

Launching with impact and efficacy in the Cal State System

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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Introduction

In October 2019 The California State University (CSU) Office of the Chancellor greenlit a two-year pilot supporting 12 campuses to roll out the [YOU at College](#) platform. The integration was part of the [Basic Needs Initiative](#) and the [Graduation Initiative 2025](#) to support comprehensive student well-being in and out of the classroom.

“We are saying to students—we hear you. More than anything, we hear you and we’re here for you.

—Candice Chick, CSULB

Among the 12 campuses were California State University Long Beach (CSULB) and California State University Fullerton (CSUF), institutions that used the launch of YOU as an integral piece of mental health and well-being strategies in light of distance learning. The results were incredible reach and impact in just two to three

months. By leaning into this digital tool, YOU partners were able to meet pressing student needs in a scalable, accessible and on-demand fashion despite constant changes to the campus environment.

As Candice Chick (Division of Student Affairs, Health & Wellness) at CSULB shared, “Just by having a 24-hour place that is a virtual home for students to log into and seek resources virtually, we are saying to students—we hear you. More than anything, we hear you and we’re here for you.”

The CSULB and CSUF launches illustrate that by empowering students to access resources on their terms, we can support them in any learning environment, be it hybrid, in-person or fully remote.



12 CSU CAMPUSES PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT

Evaluating Impact and Engagement

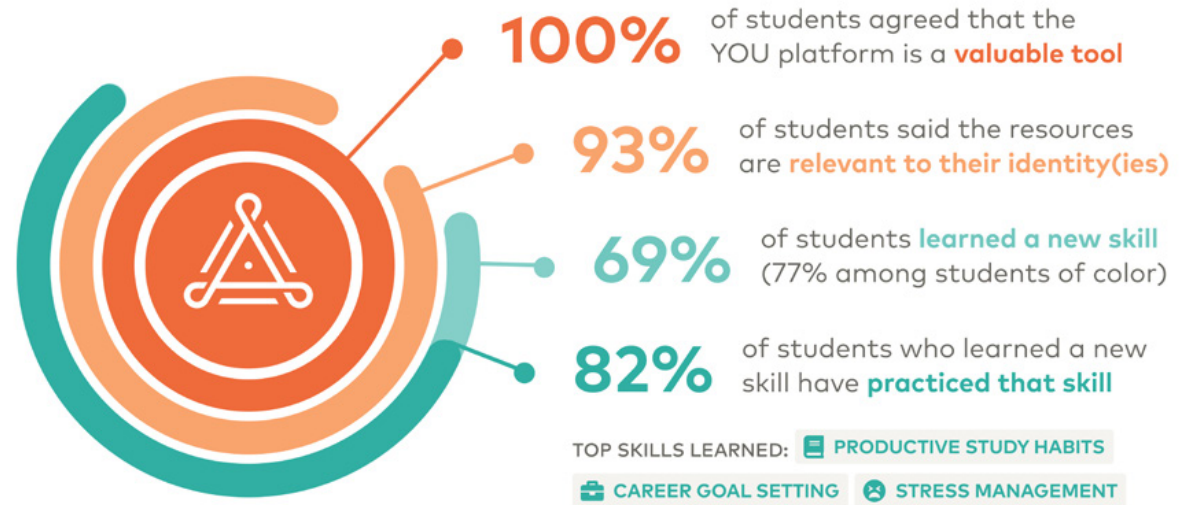
As part of their onboarding processes, CSULB and CSUF both undertook independent evaluations to gather student feedback regarding initial reactions and impact of the platform.

Kevin Thomas, Psy.D. and Vincent Vigil, Ed.D. at CSUF led the initial pilot and evaluation of their campus' instance of the platform, YOU at Fullerton. Working with Linda Hoang, M.S., 51 students were recruited from several student leader groups on campus including TitanWell, Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers, and Associated Students, Inc.

Students used YOU at Fullerton from March 9 to March 31, 2020 with the primary goal of sharing their perspectives on the following questions:

- Was YOU at Fullerton easy to navigate?
- Were students able to learn valuable mental health and well-being skills from the site?
- Is the site inclusive for students of diverse identities and backgrounds?

The results of the assessment were overwhelmingly positive and support ongoing YOU at College research¹, which highlights the platform's ability to uniquely connect students of diverse backgrounds with well-being skills and resources to support their collegiate experience.



YOU AT FULLERTON, PILOT GROUP STUDY, SPRING 2020

Accordingly, the participant group included a very diverse audience, with 83.4 percent of participants from historically underrepresented groups.

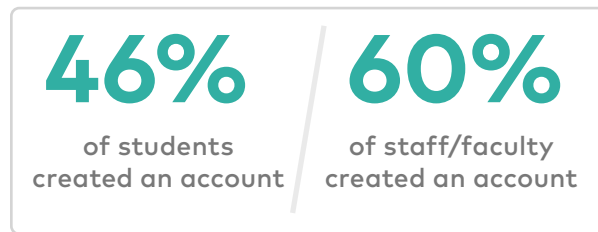
“The results of our initial pilot highlight that students see YOU at Fullerton as a vital support for their well-being. And it could not come at a more important time in light of distance learning and social unrest, which inevitably has an impact on our student’s well-being,” said Dr. Thomas.

At CSULB, Candice Chick conducted a student leader focus group in April 2020 to gather initial feedback about YOU at CSULB. CSULB students overwhelmingly endorsed an appreciation for the streamlined nature and student-friendly design of Self Checks, Goals, user profile and content. A prominent theme arose—as individual students utilized the tool more, it became more useful because it was able to customize to their needs.

¹ Schroder, Marshall 2020. *Using an Innovative Software Platform to Assess the Needs of a Broad University Student Population*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Denver. Denver, CO.

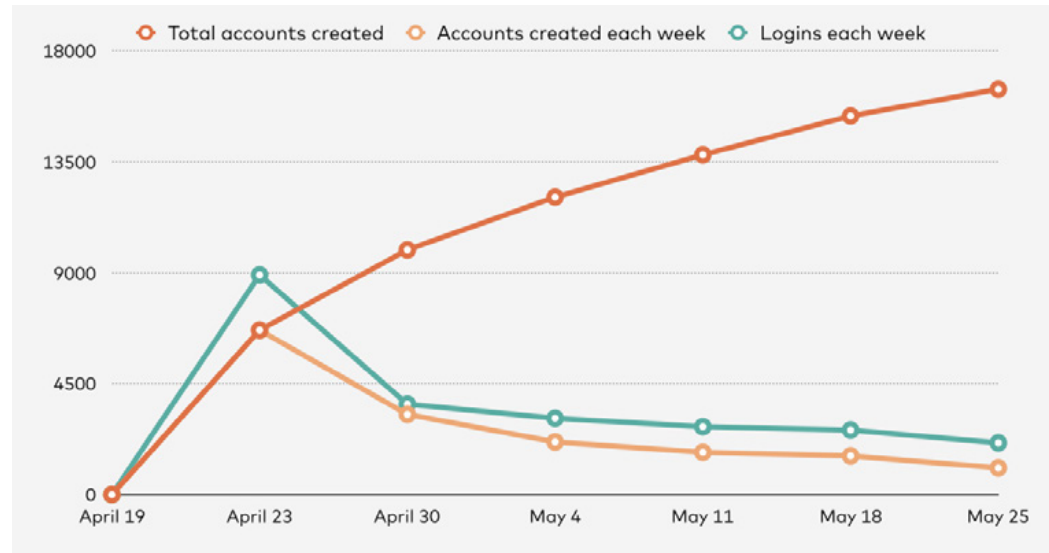
Evaluating Reach at CSU Long Beach

YOU at CSULB launched in late April 2020 as a challenging semester was reaching an end. Yet, within six weeks (April 21–May 30), 46 percent of their student population (more than 17,000 users) and 60 percent of their full and part-time staff/faculty population (more than 1,400 users) had created an account and started exploring the resource.



High-level trends indicated that 634 users clicked the crisis button and 3,000 Self Check assessments were taken. This overwhelming adoption rate spoke to students' desire to connect with reliable, validated, and approachable mental health and well-being tools during this time of online learning and uncertainty.

To get the platform in front of students, a prominent link placed on the student portal MyCSULB gained immediate attention and uplifted all marketing efforts, especially word of mouth at all levels of the campus structure. Chick led the charge in sending campus-wide emails, rallying colleagues to share on social media and generating support and feedback from student leaders. Efforts were guided by



CSULB ACCOUNT CREATION AND ACTIVITY, SPRING 2020

the robust YOU at College marketing toolkit and best practices, honed through launches at more than 120 other institutions.

Within days of launching, the YOU team began receiving inbound messages, including one from Sean, a CSULB senior physics student: “This website has been an excellent resource and is incredibly helpful. Many of the questions asked were ones I had been asking myself, but seeing them in text and answering them one after another solidified how I felt about some issues. All of the advice given was positive and insightful, and I’ve started looking into a few of the resources offered. Thank you so much to

all the compassionate and hard-working people that made this. It’s going to help a lot of people, it definitely helped me.”

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—Sean, CSULB student

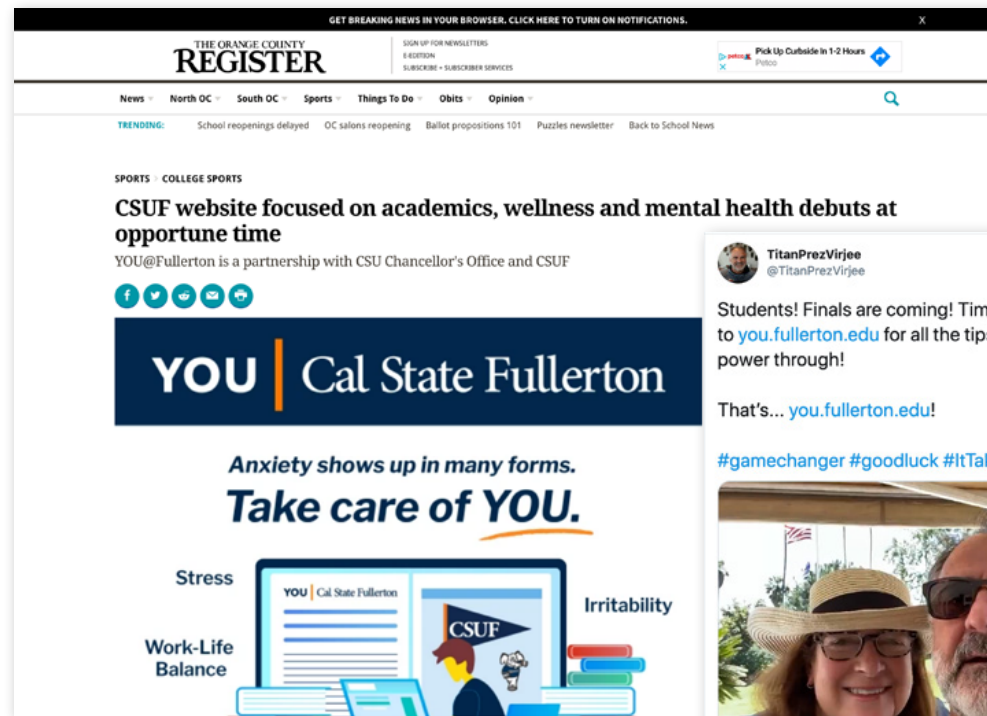
Evaluating Reach at CSUF

After the March pilot group study, CSUF launched the YOU platform to all students as they transitioned to online learning. Within three months, 25 percent of the student population and 25 percent of staff and faculty members had created an account.

Boasting an average on-site time of 4 minutes and 15 seconds, CSUF users had taken 3,380 Self Check assessments, set more than 700 Goals and connected to 4,035 resources as of June 2020.

CSUF marketed the platform in line with YOU at College's proven launch tactics including: strategic links across student platforms, promotion by campus leadership ([watch the Twitter video from President Virjee](#)) and thought leadership ([read "CSUF website focused on academics, wellness and mental health debuts at opportune time"](#)).

"We've been hearing a lot of students talking about their mental health and well-being. And we're able to have this website that provides them with evidence-based articles and videos that they, in the privacy of their phone or home, can access," shared Vincent Vigil, CSUF AVP for Student Affairs as [quoted in the OC Register](#).



EXAMPLES OF PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS BY CSUF

3,380
Self Check
assessments taken

700+
Goals set

4,035
Resources
accessed

The Value of Well-Being Content for Students

In the face of surging student mental health trends and needs—for example, COVID-19, loneliness, and social unrest—the YOU at Col-lege team has uploaded more than 100 pieces of new content related to these topics.

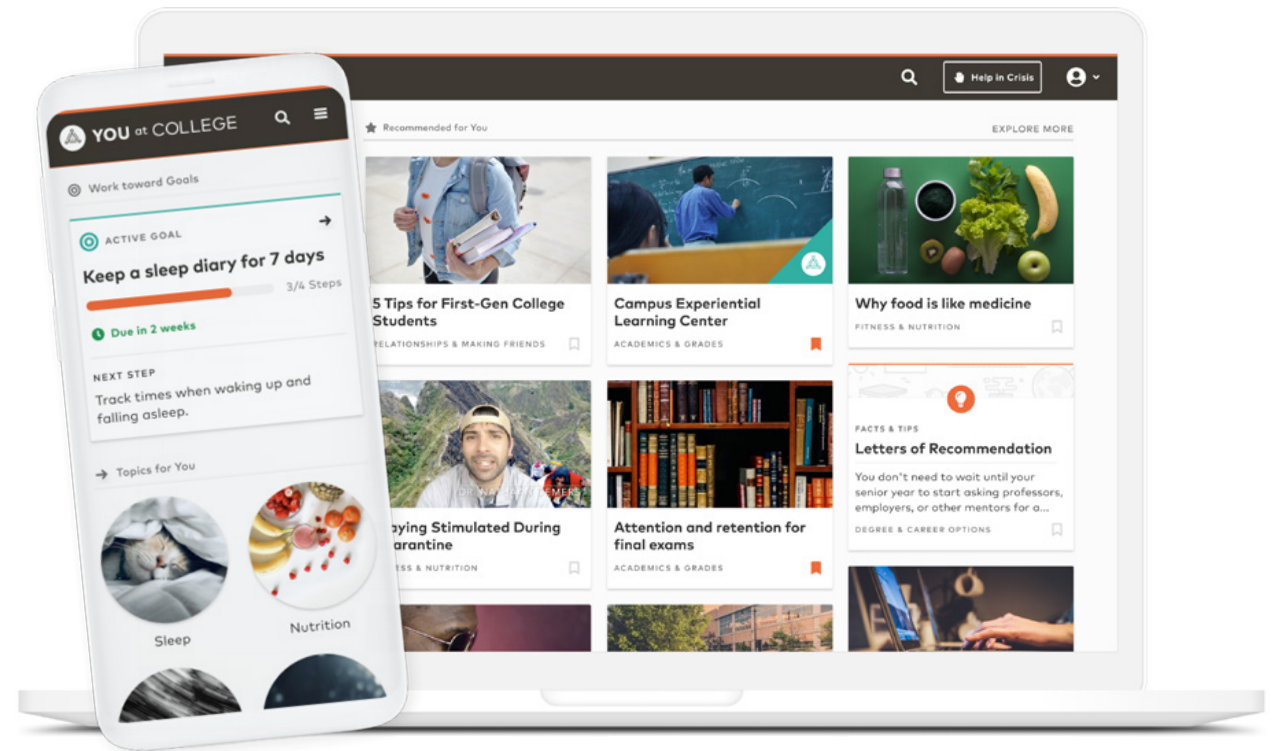
Timely content on YOU notably struck a chord, as noted by a CSULB student, Vincent, who shared that “This platform is different because you know it’s reliable content. It’s not bogus, like a lot of other information out there you have to sift through.”

“ I like how my own input [through the Self Checks] personalizes my recommendations on YOU.

—Lily, CSULB student

YOU contains thousands of vetted pieces of content curated by behavioral health, student life, and higher education experts to ensure students have access to quality information on any topic related to their college experience and overall well-being.

As a CSULB graduate student shared, “There are so many topics besides just mental health,



ACTIVE STUDENT GOAL (SHOWN ON MOBILE); PERSONALIZED CONTENT FEED (DESKTOP)

and it randomly suggests things that may be really important, but something I would never think to search for on my own.”

Referencing COVID-19 specific proprietary videos created by YOU at College’s VP and Director of Clinical Programs Nathaan Demers, Psy.D.,

Chick shared, “The video was wonderfully done, not commercialized, it didn’t have fluff and bravado. It was to-the-point, it resonated and it was real. The more we embody that, the better off we will be.”

Carrying Momentum for YOU into the Future

The question that campuses are all working to answer is: how do we support students through any version of future events? We must continue engaging our communities in ways that put their safety, mental and physical health first, and an essential part of that is to ensure students are connected to relatable, validated, digital mental health and well-being resources.

“We are so excited that our initial pilot campuses have been able to launch the YOU platform at such a critical time, and with rapid adoption and impact.

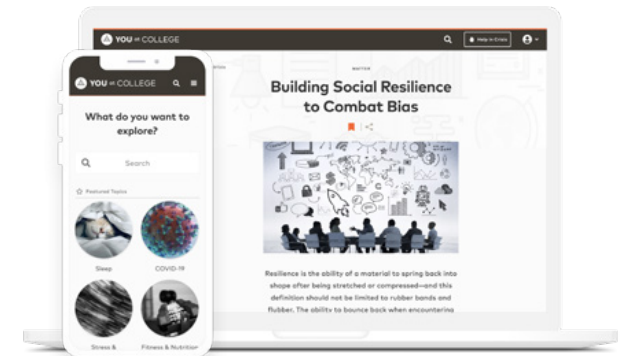
—Lea M. Jarnagin, Ed.D

For both CSUF and CSULB, continuing to market and evaluate the impact of YOU is a core component of the approach for the 2020–2021 year. “The more we utilize [YOU], the better off we are all going to be in this shared space—because it also gives us data on how to best serve our student needs,” said Chick. “What kind of

programming needs to take place? What type of concerns do our students have?”

Both campuses will continue to spread awareness so that students have the tools they need at their fingertips when challenges come their way. 2020 summer plans at CSULB included promotion through orientation/SOAR and boots-on-the-ground training for YOU, alongside an effort in which students recorded testimonial videos from home about their experience with the platform.

“Thinking outside the box just like YOU continually does for this platform is what is encouraging us in higher education. If students are going to be challenged in the classroom, we should be rising to the challenge to serve their needs,” said Chick, citing an example of how CSULB is taking their student traditions online by hosting virtual Zoom “lifeguard stations” at the start of the school year, where representatives will be posted to answer students’ questions and give referrals. “Giving students one-on-one access in a virtual realm is what we



need to be thinking going forward and from here on out. And maybe that’s something we should be offering from here on, forever for higher education.”

“We are so excited that our initial pilot campuses have been able to launch the YOU platform at such a critical time, and with rapid adoption and impact. Throughout the rest of the two-year pilot we will continue to support and work with campuses to ensure YOU supports our students,” said Lea M. Jarnagin, Ed.D, Interim Systemwide Director, Student Wellness and Basic Needs Initiatives.

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