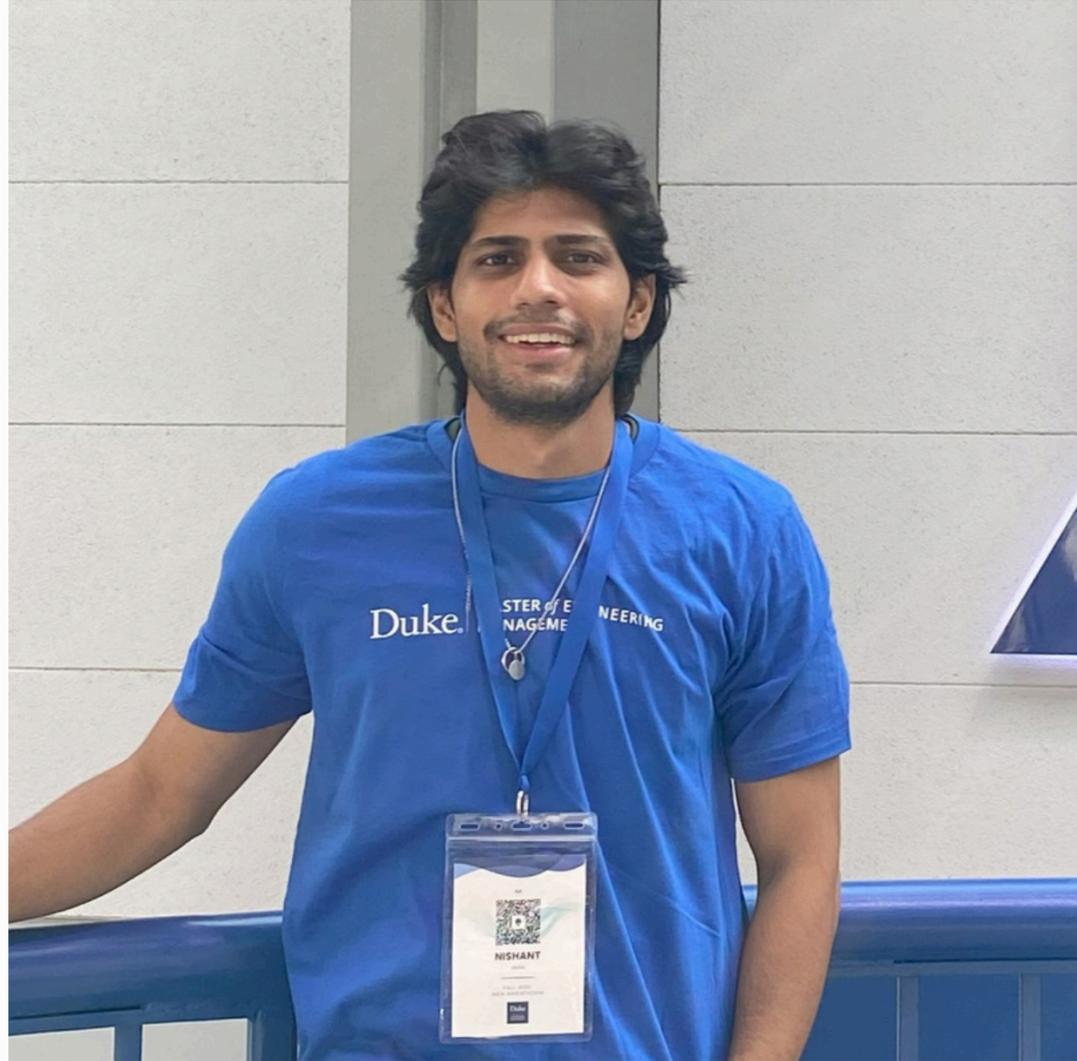




Sparc

DTI Fall 2024



By Nishant Rana

20-25 hrs
per week spent searching

73%
Recruiters struggle



Sparc

Find the right job for you

The screenshot shows the Sparc website interface on a laptop screen. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Students' and 'Employers'. The Sparc logo is prominently displayed in the top left. To the right, there are links for 'Student Groups', 'Events', 'Coaching', 'Search Jobs', 'Sign In', and a 'Join Now' button. The main heading reads 'Find the right job for you'. Below this, there are three bullet points: 'Connect with employers through your student group', 'On-demand mentorship from professionals at top companies', and 'Attend recruiting events with in-demand employers'. There are input fields for 'Email' and 'Password', followed by a 'Join Now' button. Below the button, it says 'OR JOIN WITH' and shows icons for Apple, Facebook, Google, and LinkedIn. On the right side, there are two testimonial boxes. The first is for Jonah Sinclair, a Consulting Associate at BCG, who attended a networking event via Sparc at Duke University and landed a role at BCG after graduation. The second is for Cooper Wolff, a Private Equity Intern at StarMountain Capital, who was recruited through Sparc's internship program. At the bottom, there are two statistics: '5,000+ Students & Professionals use Sparc to secure jobs and internships, build careers, and make money' and '\$110,000 Median salary of jobs secured through Sparc'. A background image of a smiling graduate in a cap and gown is visible on the right side of the screen.

Students Employers

Sparc

Student Groups Events Coaching Search Jobs Sign In Join Now

Find the right job for you

- Connect with employers through your student group
- On-demand mentorship from professionals at top companies
- Attend recruiting events with in-demand employers

Email

Password

Join Now

OR JOIN WITH

Apple Facebook Google LinkedIn

5,000+
Students & Professionals use Sparc to secure jobs and internships, build careers, and make money

\$110,000
Median salary of jobs secured through Sparc

Jonah Sinclair
Consulting Associate
BCG
"I attended an intimate networking event via Sparc at Duke University hosted by Laura Derry. Thanks to Sparc, I was able to make this connection, and we had regular mentorship follow-ups afterwards which culminated in me landing a role at BCG after graduation."

Cooper Wolff
Private Equity Intern
STAR MOUNTAIN CAPITAL
"I have been recruited by StarMountain Capital when I attended their recruiting event for their internship program. Sparc is a great platform for college students."



Problem Statement

How can we help Sparc to contact new student groups, attract users, and increase user engagement within the platform?

The 5C Analysis



COMPANY

Networking platform focused on bridging students & employers



CUSTOMERS

STEM field college students



COMPETITON

LinkedIn, Handshake, and WayUp



CONTEXT

AI & Analytics to improve connections aligning with Gen Z's preferences



COLLABORATOR

Career coaches & student organizations

Pain Points

Observed after 40 interviews



**Lack of Pre-Screening
Mechanisms for Employers**



**Mismatch of Expectations
Between Students & Employers**



**Limited Mentorship &
Networking Opportunities**

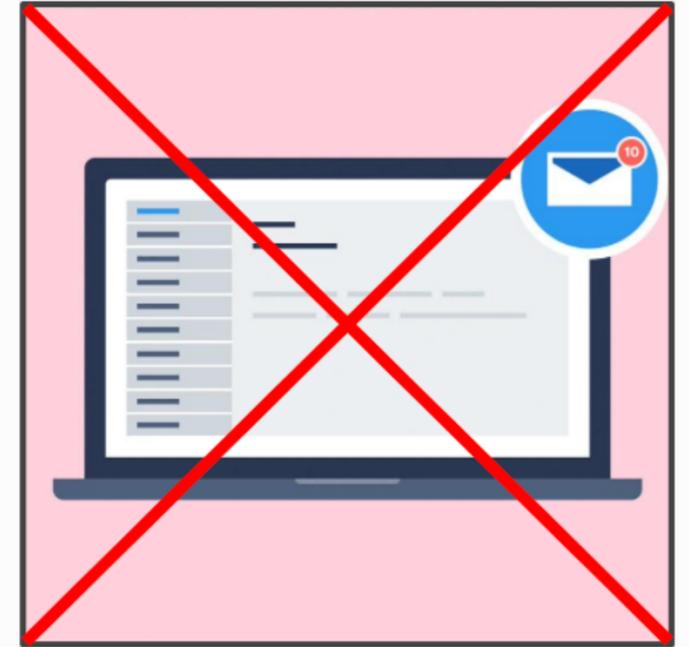
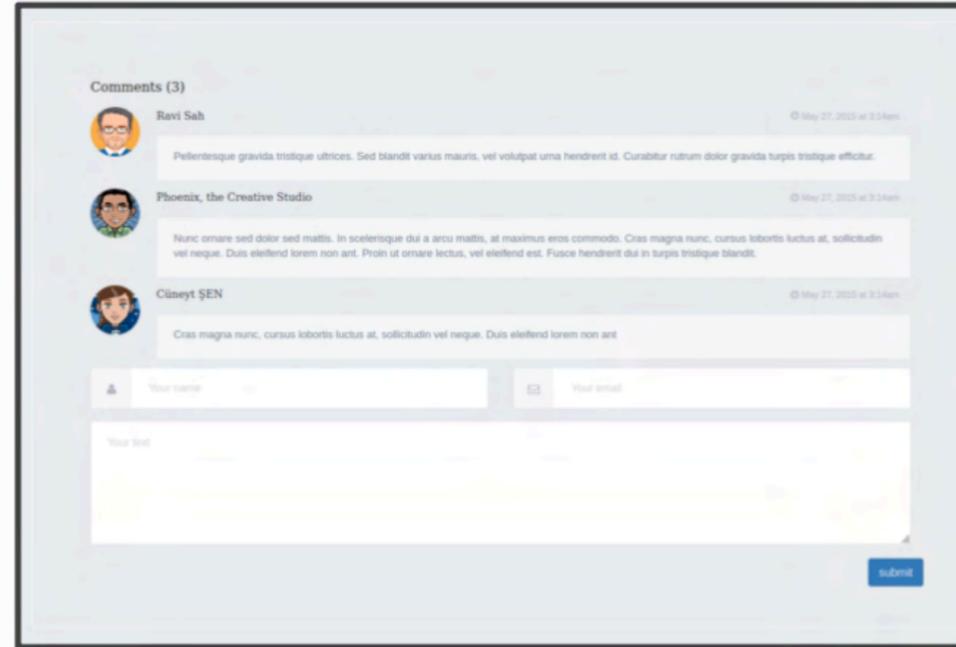


**Low Engagement in
Student Clubs**



Four Recommendations

Interactive Job Listings



Broader Methods for Contacting Student Clubs



Engaging with multi-university networks

Groups for Undergraduates

Our undergrads are uncommonly active—regularly sending hand-crafted rockets into the heavens, designing 3D-printed prosthetics for children in our neighborhood and setting the Guinness World Record for most efficient vehicle on the planet.

Clubs and Teams

Academy for Model Aeronautics

- ◆ sites.duke.edu/dukeama
- ◆ Faculty Advisor: [Martin Brooke](#)

Combat Robotics

- ◆ sites.duke.edu/combatrobots/
- ◆ Faculty Advisor: [Tyler Bletsch](#)

Duke Aviators / Duke Aviation Association

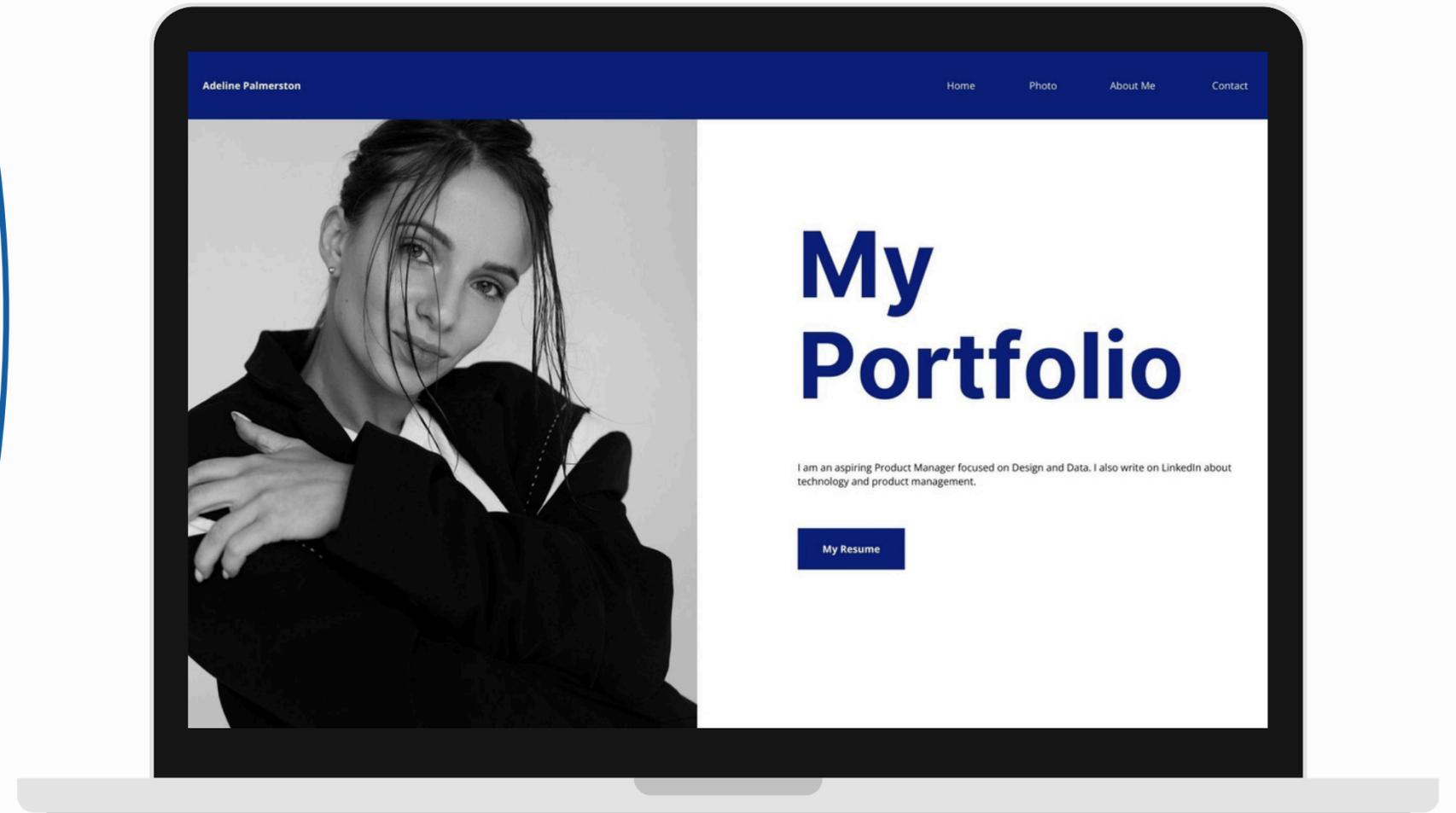
- ◆ dukegroups.com/aviation/home/
- ◆ Faculty Advisor: [Michael Gustafson](#)

Duke Conservation Tech

- ◆ dukeconservationtech.com
- ◆ Faculty Advisors: [Martin Brooke](#) and [Doug Nowacek](#)

Reaching out to club coordinator or faculty advisor

Enhanced User Profiles



Project Board



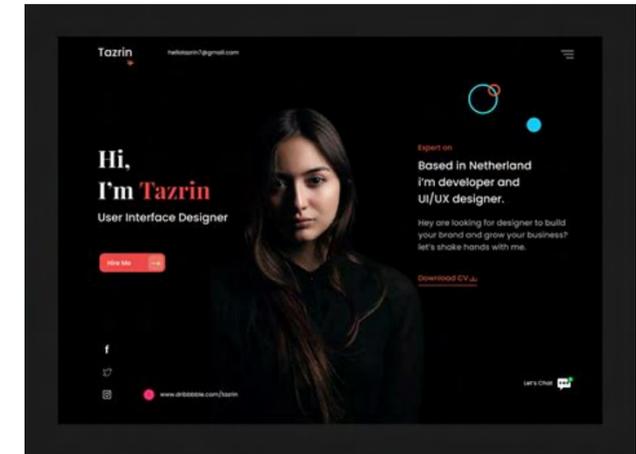
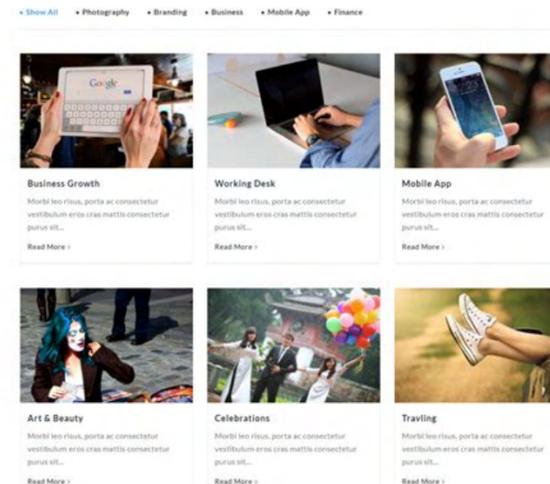
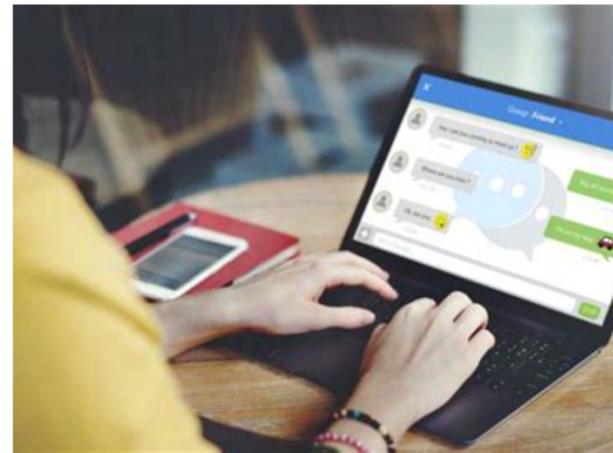
Regular Interaction with student clubs by doing joint projects



A list of available projects on Sparc portal

PRIORITIZATION & NEXT STEPS

4-Step Implementation based on Impact vs Effort



1

**Broader Avenues
for Contacting
Students Clubs**

2

**Interactive Job
Listings/Forum**

3

Project Board

4

**Enhanced User
Profiles**

Tracking Success: Progress Metrics



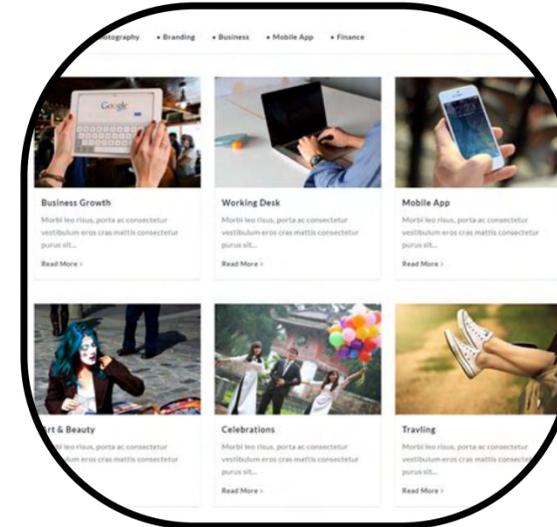
Broader Avenues for Contacting Clubs

- New student clubs
- New users per month
- Recruiting events



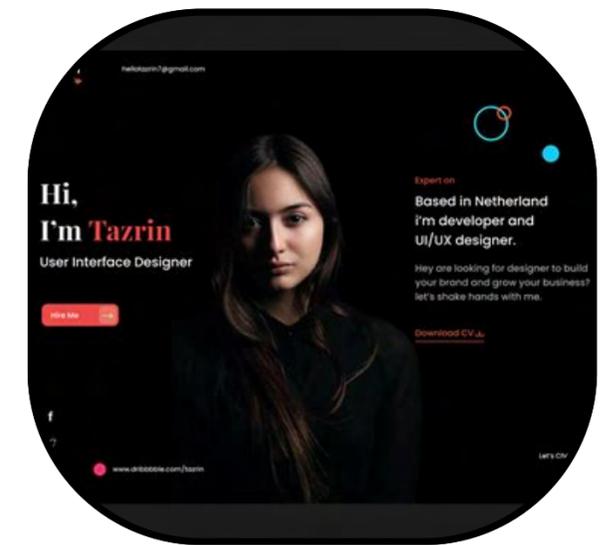
Interactive Job Listings

- No. of Jobs posted
- Time spent on listing pages
- Active minutes



Project Board

- Student club and company page Interaction
- Recruiting events created and held
- Attendees per event



Enhanced User Profiles

- People hired
- Student club and company page Interaction

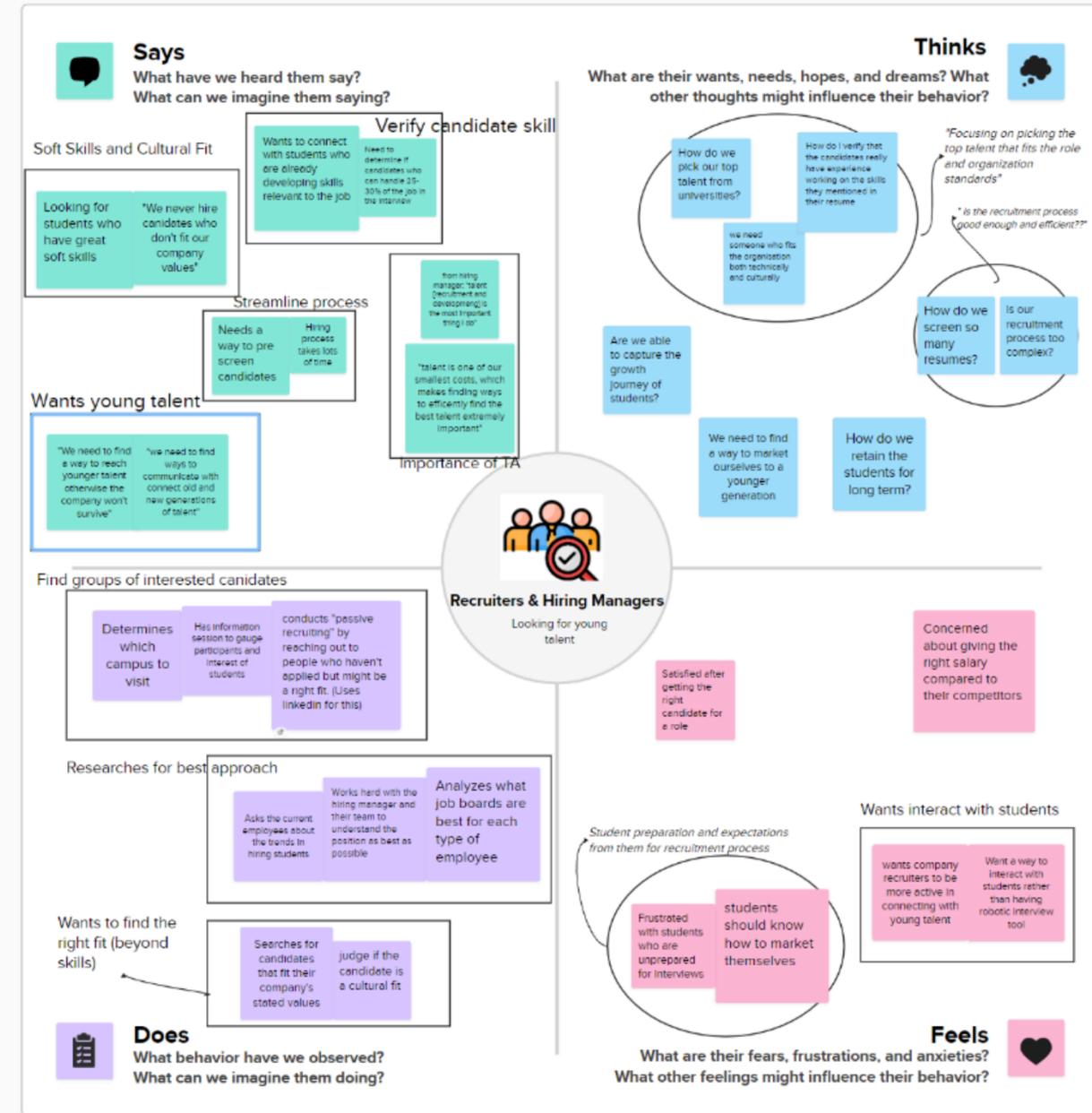
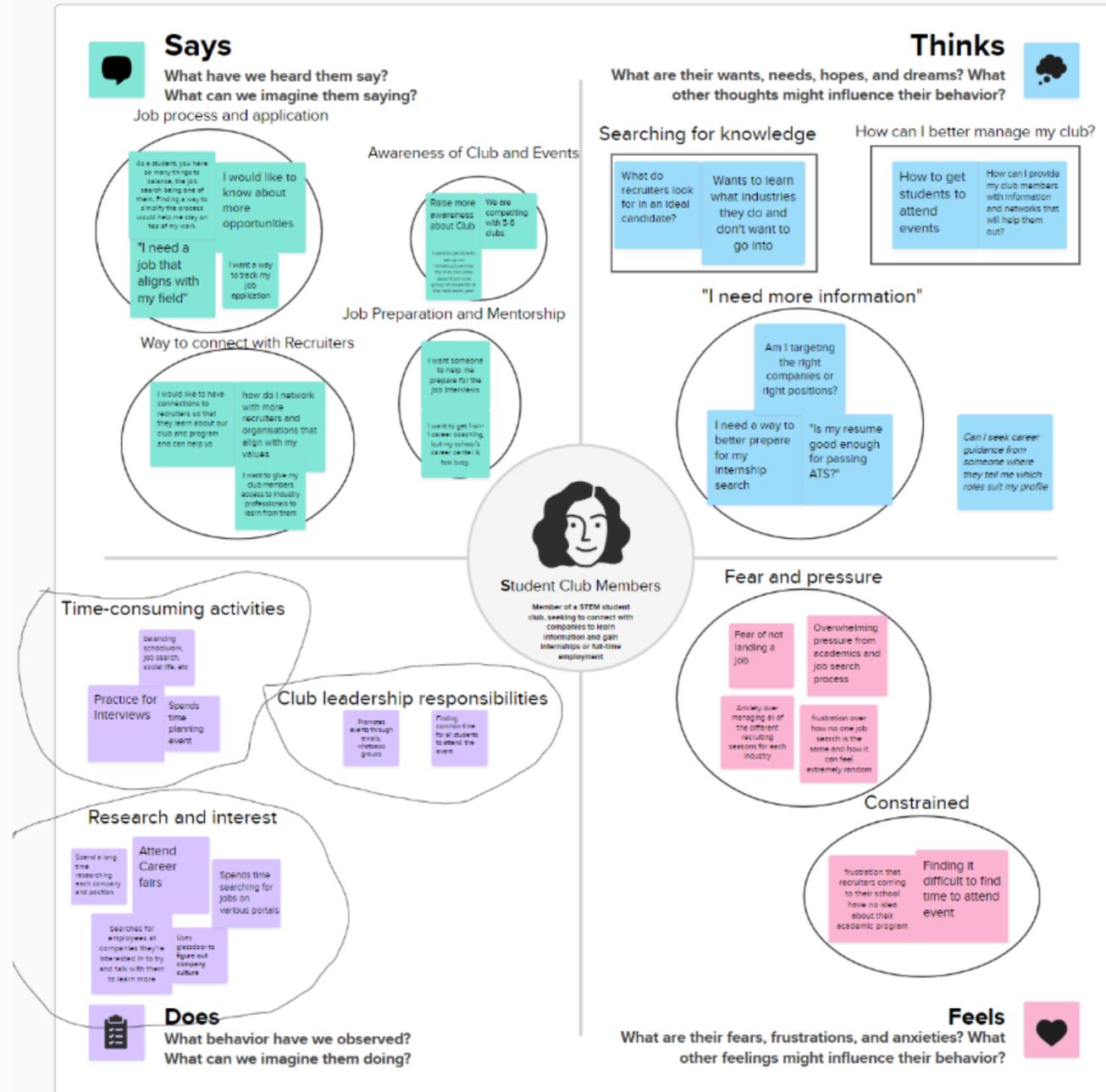
The background is a blue-tinted office scene. In the foreground, there are desks with laptops, tablets, and office chairs. In the background, there are large windows and office partitions. A white-bordered box is centered on the image, containing the text.

THANK YOU!

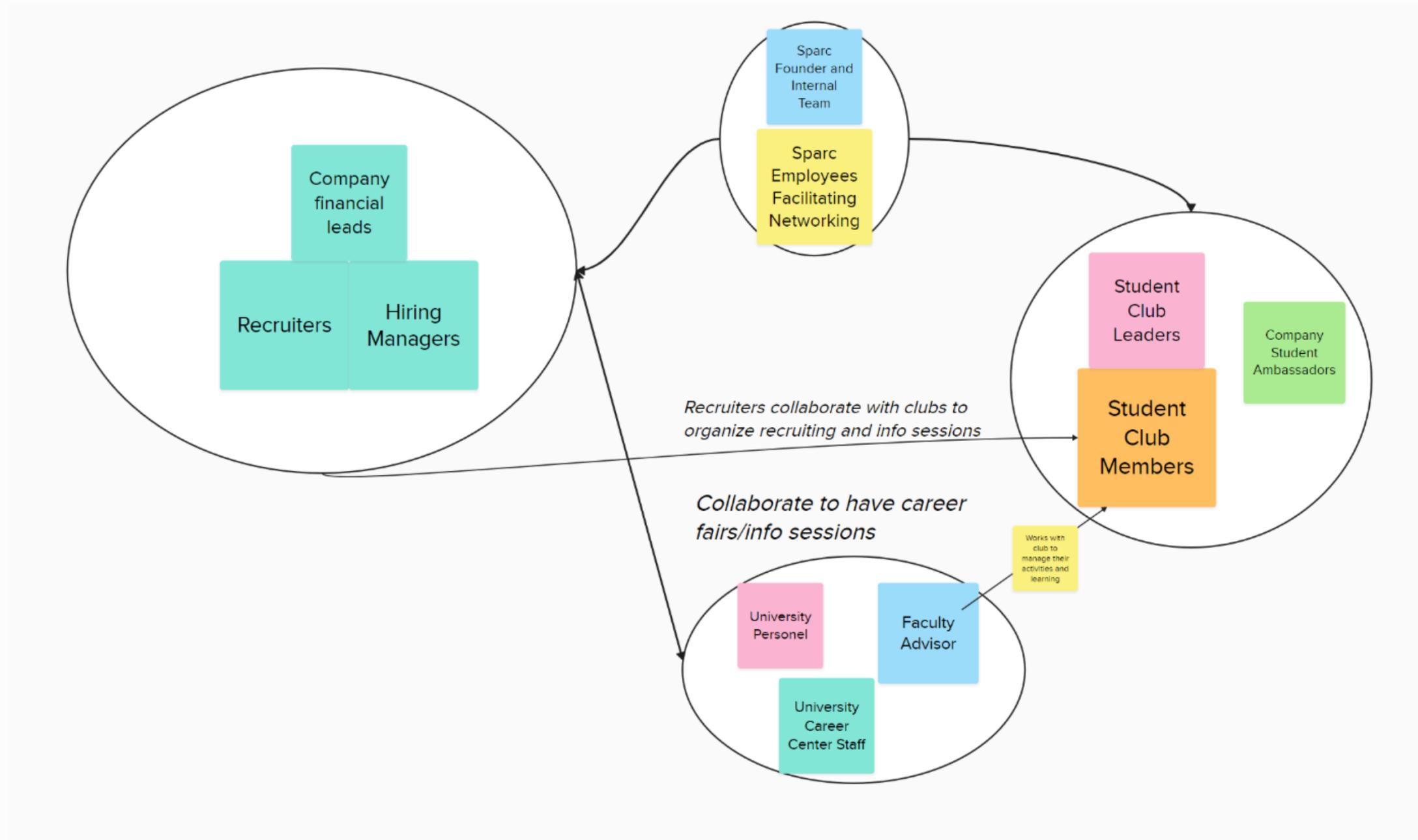
Any questions?

APPENDIX

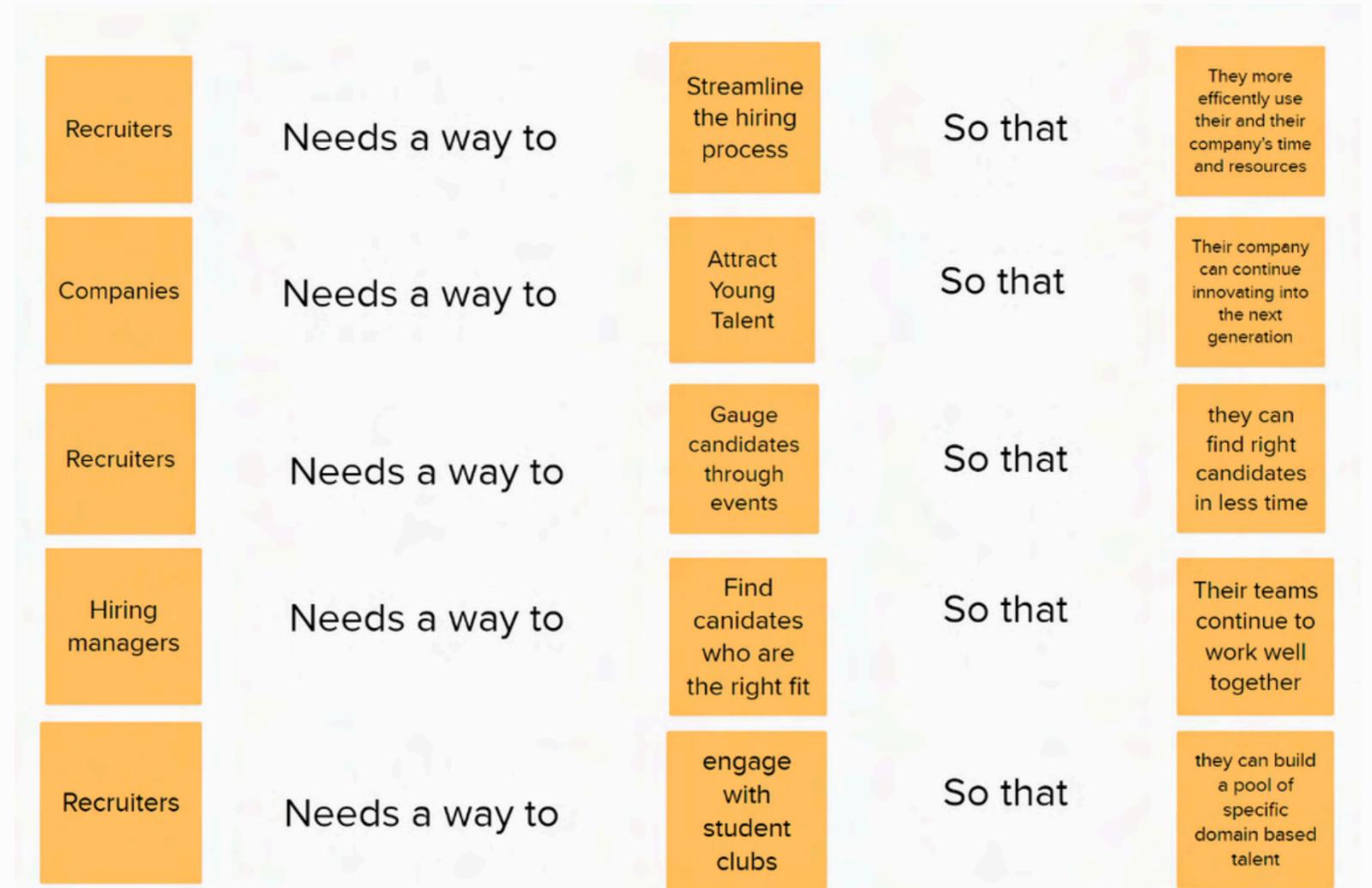
Empathy Maps



Stakeholder Map



Need Statements



As Is Scenario Map

As Is Scenario map



Phases

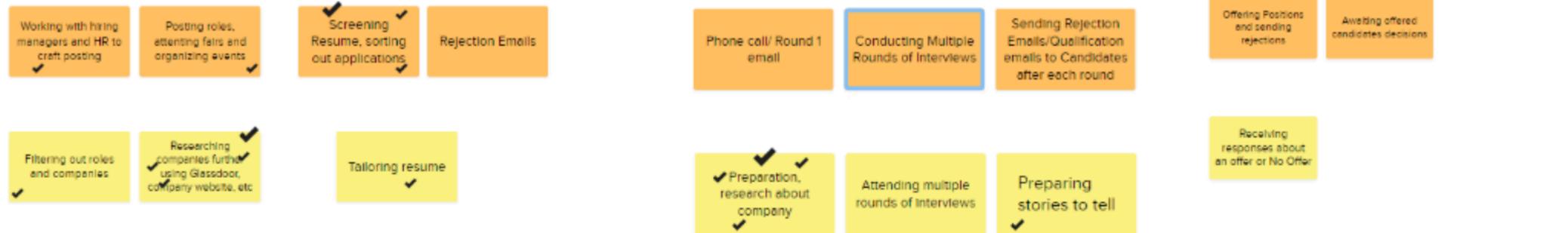
Posting Stage

Application Stage

Interview

Post Interview

Doing



Thinking

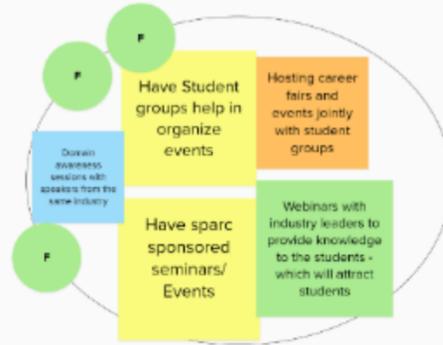


Feeling

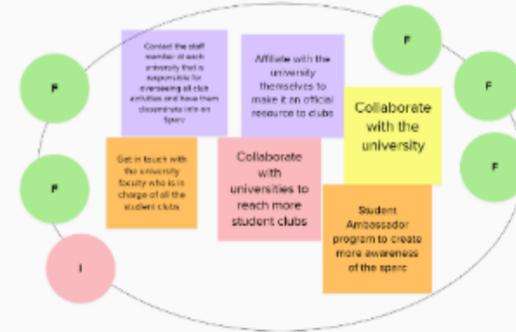


Ideas

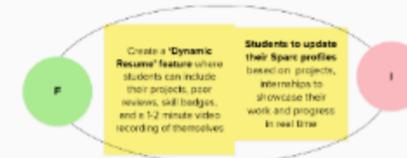
Help Student Groups to Organize Events



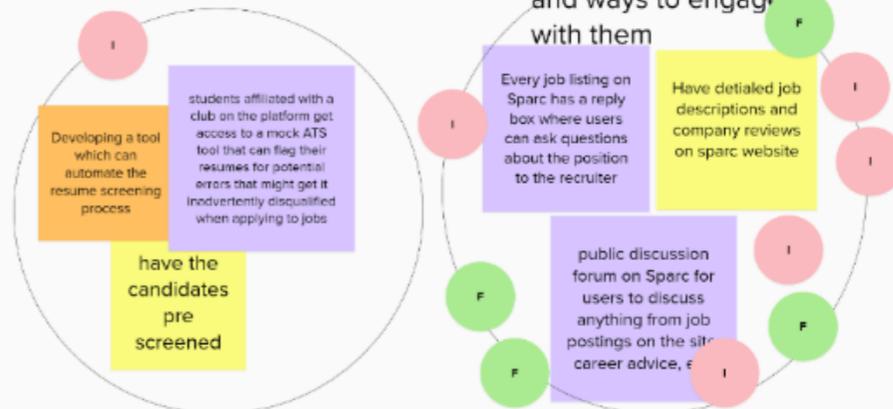
University Collaboration



Enhanced student profiles "virtual resumes" beyond LinkedIn



Sparc has higher quality job listings and ways to engage with them

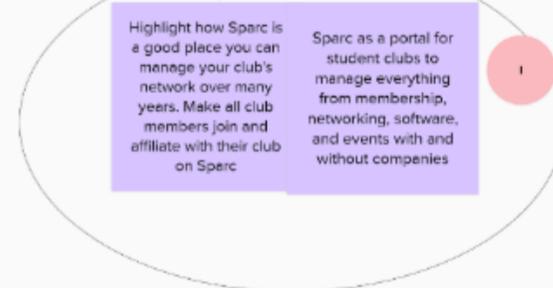


Screening tools to increase applicant quality for companies and provide helpful tools to active student users

Give reasons-for-clubs to increase platform engagement



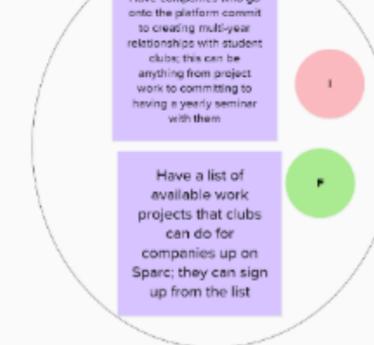
Sparc highlights and/or expands its usability for student clubs



Sparc hosts events/engages companies to host open events



Relationships between student groups and companies



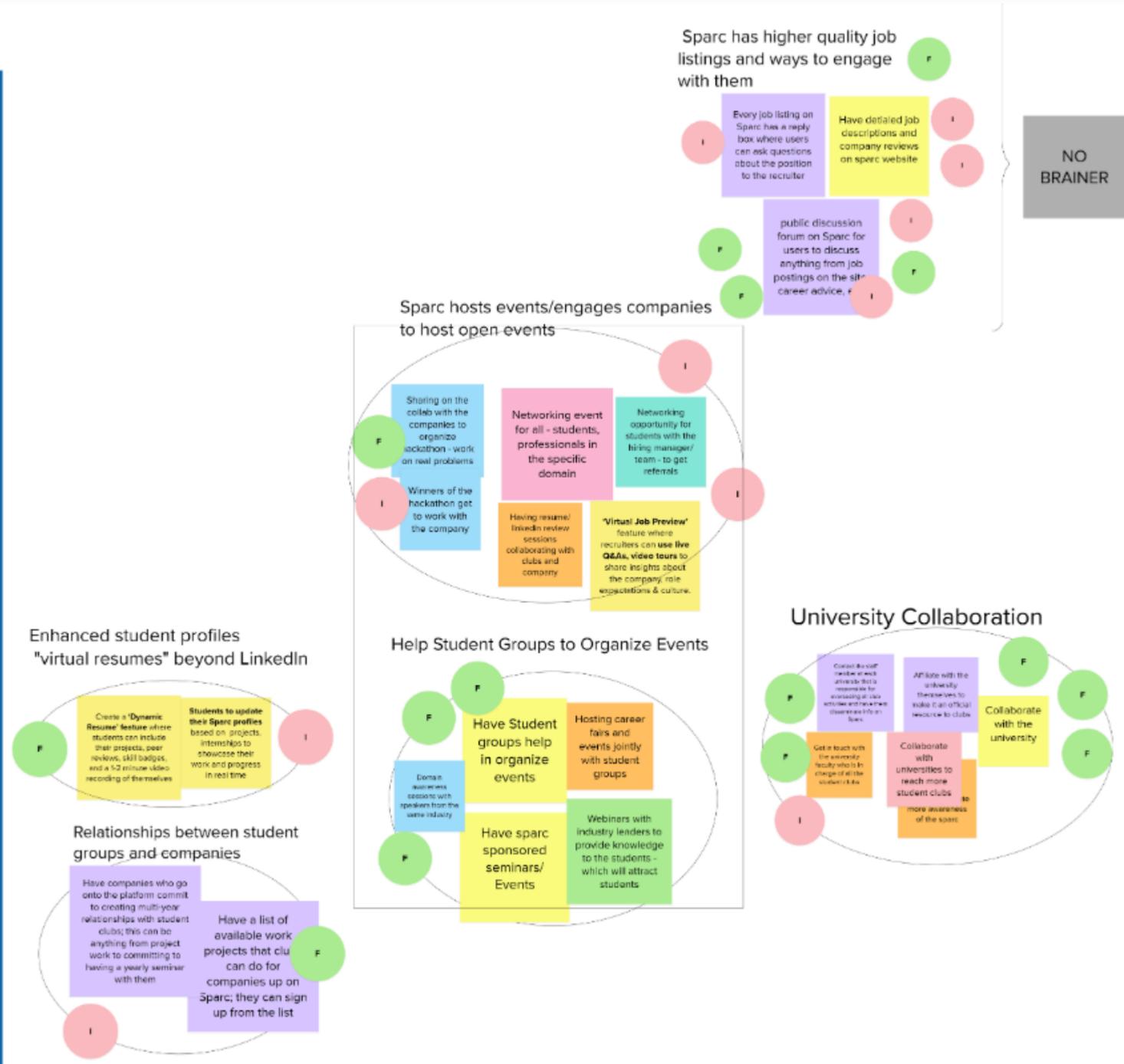
Voting

F Feasibility

I Impact to the user

Idea Prioritization

Impact



Effort

In Detail Analysis on Ideas

Compilation of Idea 1:
Interactive and higher quality job postings where recruiters are encouraged to include FAQs from the beginning, such as dates for the hiring process, start date, etc, and a public forum below each job listing where prospective candidates can ask questions.

Additional feature where you can view job listings side by side and AI can compare and contrast positions with each other and your resume.

Compilation of Idea 2:
Calendar feature for Sparc-wide events that all users can attend. Clubs can request events with companies so it is a 2-way process. More resources/event types from companies to show off what working there is like

Compilation of Idea 3:
Provide Laurel with a way he can scrape contact info for club coordinators similarly to how he found club leaders; like a general format for searching.

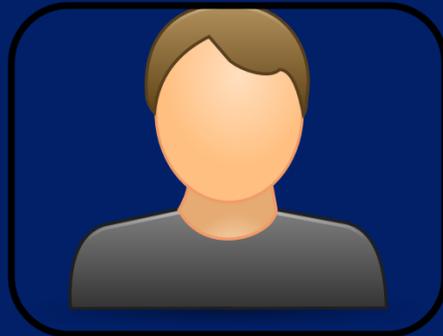
Give Laurel a list of various multi-university consortiums for various fields so that he can get an idea of how to look for things on his own and has resources to start out. They also host yearly organizational meetings Laurel could attend. He can coordinate with them to host multi-university events.

Connecting start-ups with universities can also help them find advisory board members, for example.

Compilation of Idea 4:
Sparc profiles have more customizability so they can differentiate themselves from LinkedIn profiles and serve more like personal websites and interactive virtual resumes. This can be done using base templates that students can modify how they'd like. Make sure that the profiles are publicly accessible in full without a Sparc account, or at least provide an option for students to set their privacy as such.

Compilation of Idea 5:
Project listing board, similar to job listings, viewable to those affiliated with a student club on Sparc. Club leaders can apply to different projects on behalf of their clubs, and will fill out a form informing the company of their suitability for the project in question, how many members and how much time they can dedicate, and their availability. Each project posting can be attributed to different categories to help clubs find what works best for them.

User Persona



STUDENT SAM

- 20-25 years old
- STEM Education
- University Student
- Lives in dorms or in off-campus housing
- Prefers to communicate with texting, email, & social Media

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Sam is a senior student passionate about problem solving and hands on projects. Sam is actively looking for internship and job opportunities in their field of study or interests. They hope to network with industry professionals and recruiters to build meaningful connections and gain mentorship and career guidance from experts.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of professional connections or knowledge about how to start networking effectively.
- Difficulty accessing high-quality internships and job openings that align with their career goals.
- Uncertainty about which career path to pursue.

WHAT CAN WE DO

- Offer real-world group projects with companies, .
- Connect students with mentors through on-demand career coaching from professionals at top companies.
- Simplify the job search process.

REAL QUOTES

- “How do I network with more recruiters and organizations that align with my values?”
- “I want to be able to set up an infrastructure to collaborate with companies that my club can pass down from one group of students to the next each year”

COMMON OBJECTIVES

- To learn more about company and the role
- Do networking with the hiring manager and recruiter
- Need mentorship and guidance from industry experts to navigate career

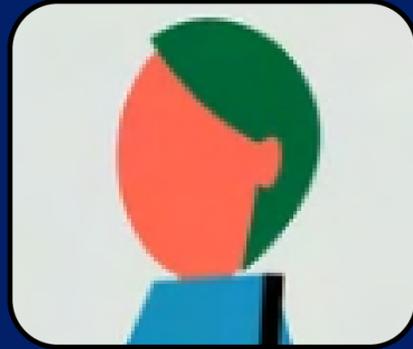
MARKETING MESSAGING

“Creating a strong community for students and recruiters.”

ELEVATOR PITCH

Confused on what should be your next career step? Don't worry, the career coaches on our board will guide you further. Sparc not only helps you in making connections, but also helps you by listing job openings which you can apply to.

User Persona



**RECRUITER
RILEY**

- 25-35 years old
- American
- College-Educated
- Recruiter

BACKGROUND & GOALS

Riley is an educated older Gen Z/younger Millennial recruitment professional. They have experience with the current era of recruitment and see ways to improve the system to communicate better with young talent. They hope to find new ways to connect with students and new grads in order to attract them to their company.

CHALLENGES

- Overwhelmed by the volume of resumes and applications
- Difficulties in analysing student's growth and true potential beyond what is mentioned on their resumes.
- Competing with large companies for recruiting top talents
- Ensuring cultural fit as resumes don't always cover soft skills

WANTS

- To streamline the application process to make it quicker and less painful for everyone involved: their team, hiring managers, and candidates.
- To find top young talent that are the right fit and can be developed in order to guide Riley's company into its next era.

REAL QUOTES

- "We get a lot of resumes and its difficult to navigate through them and find out the ones who are truly suited for the roles."
- "We need better engagement with student clubs since its hard to make meaningful relationships with them to drive hiring."

COMMON OBJECTIVES

- Engagement with Sparc
- Connections between students and recruiters
- Streamline the recruitment process
- Nourish the company's brand on campuses

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Increase student group engagement with the Sparc platform
- Make it easier for Riley and their team to increase their engagement and organize meetings with student groups

ELEVATOR PITCH

Sparc simplifies the process for recruiters by building stronger relationships with student clubs and connect diverse high-potential pools of talent that are passionate about Riley's company's industry and available roles.

Napkin Pitch- 1

The Big Idea

Interactive and higher quality job postings where recruiters are encouraged to include FAQs from the beginning, such as dates for the hiring process, start date, etc, and a public forum below each job listing where prospective candidates can ask questions.

Additional feature where you can view job listings side by side and AI can compare and contrast positions with each other and your resume.

Usability

It makes it easier for students to get their questions about each position answered and also limits the amount of messages a recruiter has to manage. Additionally, this allows candidates to more easily see what jobs their experience lines up to and how to possibly improve their resumes.

This creates a feedback loop where questions from students can improve the quality of future job postings and also students receive feedback on how they can improve their resumes

Feasibility

An interactive forum under job listings can be implemented with existing web development tools and databases. Hence, it is quite feasible to implement it. It would require additional sections to be added to the current job posting from the employer side for FAQs. And discussion forum for students and employers.

Viability

In feedback received in the team's informational interviews, students expressed frustration about lacking information about roles and companies they were looking at, and companies expressed frustration that the people they hired showed up without enough knowledge about what the company does and what they'd be working on in their role. This is an incredibly desirable change to how job postings are done and would make Sparc an attractive platform to search on.

Napkin Pitch- 2

The Big Idea

Calendar feature for Sparc-wide events that all users can attend. Clubs can request events like resume review, networking, hackathon etc with companies so it is a 2-way process. More resources/event types from companies to show off what working there is like through virtual tours etc.

Usability

All the users can have a detailed view of all upcoming events they can attend, making it easy to plan their schedules and take advantage of growth opportunities.

Feasibility

For Calendar feature, it's completely feasible as it would be an additional representation of the events conducted on Sparc. For Clubs to request events with companies, will be an additional feature provided to the student groups is feasible.

Viability

Adding this feature to their platform would not need much modification in the existing system. Also, this feature adds unique value when compared to the competitors by supporting company-student interactions that go beyond job postings, promoting a strong connection with the company. Hence, this can attract more users to the platform.

Napkin Pitch- 3

The Big Idea

Sparc can search for clubs and universities to partner with in a more broad way. Rather than contacting clubs, Sparc can contact the staff club coordinator at each university and have them disseminate information to clubs and organize an event. Additionally having a more formal connection with universities can extend deeper: Sparc can connect start-ups with professors who can become advisory board members.

More broadly, Sparc could contact multi-university consortiums or associations, which are when the same programs at multiple universities network together like MEMPC. These consortiums host regular meetings and Sparc can find a way to get in touch with each organization based off what the needs of his company clients are. This would allow Sparc to connect with more students at once.

Usability

This new recruitment methodology is just a change in tactic of the establish methodology used by Sparc to attract clubs and universities to their platform. Additionally, showing an increase in the amount of clubs onboarded will allow for Sparc to more easily establish more meaningful connections with multiple companies.

Feasibility

This idea is not financially heavy, its easy to connect and spread the word.

Partnering with multi-university networks like MEMPC helps Sparc reach many schools at once, saving time and effort. Using existing systems and digital tools keeps costs low and makes connecting with students straightforward.

Viability

Sparc has already seen success in approaching student clubs directly, so scaling upwards by being able to onboard and connect with multiple clubs, and multiple universities, at once will allow for Sparc to become an even more attractive prospect for companies looking to partner with and recruit from universities and their clubs.

Storyboard-1

Sparc Interactive Job Postings with FAQ & Forum

Student views a
job posting on Sparc



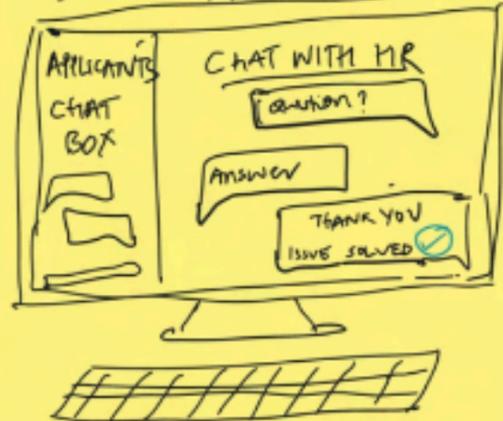
Student is interested in the job but
still has certain questions about it



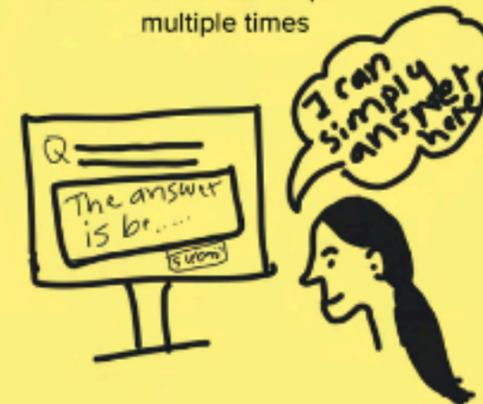
Student comes across the FAQ
section and discussion forum
where he asks the question



His question is addressed
by other applicants and HR



Recruiter is happy that she does not
have to answer same questions
multiple times



Student is happy that his
question was answered and
also feels sense of community



Storyboard- 2

Broader Methods for Connecting with Student Clubs

