



Red Rover is a web application that increases student engagement and success by increasing the number of positive interpersonal connections in their campus community. These new connections create opportunities to engage with their university through student leadership, student activities, and active mentoring.

Red Rover is currently in a pilot program at 5 institutions, with approximately 35 additional institutions registered for the second round pilot program.

Significance

Red Rover is the first application that:

- Works within social networks like Facebook on behalf of institutions.
- Provides communication between institutions and the online social networks.
- Is designed from the ground up to measurably increase student engagement.
- Provides institutions and student leaders with real time "dashboard" assessment and benchmarking on publicly displayed student data.
- Connects the institution with taxonomy and folksonomy interfaces, allowing for guided and efficient student self-organization.
- Empowers student leaders by providing simple access to national best practices and mentors.
- Enables the institution to easily communicate through various electronic media: email, social network, or text message.

Contribution

Through ongoing research collaboration, a frequently updated blog, and tens of thousands of public clickstreams, Red Rover will contribute to the field of Digital Media and Learning by addressing vital questions such as:

- Can institutions use social networking to increase community social capital?
- Does the social safety of social networking increase opt-in rates for institutional opportunities?
Do online opt-ins convert to action?
- Will students embrace institutions within their online social context?
- Will students effectively use folksonomy to navigate their connection options?
- Does a social network-embedded orientation increase the effectiveness of in person orientation?
- How do these new forms of engagement translate into student satisfaction and retention?

Impact

By inserting an engaging interface into social networks, institutional involvement itself can become viral. Research suggests that increasing involvement will increase student G.P.A., satisfaction rates, and retention rates.

Through its application and business model design, Red Rover can quickly and massively scale to reach every institution in the country. Through a very small, non-technical investment of time, anyone can set up Red Rover for their institution.

Historical Context

Alexander Astin's (1985) and Lee Upcraft's (1995) research suggest a relationship between quantity and quality of involvement and student achievement. Red Rover will increase engagement by increasing the access and efficiency of becoming involved, thus increasing student success. Kuh (2005) shows that highly effective institutions "clearly mark routes to student success" (p. 131). Thus, institutions are drawn to Red Rover because it enables them to clearly mark the path to student success within the new context of virtual social networking, a medium institutions have yet to master (e.g. Facebook). Systematically, Red Rover uses simple interfaces embedded in Facebook and emotionally, it utilizes the feelings of social safety and well-being created by Facebook (Ellison, et. al. 2007).

References available [here](#).

Further Potential

Red Rover can easily expand its current group and connection recommendation engine to include: professional/graduate schools, university courses, internships, international travel, learning groups, mentors, and community service opportunities. The student's experience timeline (updated via RSS feeds) could serve as their core education identity, providing a transferable digital portfolio of their developmental experiences. The student could share their portfolio with others to enable peer-to-peer learning. This system design could also apply to high school students, providing many new college admissions possibilities.

12 Month Project Goals

Adoption

- Set up and activate 250 campuses by January, 2009 with an average 70% of enrolled students participating.
- Achieve an average of 14 tags per student.

Research

- Work with lead researchers to frame and design 3 research projects using publicly available data generated by Red Rover. Publish in summer of 2008.
- Create community portal for outside researchers to access anonymous data.

Application

- Implement tag step UI redesign.
- Create user forums and community interface.
- Integrate text messaging for group communication.
- Design and implement dashboard for administration and student leaders.
- Implement institution "newsletter" in Facebook, with relevancy filters.
- Add cross-network interface for staff and leaders to find counterparts.
- Make identity portable across networks and allow for multiple network association.

Personnel Qualifications

Project Team

Kevin Prentiss

Web software entrepreneur. Started 3 successful software companies. Oversaw Userplane IM development (currently with millions of daily users). Project managed 25+ web applications for startups. 9 years of software project strategy and management. 3 years experience consulting & speaking in Higher Education.

Tom Krieglstein:

An All-USA Academic First Team Member, Illinois Trustees Scholar, and Valedictorian. Combines 8+ years of involvement in Student Affairs both as a student leader and trainer/consultant on marketing and recruitment for student groups. Awarded National Campus Speaker of the Year in 2007 for presentations and trainings on technology and engagement.



Lance Ivy

A Ruby on Rails genius with 3 years of startup experience in the post-secondary market. Lead developer of the highly successful ActiveSupport project.

Richard White

Designed Web 2.0 calendar app [Kiko.com](http://kiko.com) (praised in Designing the Obvious). Created SlimTimer.com, online time tracker (1.5 million+ hours logged). Developed AjaxScaffold Ruby on Rails plugin (40k+ downloads). Graduated Summa Cum Laude from NCSU in Computer Science.

For Advisory Board and Researcher qualifications, please see "Project Collaborators" resumes.

Work plan

The Red Rover team has rapidly and successfully implemented Red Rover 1.0, executing well under budget. The team will continue to develop using the same processes and management methods. The team also uses many best practice methods and tools to ensure rapid, high-quality, user-focused product development, while simultaneously building a user community and marketing.

Current tools used include:

- Facebook for user community coordination.
- Basecamp for project team coordination.
- Trac and Assembla for source code and development ticket management.
- Jing for screencast communication, help screens and user-case optimization.
- Salesforce for customer relationship management and marketing.
- Grand Central for customer contact and service support.
- Typepad, feedburner, and del.icio.us for blogging and learning network.

For work and management timeline, please see "Project Timeline" section.