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Randy: [00:00:08] Thank you for joining us on today's episode of the UW HELP podcast. I'm Randy Parvin, your host, and a student services coordinator at the University of Wisconsin System HELP Office. In our last podcast we talked about College Goal Wisconsin, an event that has been around for a number of years. And if you haven't listened to that podcast, I suggest you do it today. It was very interesting. But today we're going to talk about something that has been around only for a few weeks and is a new service for students searching for a UW college campus and it's called UW Journey. My guests today were instrumental in conceptualizing and building this new service. Laura Beiermeister is a business analyst, and Nicole Knudson, a digital communication specialist, both with UW HELP. Welcome, Laura! Welcome, Nichole.

Laura: [00:01:03] Thank you for having us today. We're excited to talk about it.

Nichole: Yeah, thanks for having us, Randy.

Randy: [00:01:07] All right. Awesome. Well, Laura and Nicole, thanks for sitting down and talking about UW Journey. Nicole could you just tell us what Journey is?

Nichole: Sure. Journey is a new mobile application, again, developed by UW HELP, to help college students in their search process. So we'll help them find their fit on all UW System campuses.

Randy: [00:01:32] All right. So if my son or daughter or I want to access, or someone out there, how does a person do that? Where do we….

Nichole: [00:01:39] We have a couple options. If you have an Apple device you can go to the App Store and download it. It's free. It's also free on Google Play if you have an Android phone, and you can also visit the website for a desktop mobile experience at uwjourney.wisconsin.edu

Randy: [00:01:56] All right, can you repeat that website again? I just want make sure everybody caught it.

Nichole: [00:02:01] Sure. Visit uwjourney.wisconsin.edu

Randy: [00:02:06] All right. Thanks. So Laura, when a person goes to the website or downloads it on Apple Play... or Google Play and the Apple Store, how do they get started? What is that process like? Can you give us some idea about that?

Laura: I can elaborate a little bit on that. So after you've downloaded it, got to the website, you can actually just honestly just get started. You're going to go through some onboarding screens that give you a little bit about each section of the mobile app, so you're gonna see information about find your fit, how comparing campuses, how to pay, how to apply, just to kind of see what you're going to be experiencing in this app. And then you're going to come to the Let's Get Started page and a student will immediately start filling in a Madlibs type of search that will input their criteria for, you know, what they're called, what they want a college search. So that's how a student would just get started. You can also get started by just creating an account as well, which would be found in the burger menu. So there's a variety of different ways you can jump into this app. It's meant to be a bit flexible, but ideally it would be nice just to get with like you start an account or just get going in and you'll eventually run into it. It's pretty flexible in that way.

Nichole: [00:03:19] So yeah, once a student gets to the Let's Get Started page, they'll be filling out things: I'm a junior and a senior. I'm a freshman. I'm an adult student. They can also input fields as what they're interested in studying, what their interests are--are they interested in tennis or soccer? Or are they more theatre arts? And then how far do you want to be from home? How many miles away? Do you want to live on campus? So they'll go through and fill out these different items. And then at the bottom they'll hit "find your fit" and at that point, the individual be given a list of all the schools who fit those different selections.

Randy: [00:04:00] All right and so this is the typical way students look at college and it sounds like this has just been put out there for a mobile phone and a website for those who don't have smartphones. Is that….

Nichole: [00:04:12] Yep, we wanted people to be able to access this tool either on a mobile device, or while they're in a classroom setting, at their laptop, or at home on a desktop, or even parents can log in from their office.

Randy: [00:04:26] Do students and… can parents use this as well? Let me start with that.

Nichole: [00:04:29] Absolutely. You don't have to have an account. But if you do want to have any of the "save" functions, then you do need to log in so that we can save that information because you can also share it via text message or e-mail.

Randy: [00:04:43] Well, wait a minute, that's kind of interesting. So once I do a search—I'm a student, right, or you're a student--and we like these campuses, we like these three, I can forward that to a friend then, or how does that work?

Laura: [00:04:54] Yeah, so you do your search you come up, you know, three top matches that there will be an option. There is iconology that shows that "send" option that you just tap on that (or click if you're on the website version) and you can either put in a, you know, you can go to your, pop up that drawer in your phone and you can choose to send it, you know to your mom and dad, you can e-mail it to your high school counselor, so you can email or text it to really anybody that you would like to, to share this information with them.

Randy: [00:05:23] That is awesome. I really like that because that's awesome. Now does it have information on cost of these colleges or universities?

Laura: [00:05:34] Yes. So in the Pay for College section, that goes through general financial aid basics and financial aid timelines. Now on each campus profile they have the tuitions for a resident, nonresident, Minnesota reciprocity, and a few other different types of tuitions that campuses have. So you can see all that information all in one spot. And if you compare, you can see it right next to each other as well.

Randy: And you don't have to be tied down to a desktop computer which is what I really like. And do this at lunch or someplace convenient for you, after school practice…

Laura: Quick on your phone. It's just right there in your hand.

Randy: That is awesome. All right. I know you both said that I don't have to create an account. But

what are the benefits of creating an account? I meant is there an advantage for students and parents to create an account?

Nichole: [00:06:25] So once you've completed Find Your Fit, you have the option to save that search. So if you've made a search selection that is for biology and soccer, but then you want to try a different search and do arts and, let's say billiards, then you want to save that, name that as something else, so you're going to get different results each time you do one of these Find Your Fit sessions. So you can name them and save them for later. So it's always there when you go back.

Randy: 00:06:56] OK. Is there ability to request information from these campuses? Is that a part of the app?

Nichole: At this point in time, we're not directly communicating with campuses but we do provide all the contact information within. I'd like to go back though and talk about… we do also have the capability of making a Favorites list.

Randy: OK now, what's that?

Nichole: A favorites list is once you've gone through and you've done your comparisons, you are able to "heart," or "favorite," one of the campuses. So that's kind of just calling a campus out saying, "I really like one of these campuses; these are my favorites." And then again you can share those with friends and family.

Randy: [00:07:35] OK. I like that. I wasn't aware of that and I've looked at this before. All our discussion here and I didn't see that, so thanks. Let me ask this, are there features that we haven't talked about that you want to highlight? And Nichole, you just mentioned the favorite ones. Are there others?

Laura: So a few that we kind of just touched on. I mean How to Apply is the section that kind of goes over the general steps of how to start the college application process. It runs down, you know, completing an application, paying the application fee, sending transcripts. You know, let's see here, why am I blanking on this? All the things that you would have to do to apply to a UW System campus on one spot, and it has a nice checklist feature so you could kind of just check that off as you're working through that process. And then there's also a timeline feature on how to apply. And it goes through all the campuses' application deadlines or priority deadlines and so you can take those dates and you can add them to your personal calendar, so you always know, you know, when is UW-Milwaukee's priority deadline or when is Madison's deadline--that type of information, so you can just put it on your phone as well.

Nichole: [00:08:50] So yeah, it's been great. We've been able to integrate with mobile devices so that it will work with the calendar that's on your phone. So you can save that calendar as a reminder, and a week before a deadline, it'll pop up as "hey, don't forget to apply." "Don't forget that you have to complete the FAFSA." So another cool integration with the mobile devices.

Randy: [00:09:12] Well, that is super. You know, one thing I forgot to ask early on and I want to ask this. Does this cost, if I want to download it from Apple or Google?

Laura: It's free, it's completely free. And there are no ads as well. No ads!

Randy: [00:09:30] I like that, I like that! What do you see…. Now this is awesome. I think this is something that I want to encourage my daughter, who is a Junior, to download. But let's look to the future a little. What do you see as the future for UW Journey, the University of Wisconsin Journey app? Is there anything that you're thinking about as we move forward with this?

Nichole: [00:09:49] We're currently working with each one of the campuses so that they can push notifications and reminders to the end users, so if they're having an upcoming preview day, they can send an announcement to everyone who has favorited their school or put them in their comparison. So we're getting the campuses involved in helping them connect with the students.

Randy: OK. That sounds awesome, but that's probably a little ways out, right? I mean or what….

Nichole: [00:10:21] Well that's just right around the corner. It's something that we're working on currently. So hopefully in the next few weeks that will be up and live, and the people who go out and download it now should be seeing something in the next few weeks.

Randy: [00:10:34] OK. This is definitely something that I think students, parents, and school counselors should be aware of. If a school counselor is out there listening to this, is there any kind of promotional piece that you have or we have, that they can hand out to their students? Anything like that that we're working on?

Nichole: [00:10:54] Yep, we've developed a little card that will give just the highlight levels like Laura said. It'll give you the UW Journey on one side—compare, apply, pay--and on the other side, it'll also talk about our new website redesign.

Randy: All right, and so to get those they should--the school counselors or folks out there should…

Nichole: They'll be available at the fall workshop, but if they want they can e-mail us at our publications and requests and we can send them some of those.

Randy: [00:11:23] All right. If students… kind of the same strain here… if students, parents, or counselors have questions about this UW Journey app, because I know a lot of times, parents and folks are real hesitant to download stuff on their smartphone. Heck, my mother-in-law just got a smart phone the other day. Who should they… can they call? Can they e-mail? You know, that kind of thing.

Laura: [00:11:46] Yep, so there's about two different ways you can contact. You know, we'd love if you write an e-mail to uwjourney@uwex.edu. I can repeat that again. It's you can e-mail us at uwjourney@uwex.edu. You can send any e-mail questions. You know anything. That way we'll respond pretty quickly. Otherwise within the app, in the burger menu, there is a feedback link, and if you click on that you can send general feedback questions that way as well. And we're pretty attentive and we'll respond quite hastily.

Randy: [00:12:19] For those who may have missed it from the beginning, how do we… how does a student, parent, counselor access or get into University Wisconsin Journey?

Laura: [00:12:30] Yep, so what you can either do is if you have an Apple device you can go to the App Store, and if you type in UW Journey, it will come up in the search bar and you just hit

download from there. In Google Play, it's also there and it's a similar experience; you'd search under UW Journey. Also, if you go to uwjourney.wisconsin.edu you can use Journey there, and also those two download buttons are on that page as well, so if you don't want you can just get to that page right away if you start there in both stores--in Google Play and the App Store.

Randy: [00:13:03] All right. That is awesome. Is there anything that I haven't asked you both yet that I should have… that you want to add about UW Journey?

Laura: [00:13:12] What about our favorite features?

Randy: Well, what are they? Anything you want to add about favorite features?

Nichole: [00:13:19] Well, I think the notifications are going to be super helpful for reminding students to get applications and meet deadlines, so I think there's something to that… having that personal contact with the campuses is going to be really great for the end user.

Randy: [00:13:35] Anything you want to add, Laura?

Laura: I'm kind of torn on a few of them. So there's the explorer section and that's where you see your results. You can use them in a list, you can view your results in a list or a map view. And I just think it's pretty cool how we can take all this information and generate out results that can help, you know, see what, you know, what are my top matches going to be. I find that's a pretty and a very unique experience and I have every time even though I have a ton of times, every time I'm excited to see what campuses come out on top. Another thing I think the sharing feature is also really, really important. I think this could really work well, you know, to keep everyone in the loop so I can just see a student signing this, you know, sharing this with their parents or sharing it with their counselors, their results--either a compare or a search. And I think it could get a lot of good discussions going on just to get that college decision process started.

Laura: [00:14:27] And that's where I'm kind of sitting between my favorites.

Randy: And you know, I think this app is going to be great because a lot of people also don't realize how big the University Wisconsin System is with 26 different campuses. You know, all the different majors and club opportunities that are out there. So this app not only will help, I think, you know people research, but get the word out about what a great place the University Wisconsin System campuses are. So I really want to thank both of you for working so hard to get this done and out there. It's awesome.

[00:15:03] And also, let's just wrap this up. Again, I'm Randy Parvin, your host, and a student services coordinator at UW HELP. I hope you've enjoyed this discussion about UW Journey. If you have questions about UW Journey or suggestions for a future podcast, email! Email me: uwhelp@uwex.edu. And until next time this is UW HELP, your guide to the college process.