



# **LEAP SOLUTIONS TEAM: COUGAR PROUD!**

**“Enhancing Student Engagement and Recognition”**

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## **Executive Summary**

In partnership with Administrative Leadership and ASG (Associated Student Government), Cougar Proud is developing initiatives to enhance student engagement and acknowledge their achievements. Our primary objective is to establish a unified source of crucial information to boost awareness of the academic, financial, and emotional resources accessible to students. In addition to this, we aim to share information about a wide array of campus events, including athletic games, movie nights, star parties, and performances at the PAC (Performing Arts Center), among others. We are also committed to creating a channel for students to communicate their experiences and needs directly to the administration team. Ultimately, our mission is to foster a stronger sense of community within our student body by acknowledging and celebrating their accomplishments.

We understand that traditional methods such as emails may not reach all students, and that they may feel their feedback is unheard. By providing a platform that showcases student achievements across campus, we aim to create an environment where students feel connected and valued.

In an institution of higher learning, such initiatives are of paramount importance for several reasons. First and foremost, they promote a vibrant, engaged, and inclusive campus culture. By facilitating effective communication and fostering a sense of community, we can enhance the overall student experience, which in turn can lead to higher levels of student satisfaction and retention.

Moreover, centralizing access to academic, financial, and emotional resources eliminates the often-daunting task of navigating disparate information sources. This not only saves time but also ensures that students are fully aware of the support available to them, thereby maximizing their potential to succeed academically.

The ability to provide direct feedback to the administrative team is crucial in creating a responsive and adaptive institution. Feedback from students offers invaluable insights into their experiences and needs, helping the institution to continually improve its services, policies, and practices. It also demonstrates that the leadership team of College of the Canyons truly cares about their students.

Finally, by recognizing and celebrating student achievements, we are encouraging a culture of excellence and ambition. Publicly acknowledging accomplishments can boost student morale, instill pride, and inspire others to strive for similar success. This sense of healthy competition and aspiration can lead to a more dynamic and high-achieving learning environment.

Therefore, such initiatives serve not just the students but also the institution as a whole. They contribute to an engaged, supportive, and high-performing community that is critical to the reputation and success of any institution of higher learning.

We're currently investigating the use of various platforms to roll out the services of Cougar Proud, potentially under the new brand name of Cougar Vibe Check.

Recognizing the diverse social demographics within our student body, our aim is to disseminate information through multiple mediums, ensuring maximum accessibility for all students.

We're considering the development of a dedicated Canvas Splash page, leveraging the popular social media platform, Discord, and implementing a Feedback webpage. In addition, we're coordinating with the Student Services department to establish a physical presence where students can obtain the same information in person and voice their feedback. Our goal is to provide comprehensive, multi-channel access to our services.

## **Business**

In partnership with Administrative Leadership and ASG, Cougar Proud is developing initiatives to enhance student engagement and acknowledge their achievements to promote a vibrant, engaged, and inclusive campus culture, which can enhance the overall student experience, leading to higher levels of student satisfaction and retention.

### **Problems (Needed/Needs)**

While it may appear from an external perspective that we're offering all the necessary information to our students, feedback from ASG suggests that the students' internal perspective paints a different picture. This disconnect emphasizes the need for us to cultivate a more inclusive community. Our aim should not be restricted to providing the necessary courses and steppingstones for personal advancement but should extend to nurturing a culture deeply invested in the wellbeing of its members. Our community should transcend the bounds of academic achievement and certificate completion, demonstrating genuine care and concern for each individual beyond these milestones.

ASG has also expressed concerns about the lack of public recognition for student accomplishments. Recognition is a powerful motivator and a key element in fostering a sense of belonging and pride within the student body. Celebrating our students' achievements not only boosts their morale but also encourages a culture of striving for excellence among their peers. We need to create more opportunities for such acknowledgment, making our students feel valued and appreciated for their hard work and commitment.

Lastly, establishing a direct line of communication for students to voice their opinions and concerns to the college leadership is a critical aspect that needs to be addressed. Such a conduit would not only empower students, making them feel heard and respected, but also provide our leadership team with invaluable data. This feedback can guide us in making informed decisions about the future direction of the College of the Canyons. It would allow us to better understand the needs, aspirations, and challenges of our students, enabling us to create a more responsive, student-centered institution.

We're striving to foster a community that's not merely an institution for learning but a supportive and engaging environment where every student feels valued, heard, and motivated to excel.

## **Solution**

To improve student engagement and feedback, we propose the use of Discord, a popular communication platform supporting voice, video, and text chat. This platform's wide reach and accessibility make it an excellent tool for fostering communication within our diverse student body. The monitoring of this platform can be efficiently managed by the Student Services Welcome Desk staff.

Additionally, we propose leveraging Canvas, a trusted educational platform, to create an easily accessible 'Splash Page.' This page would centralize the most utilized links, making it more convenient for students to navigate and find the resources they need.

In parallel, we suggest introducing a dedicated Feedback tile in MyCanyons and the Canyons M app, further providing a platform for students to voice any concerns and participate in a two-way dialog with administration/staff. The Feedback page link would also be advertised on Discord, Canvas, and potentially as a QR code posted in physical locations on campus.

A more vibrant visual representation of our student community is another aspect we wish to develop. We propose inviting students to create murals in communal areas such as the Student Union or Student Center. Additionally, we envision displaying student artwork on banners and within the new Intercultural Center, as demonstrated in our virtual tour of the new student union. Art Installations can be changed seasonally and can be replicated on both campuses.

In collaboration with Student Services and ASG, we aim to expand Discover Day into a comprehensive Cougar Proud Student Showcase event. This event will spotlight student achievements across the myriad programs offered at the College of the Canyons. Experiences have shown us that celebrating students' accomplishments sparks a sense of communal pride. Integrating this showcase event with Discover Day would amplify the exposure of the opportunities available to all COC students. Additionally, we could incorporate industry and business representatives, providing students with the opportunity to present their work in a real-world context.

## **Target Market**

Our target market is the entire student population. In the Fall of 2021, the student age distribution at our institution was split with 55% of students being 24 years old or younger, and the remaining 45% of students being 25 years or older. It is worth noting that 1 in 10 students, 8%, are over the age of 50. By the following year, Fall 2022, the enrollment patterns showed interesting dynamics. Among all enrolled students, 24% chose to take exclusively in-person courses. On the other hand, 22% of students opted for entirely online courses. The rest of the student body took a blended approach, enrolling in a combination of in-person and online classes. It's worth highlighting that a significant 63% of our student population in Fall 2022 registered for at least one in-person class. Therefore, it is critical to offer Cougar Vibe Check through multiple modalities.

## **Competition**

In this landscape, our biggest competitor might very well be our own institutional practices. It's essential that we thoughtfully integrate Cougar Vibe Check with our existing information delivery mechanisms and platforms. The goal is to provide a seamless, unified experience without overloading students with an excessive influx of information.

## **Market Dimensions**

We are simply tapping into an existing market that is already monopolized. This service is only for our already existing customers, our students. However, it can potentially be utilized as a marketing device for outreach and recruitment purposes.

Discord is a popular social platform being used by the student population between 18-25. This makes it a solid platform to add to our social media presence. Utilizing a platform the student population is already a part of will hopefully attract them to join our communication channel.

Canvas is the Learning Management System used by all students of COC. Because of the visibility the website has with our student population, we'd be able to reach students of all ages with our communications.

My Canyons and the Canyons M app is the portal used by our students. Since it is a general portal that can lead to numerous services we offer, it's a great opportunity to link a Feedback page so that students have where the opportunity to share their COC experiences to staff/administration. Data collected from our Apple and Google App Stores shows we have over 30k downloads of the Canyons M app. Our usage data shows we average nearly 2,500 users per month. We also have nearly average 20,000 active users per month between the website and app.

## IP

As a non-profit institution of higher learning, our goal would be to share our vision and future success with other institutions so they may utilize the ideas and modalities to better serve their student population.

### Growth Strategy

The incorporation of direct student feedback into our leadership decision-making process is a compelling aspect of this service. This valuable feedback enables us to refine and enhance Cougar Vibe Check, ensuring its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Our strategic choice to leverage Discord and Canvas as part of our market entry strategy is driven by their strong alignment with the sociodemographic profile of our target audience. By capitalizing on these platforms, we maximize our reach and engagement within our desired market segment, thereby optimizing our business outcomes.

### Team

**Fred Bobola:** I started my journey at COC as a college assistant in 2004, providing English and Humanities tutoring services. However, in 2010, I veered off course and ventured into the financial services industry, where I worked as a business development professional for 8 years. However, my passion for education drew me back, and I rejoined COC in 2018. Since then, I have cherished every moment of my experience as a TLC Instructional Coordinator.

**Roy Castillo:** Director, Payroll Services. I began my career in school business as a student worker at a K-12 district in 1997. Since then, I worked my way up, working at K-12 districts, the Los Angeles County Office of Education and now a Community College. In my current role at COC and previous roles at other districts, I've needed to send out clear communications to large groups of employees using various methods/platforms to deliver this info. I've also been involved in employee recognition event planning. Both areas of experience helped me to contribute to the team on this LEAP project

**Kari Dahlquist:** COC Foundation Events Coordinator. I have a background in entertainment communications and public relations, working at Icon Productions and Warner Bros for fifteen years. Prior to joining the Foundation at College of the Canyons in August 2022, I worked in the Hart District for seven years connecting students to Career Pathways at Saugus and Canyon High Schools.

**Oliver Sumampong:** IT Coordinator, Computer Support. Strong foundation in providing technical project planning and end-user support.

**Erin Tague:** Director, Capital Projects. I have 16 years' experience in Facilities Planning, Logistics, Construction and Facilities, Maintenance and Operations at Antelope Valley College prior to coming onboard at College of the Canyons in October 2023.

## **Financial Projections**

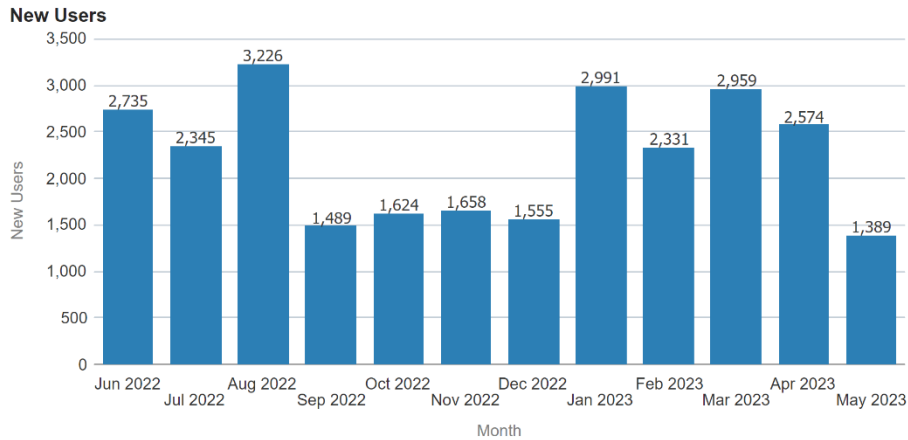
The use of Discord is free and the way we will be using Canvas will incur no more additional costs in that regard. Staff will be needed to oversee and monitor the Discord Server, Canvas Splash page, and manage the student feedback channel. This can be rolled into existing staff and college assistants and assign the supervising to a current permanent staff member.



## Supplemental Data and Visuals of our Proposed Solution

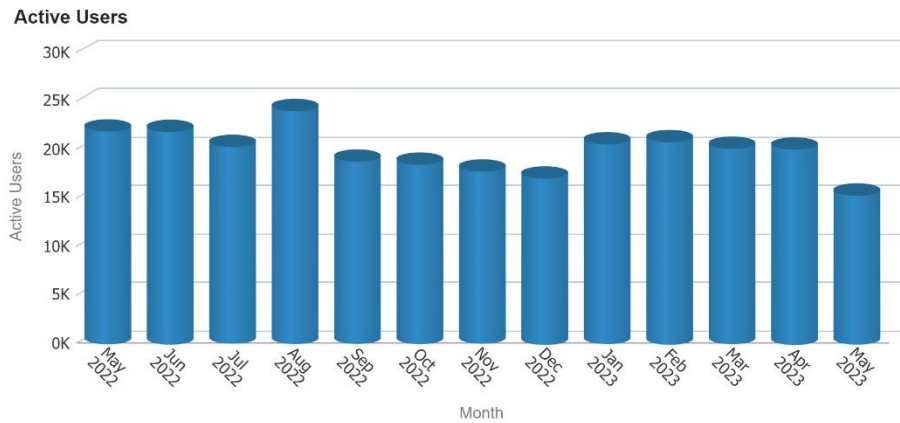
MyCanyons/Canyons M Statistics for New User Registration and Active Users:

**New User Registrations, COTC**



Month	New Users
May 2023	1,389
Apr 2023	2,574
Mar 2023	2,959
Feb 2023	2,331
Jan 2023	2,991
Dec 2022	1,555
Nov 2022	1,658
Oct 2022	1,624
Sep 2022	1,489
Aug 2022	3,226
Jul 2022	2,345
Jun 2022	2,735
May 2022	3,511
Apr 2022	3,467

**Active Users by Month in Last Year**



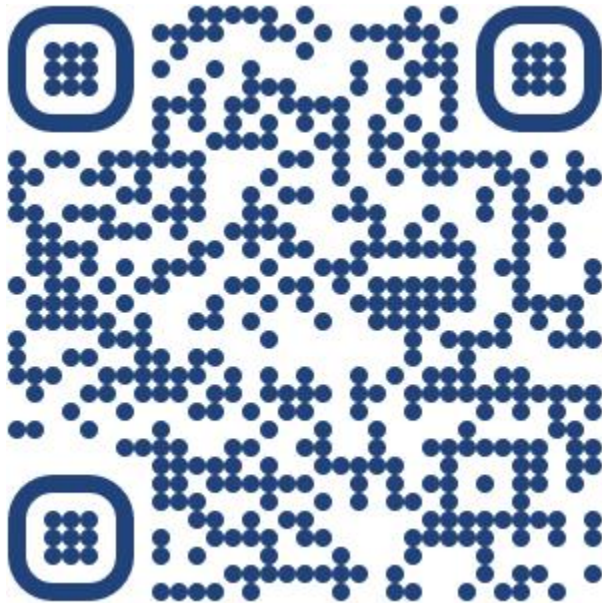
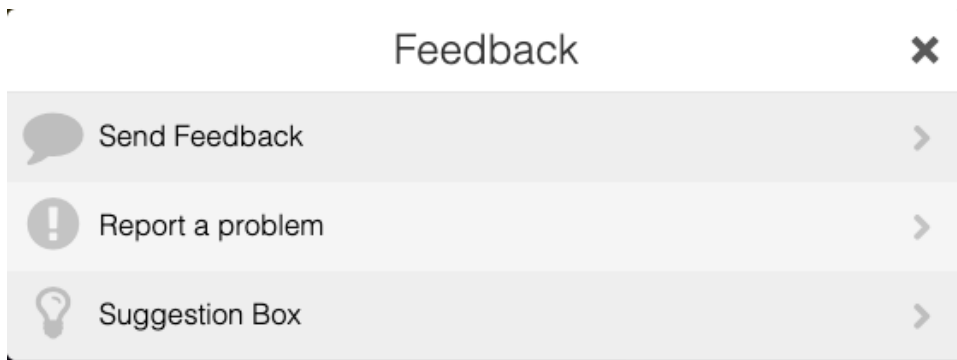
Month	Active Users
May 2023	15,430
Apr 2023	20,170
Mar 2023	20,260
Feb 2023	20,940
Jan 2023	20,716
Dec 2022	17,191
Nov 2022	17,912
Oct 2022	18,618
Sep 2022	18,933
Aug 2022	24,148
Jul 2022	20,450
Jun 2022	21,997
May 2022	22,036

# Cougar Vibe Check Discord Server:

The screenshot displays the Discord interface for the 'Cougar Vibe Check' server. The top bar shows the server name and the current channel, '# announcements'. On the left sidebar, there is a 'Your Server' banner with a 'Boost This Server' button and a list of text channels including #welcome, #rules, #helpme, #how-can-we-help, #announcements (selected), #alliances, #clubs, #events, #studentaccomplishme..., #important-deadlines, #pets, and #chat-and-chill.

The main content area features a large '# announcements' header and a welcome message: 'Welcome to #announcements! This is the start of the #announcements channel.' Below this, a message from 'Peaceful Moderator' dated '03/30/2023 11:57 AM' is shown. The message content is an image of a character at a podium with a screen behind them that reads 'IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT'.

My Canyons/Canyons M Feedback Button and QR Code Link:



Renderings of Student Spaces with Murals:

