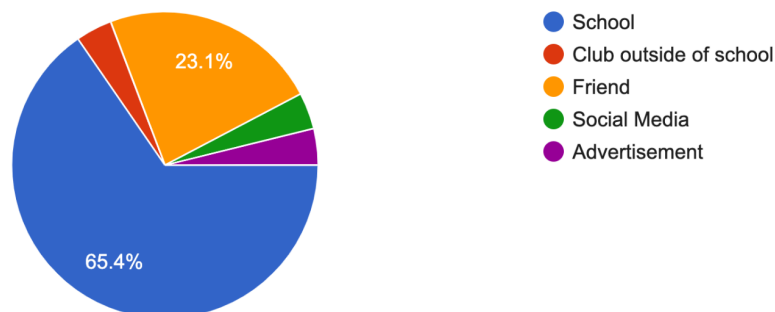
Regarding networking platforms, Instagram is the most widely used, with 17 respondents indicating they use it regularly. Other platforms like Facebook and email were each mentioned by 2 respondents, while a few others specified non-traditional options such as Google Classroom, Gmail, or simply noted that they don't use social media.

Which platforms do you regularly use for professional networking? (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, other - please specify)
26 responses

- LinkedIn
- Instragram
- Facebook
- Email
- My school computer, so google classroom
- I don't
- no social media
- none
- Gmail

65.4%

Interest in a dedicated platform to connect summit participants is high, with 21 students responding "Yes" to this idea, 4 saying "Maybe," and only 1 responding "No." Given that 21 out

of 26 respondents expressed interest in a dedicated alumni platform, the website should serve as a central hub for maintaining meaningful connections. Features like a searchable alumni directory and group-based networking (e.g., by summit year, region, or interest) will allow users to form both professional and personal bonds. To accommodate the preference for both informal (e.g., Instagram) and formal (e.g., LinkedIn) networking styles, the platform should integrate these functions while offering a seamless and intuitive user experience.

**Would you be interested in using a dedicated platform to connect with other summit participants?**
26 responses
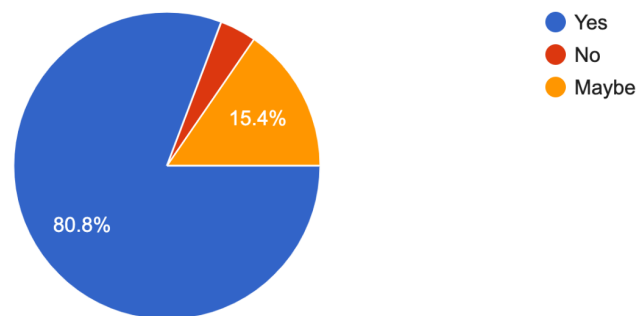
When asked about the types of content they would find most valuable, responses were diverse but leaned heavily toward practical and inspirational resources. Eight respondents expressed interest in success stories, resource sharing, skill-building workshops, and job/volunteer opportunities combined. Skill-building workshops and job/volunteer opportunities were also popular individually, with each option mentioned by 4 respondents. Additionally, other combinations of success stories, resource sharing, and skill-building were mentioned across the group.
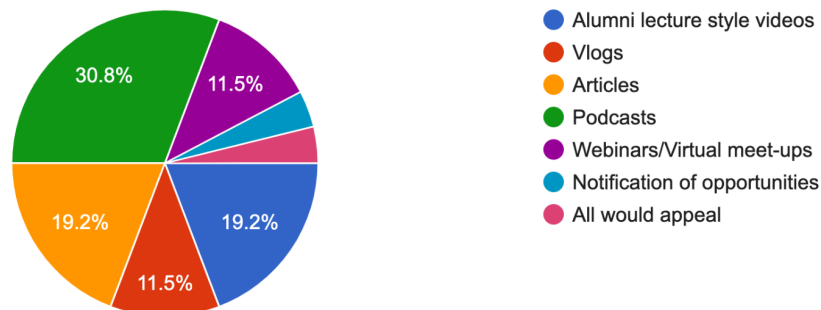
What type of content would you find most valuable?
26 responses

Content Type	Responses
Success stories	13 (50%)
Resource sharing	16 (61.5%)
Skill-building workshops	23 (88.5%)
Job and volunteer opportunities	17 (65.4%)
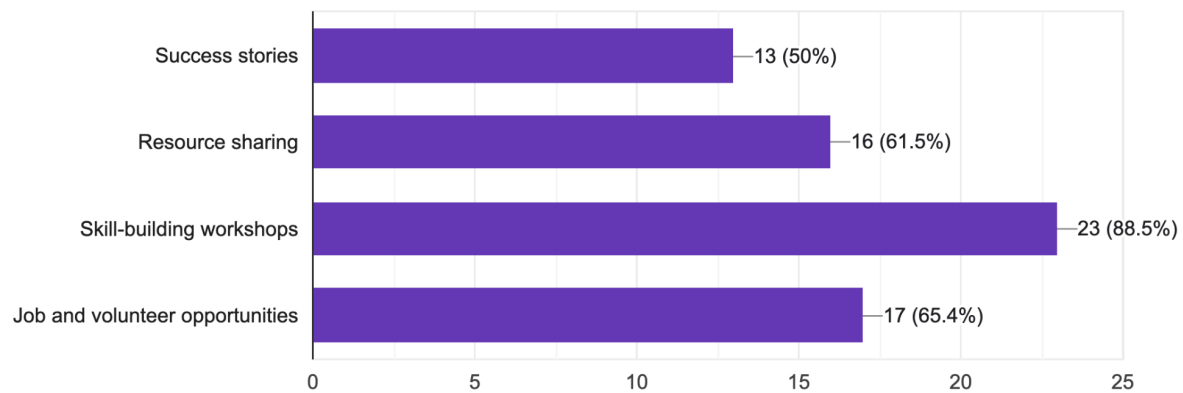
In terms of preferred storytelling formats, podcasts were chosen by 8 respondents as their favorite way to engage with content, followed closely by articles (5) and alumni lecture-style videos (5). Other formats like webinars/virtual meet-ups and vlogs also appealed to a smaller portion of the group, with 3 respondents choosing each. One respondent indicated that all storytelling formats would appeal to them, and other preferred notifications of opportunities over traditional storytelling formats. Participants showed significant interest in success stories, skill-building workshops, and job/volunteer opportunities, making these essential components of the website. We envision a Resource Library where users can access curated materials such as leadership guides, project toolkits, and recordings of past workshops or summits. Additionally, the Storytelling Hub should showcase alumni journeys through podcasts, articles, and alumni lecture-style videos, offering inspiration while reinforcing a sense of community. These sections should be updated regularly to remain engaging and relevant.

## What kind of storytelling formats appeals you the most?alumni videos, articles, or podcasts?
26 responses

- Alumni lecture style videos
- Vlogs
- Articles
- Podcasts
- Webinars/Virtual meet-ups
- Notification of opportunities
- All would appeal

For staying updated, 13 respondents expressed interest in receiving newsletters or notifications "Maybe," while 12 said they would like to receive them, and only 1 preferred not to receive any updates.

Would you like to receive regular newsletters or notifications with updates about other members' climate action projects?
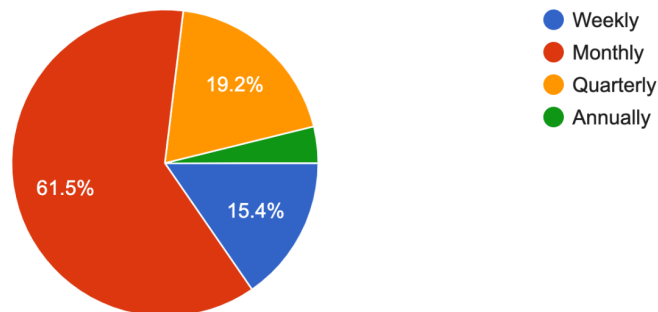26 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
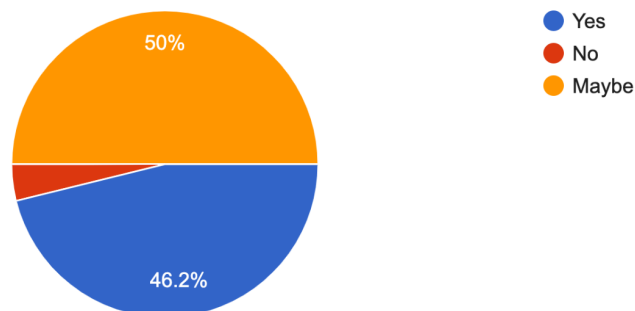
Monthly updates were the preferred frequency for 16 respondents, with quarterly updates chosen by 5, weekly by 4, and annually by 1 respondent.

How often would you like updates from our community? (Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually)
26 responses

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

61.5%
19.2%
15.4%

20 respondents indicated they had not used similar alumni or networking platforms before, suggesting that a dedicated alumni network could be a novel experience for most of them.The website must provide dynamic communication tools that cater to a wide range of preferences. With 16 respondents favoring monthly updates, the platform should support regular newsletters and notifications to share upcoming events, new resources, or alumni achievements. Integration with email and social media platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp could ensure communication reaches participants on the channels they are already comfortable using.

Have you used similar alumni or networking platforms before?
26 responses

- Yes
- No

76.9%
23.1%
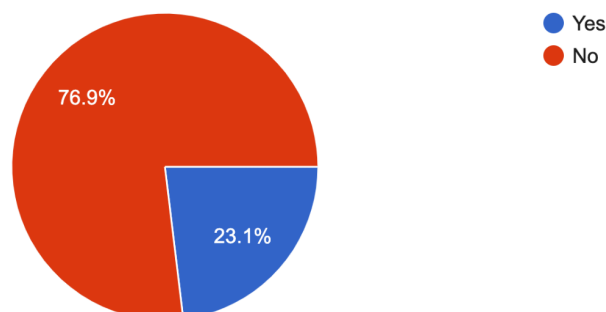
When it comes to device preference, 12 respondents said they would prefer connecting through a mobile app, 10 preferred a desktop website, and 4 were open to using both. With 12 respondents preferring a mobile app and 10 favoring a desktop website, the platform must be designed for cross-device compatibility. This includes a responsive design that ensures seamless navigation and functionality on smartphones, tablets, and desktops. A mobile-friendly interface is particularly important for younger users, while desktop functionality can cater to professionals and staff.

Do you prefer connecting through a mobile app or a desktop website?
26 responses
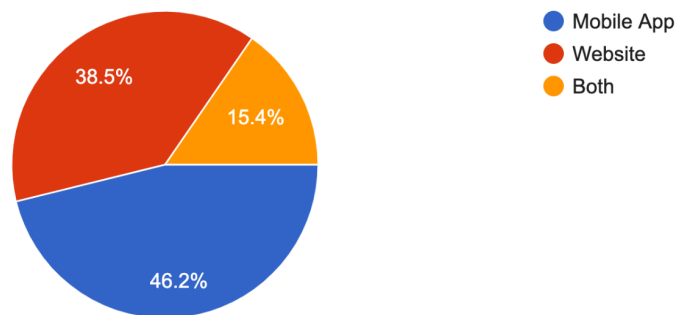
Finally, regarding platform preference, 13 respondents showed a clear preference for a customized platform over LinkedIn, while 8 were comfortable using LinkedIn. The remaining responses indicated uncertainty or a lack of preference, with comments such as "I don't know what either is," "No interest in downloading/learning a new app," and "Open to either." The questionnaire revealed a clear preference for a customized platform (13 respondents) over LinkedIn (8 respondents). This aligns with the demographic diversity of the participants, from high school students to professionals. The website must cater to both groups by incorporating student-friendly features like easy account setup and interactive forums, alongside professional

networking tools for older alumni. The platform should prioritize inclusivity, simplicity, and intuitive navigation to engage all users effectively.

How comfortable are you with using LinkedIn for this purpose, or would you prefer a customized platform?
26 responses
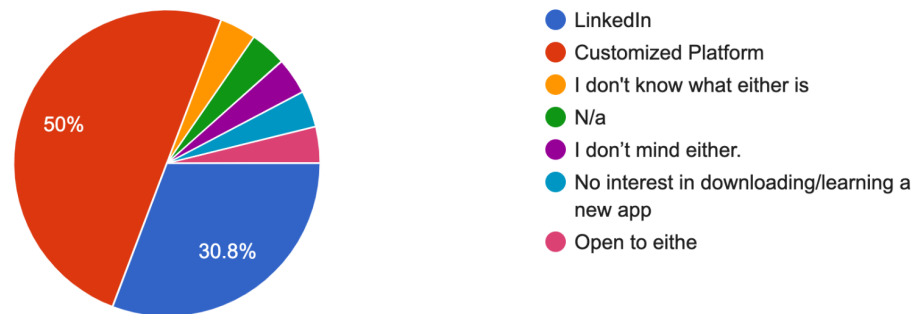
These numbers reflect a strong interest in a dedicated, user-friendly platform that provides access to relevant content, networking opportunities, and regular updates on climate action projects and alumni activities. The data supports the development of a customized alumni network tailored to the unique needs and preferences of the Wild Center Youth Climate Summit participants. The ultimate expectation is that this platform becomes a living ecosystem where alumni can thrive—an adaptable and evolving space that reflects the innovative spirit of the Wild Center while maintaining the personal connections that make the Youth Climate Summit experience so meaningful.

Individual Contributions

Simon Gu

I developed the schedule for Thursday and Friday, organizing our team's activities and making sure we adhered to timelines for each event. Additionally, I planned the video schedule, coordinated the preliminary proposal revisions, and made sure everything was on track for a smooth experience at the summit. I filmed interviews and event segments throughout the summit and am currently in the editing & production phase. Furthermore, I was responsible for organizing and analyzing the interview and survey content based on Albert and Nana's transcriptions, incorporating them into the progress report. In the upcoming weeks, I will do further research into the data & responses we collected and make sure our platform solves desirable problems.

Marin Zhang

I mainly paid attention to jobs related to data collection. Two major ways of collecting data we need are interviews and questionnaires. After I first designed the interview questions, we communicated with Cedar in the meeting to let them help us make it more suitable for the summit. Also, I made the questionnaire for all participants in the summit (high school students), so we could directly know the future users' needs.

During the summit, we communicated with a lot of faculties and participants. I took the role of interviewer. Based on the different roles of our interviewees, I changed the question slightly and provided positive feedback to encourage them to speak more.

Iris Han

I was responsible for contacting interviewees both before and after the trip, as well as taking detailed notes during the interviews. During the trip, I attended several workshops with our

interviewees and engaged in meaningful conversations with them. Additionally, I assisted in reviewing and refining documents to ensure accuracy and quality.

Nana Gu

During the Wild Center summit, I actively contributed to the foundation of the alumni network system. I participated in a workshop that provided an in-depth understanding of the Wild Center's activities, mission, and goals, enabling me to identify opportunities for ongoing engagement and propose initial ideas for post-summit connections. During the tabling phase, I interviewed numerous students, gathering valuable feedback on the Center's projects and encouraging survey participation to gain detailed insights. I organized this interview data to inform the design of the alumni network website. In the next steps, I will use this data to develop a prototype and, ultimately, the full alumni network system.

Albert Zhang

In the past few weeks, I actively participated in group meetings and in our trip to the Wild Center. At the Wild Center, I engaged in various workshops and observed and recorded different activities to gather insights relevant to our capstone project through notes and photos. I hosted interviews and alumni and staff, focusing on discussions about the potential structure and usefulness of the alumni system/website. Moreover, Me and one of my teammates hosted the tabling session where we handed out surveys to each individual to gather their insights and I had the opportunity to talk with them to see how we can benefit the Youth Climate Program further. In the coming weeks, I plan to analyze the information we collected and incorporate these insights into our project to help design an effective alumni system.

Road Bumps

A significant road bump in our project is the challenge of designing a platform that is both user-friendly and engaging across a diverse user base. The digital habits and content preferences of younger students often differ from those of older alumni, which means we need to strike a careful balance between simplicity and functionality. Younger students may prefer more intuitive, visually engaging interfaces with easy-to-use features, while older alumni might prioritize more robust networking and information-sharing tools. Creating a platform that meets both groups' needs without overwhelming or under-serving either will require thoughtful design choices, such as modular layouts that allow users to focus on different types of content based on their interests.

Additionally, technical resources and development time could present constraints, particularly if we plan to launch both a mobile-friendly version and a desktop website. Developing a seamless, high-quality experience across multiple devices is resource-intensive, and rushing this process could compromise usability. If we encounter time or resource limitations, we may need to consider prioritizing one platform, such as focusing on either mobile or desktop initially, and launching additional features in phases. This approach would allow us to maintain a manageable development process while ensuring a polished user experience. By focusing on core features first, we can build a strong foundation that can later be expanded to accommodate the full range of functionalities needed for both younger and older users.

Schedule

Check in with our proposed schedule for October & November:

- ☑ Define team roles and responsibilities to maximize skill sets.
- ☑ Conduct preliminary research on successful alumni networks, focusing on similar environmental and climate initiatives to identify best practices for engagement, mentorship, and community building.
- ☑ Prepare interview questions and survey materials to gather in-depth insights from alumni and students during the upcoming Youth Climate Summit.
- ☑ Attend the Youth Climate Summit to conduct on-site interviews with alumni and current students.
- ☑ Gather firsthand insights into their engagement preferences, networking needs, and content interests.

Our plan for the rest of the semester:

- ☐ Use feedback to start shaping the platform's design framework, with initial sketches and concepts for key elements like the alumni database, storytelling hub, and professional networking tools.
- ☐ Translate insights from the Summit into concrete platform designs and begin building the primary website structure.

- ☐ Develop initial content, including alumni stories, video segments, and event highlights, to populate key sections of the platform.

- ☐ Conduct basic usability testing within the team to refine the interface and enhance user experience.

Updates for February 17th

Progress Summary

Our team prepared extensively for the Lo-Fi Prototype Fair, including developing sketches, refining our initial designs, and making edits based on peer, mentors and the Wild Center's feedback. The final prototype showcased key features such as the searchable alumni database, storytelling hub, and networking tools. We also created interactive elements in our Figma prototype to simulate user experiences like searching profiles and posting stories. We have got permission to access the Oxygen plug-in on the Wild Center's website, so the next stage would be developing features from our prototype to the Wild Center's Wordpress.

Work done for Lo-Fi Prototype Fair
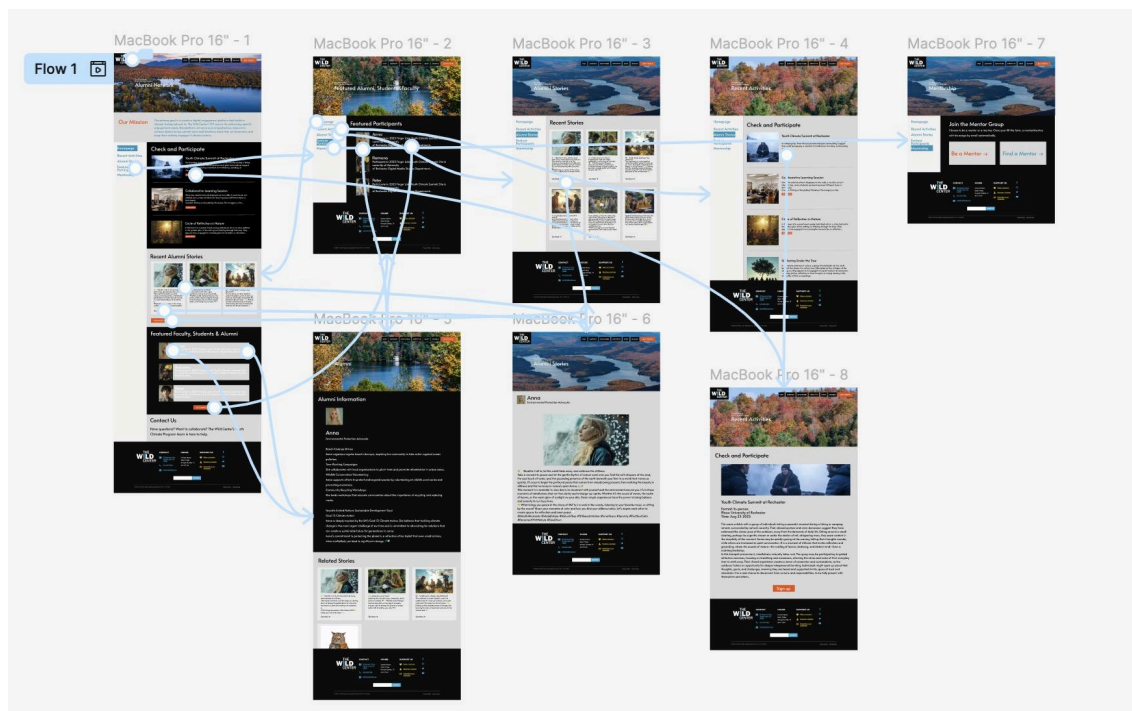
Personal Contribution

Simon Gu

I worked on developing agendas for our weekly meetings with the Wild Center, ensuring that each session was well-organized and focused on key project milestones. Additionally, I monitored our team's progress to ensure that our prototype remained aligned with the Wild Center's needs and expectations. During the Prototype Fair, I filmed interviews with participants to capture valuable feedback and insights. I also visited other groups' prototype fairs to gather references and learn from their approaches, which helped our own project development. In the upcoming weeks, I will conduct further research and analysis of the data and responses we collected during the Prototype Fair and alumni questionnaires, ensuring that our platform effectively addresses the most pressing and desirable needs of our target users.

Marin Zhang

I developed the initial lo-fi prototype for the project and presented it to our community partner during a meeting, making adjustments based on their feedback. I also coordinated with the Wild Center's marketing team to gain access to their website for future integrations. During the prototype fair, I actively addressed questions from visitors and shared insights into our design process. I will continue focusing on webpage development to ensure we deliver a fully functional and user-friendly platform.

Iris Han

I served as the primary coordinator between our team and our community partner, ensuring clear communication on our progress, scheduling regular meetings, and following up on action items after each session. In preparation for the next phase of our project, I also reached out to alumni to arrange upcoming interviews once our website is built. During the prototype fair, I worked with Simon to explore other groups' projects, gathering ideas and best practices that could enhance our own development process. Moving forward, I will keep in touch with both the community partner and the alumni to ensure continued collaboration and alignment on our goals.

Nana Gu

Platform Architecture & Development: Designed and implemented the website's backend and frontend, ensuring a seamless user experience for alumni.

User Authentication & Security: Integrated secure login systems with role-based access control to protect user data.

Messaging & Networking Features: Developed interactive features such as discussion forums, and event announcements to enhance alumni engagement.

Data Management & Integration: Implemented efficient database structures to handle alumni profiles, event registrations, and communications.

Responsive UI/UX Design: Built a modern, mobile-friendly interface using the latest web technologies to ensure accessibility across devices.

Communication with Wild Center in above area, make sure our designs align with their goals.

Albert Zhang

During my time working on the Wild Center project, I have actively contributed to video production. I have actively participated in weekly meetings, providing strategic input on content and engagement, and collaborated closely with the team to align our work with the Wild Center's vision. Additionally, I presented our digital platform prototype at the fair, effectively showcasing its potential to stakeholders and gathering feedback for future development. Through these efforts, I made sure our project is going in the right direction.

Prototype used for the fair

https://www.figma.com/proto/CCIH8WQ3Aiq9Ab4ItWIrEE/W!ld?node-id=19-79&node-type=canvas&t=GjwbuA5NzCM0hGE5-0&scaling=scale-down&content-scaling=fixed&page-id=0%3A1&starting-point-node-id=1%3A6

Take-aways from the Prototype Fair

We introduced our prototype to colleagues during the prototype fair and distributed a questionnaire on Alumni Network to them for feedback. Besides, we also distributed the questionnaire to the Wild Center. Users provided us with encouraging feedback and practical suggestions. Users appreciated the design and saw the potential for meaningful alumni engagement. However, they emphasized the need for more filtering options and better

networking functionalities. Moving forward, we will integrate these suggestions into our next design iteration and continue seeking feedback from alumni and stakeholders to ensure our platform meets user needs.

The demographics of the questionnaire respondents reflected a diverse group of participants, with 85.7% aged between 12 and 16. This indicates that a significant portion of our target audience is in the younger age range, highlighting the need for a platform that is intuitive and user-friendly for high school students. Additionally, 57.1% of respondents identified as alumni, while 42.9% were current students. This balanced mix of alumni and students underscores the importance of creating a platform that serves the needs of both groups, fostering mentorship, networking, and continued engagement with the Youth Climate Program.

The prototype received positive feedback, with 85.7% of respondents rating it as "Very Good" or "Amazing." This encouraging reception suggests that our initial design and functionality align well with user expectations. However, it also motivates us to further refine and enhance the platform to maintain and increase this level of satisfaction.

What do you think about our prototype?
7 responses

- 🔵 Good
- 🔴 Very Good
- 🟠 Amazing
- 🟢 Ummmmm, nice

14.3%

85.7%
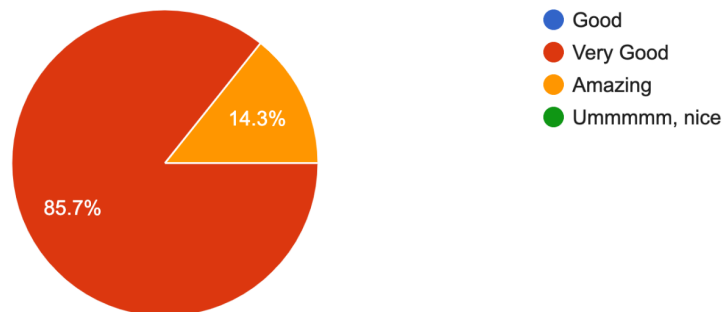
In terms of project scope, 85.7% of participants believed that the scope of our project was fair and manageable. This feedback is crucial as it validates our current project plan and timeline, reassuring us that our objectives are realistic and achievable within the given timeframe.

## Do you think our prototype idea is too big or too small?
7 responses

- 🔵 Too Big
- 🔴 Too Small
- 🟠 Fair

85.7%

14.3%
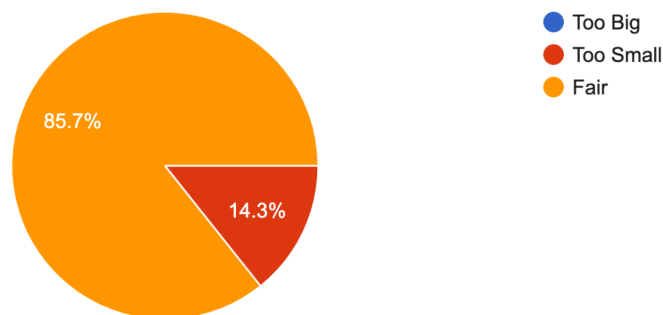
The prototype's purpose was also well-received, with 85.7% agreeing that it could effectively enhance alumni engagement within the Youth Climate Program. This affirmation is significant as it confirms that our platform addresses a genuine need for better connectivity and interaction among program participants, both past and present.

Do you think this prototype fulfills the purpose of making alumni engage more in Youth Climate Program?

7 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14.3%

85.7%
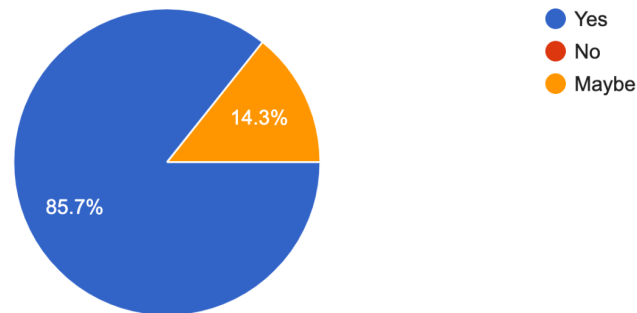
Respondents provided valuable suggestions for improving the platform, including the addition of a search bar and filter options, such as filtering by major, year of participation, or location. This functionality would make it easier for users to find and connect with alumni who share similar interests or experiences. Another key suggestion was to include a feature that allows alumni to network more seamlessly, such as a "Contact Me" button on profiles. Same suggestion was given by the YCP coordinator as well. This addition would enable direct communication between users, fostering stronger connections and collaborations within the Youth Climate Program community.

Any Specific suggestions?

2 responses

Search bar
Filter bar (major, year participated, etc)

Maybe include a feature where alum could reach out to each other if they want to network or speak more. Could even be a social button or just include a contact me for more question to be added in their profile

We were also asked whether specific incentives could encourage alumni participation. After meeting with the YCP Program team, we learned that the core value of this alumni network lies in offering meaningful networking opportunities for individuals who share a passion for climate action. Therefore, the focus is on fostering high-quality engagement among participants rather than simply increasing the number of users.