Congo.ai

Let's meet now.

User Research

Spring 2026 | NMIX 4410

Jodie Lederman, Alex Cho, Evelyn Kim, Grace Oh, Aditi Chiluguri

Overview

I. . . . . Research Objectives

II. . . . . Research Methods

III. . . . . Survey Overview

IV. . . . . Survey Findings

V. . . . . Interview Structure

VI. . . . . Interview Findings

VII. . . . . Key Takeaways

VIII. . . . . Future Plans

Research Objectives

What is Congo.ai?

Congo.ai is a real-time, location-based mobile application designed to connect people based on immediate needs and available skills. The platform addresses the problem of missed opportunities for meaningful connection and collaboration by matching users who are physically proximate and can help each other right now. Unlike traditional networking platforms that rely on long-term relationship building, Congo.ai focuses on solving immediate, situational problems through spontaneous, low-friction interactions.

Research Objectives

- Evaluate whether students experience recurring academic or career friction that warrants a proximity-based solution.
- Analyze how students solve these challenges.
- What are student's comfort levels with peer-to-peer support, including preferences for virtual vs in-person, location-tracking features?
- Identify social, emotional, and privacy-related barriers to adoption.
- Determine whether Congo would have ongoing value rather than being a one-time engagement.

Research Methods

Research Methods

1. Surveys:

Created a Google Form survey of 34 questions to send out to UGA students.

2. Interviews:

Each conducted an in-person interview with one to two people to collect qualitative insights and hear their experiences on a more personal level.

Target Audience

Our target audience is students at The University of Georgia. The research focuses on students across majors and class years who experience acadmeic or professional friction and may benefit from real-time peer support.



Survey Overview

Structure

We created a cross-sectional Google Form survey of 34 questions to send out to UGA students, adding both quantitative (likert scales, multiple choice, frequency measures) and qualitative open-ended questions.

Questions

The survey was to measure the frequency and urgency of academic and career-related problems. We wanted to assess what other resources students use to get help and what the gaps are in existing solutions. Our survey's purpose was also to measure students' comfort levels with in-person interactions, their perception to location-tracking features on apps, and other potential privacy related barriers to adopt.

Overall, the design is to see whether their problems are recurring and significant enough to justify this app. As well as if the solution would be used to generate sustained engagement rather than facilitate one-time use.

Survey Findings

Problem Severity

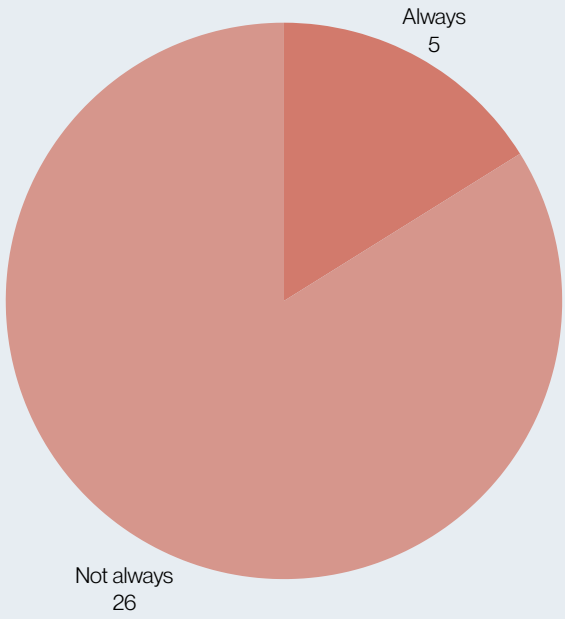
Students are moderately stressed about getting help, and nearly half struggle with inconsistent access despite effort, validating a friction point Congo.ai could address. **Median stress level: 6/10.**



Problem Frequency

Out of 31 responses, **5** students indicated that they were **always** able to get assistance. In other words, most students struggled with inconsistent access to help.

When needing assistance, are you consistently able to get it?



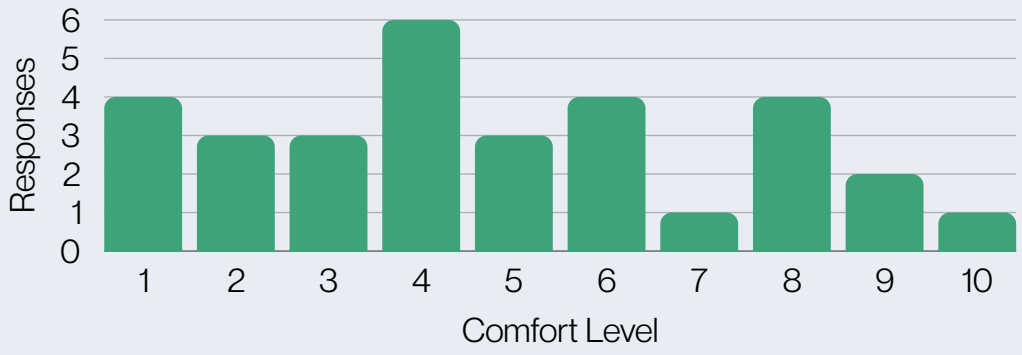
Survey Findings

Social Comfort and Risk

Students had mixed comfort level reactions when it came to interacting with unfamiliar peers. Social awkwardness and preference for public or anonymous settings suggest Congo must reduce perceived social risk.

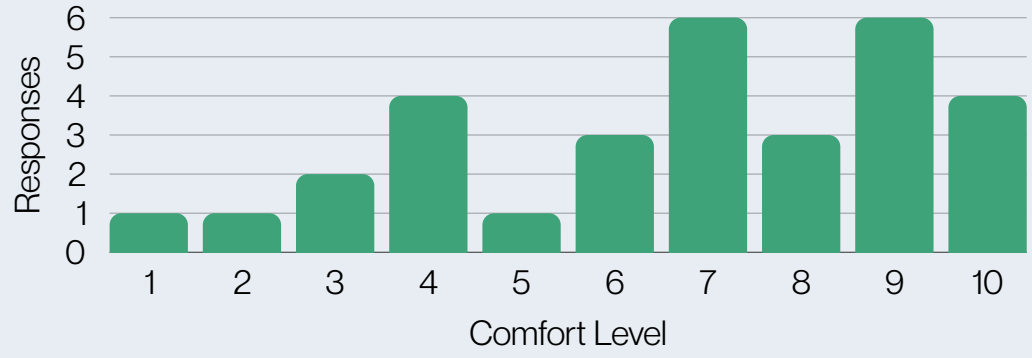
Comfort Level Asking Stranger for Help

(1 Very Uncomfortable - 10 Very Comfortable)



Comfort Level Helping a Stranger

(1 Very Uncomfortable - 10 Very Comfortable)



Trends also suggested that students were more uncomfortable **asking a stranger** for help versus **helping a stranger**.

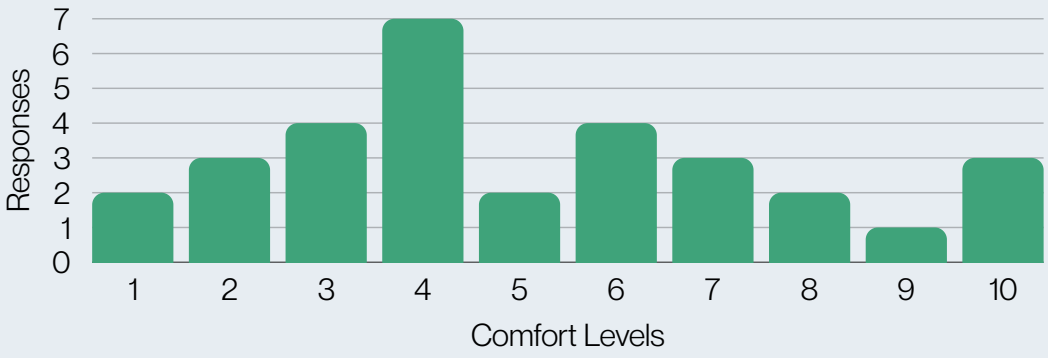
Survey Findings

Location-Based Perceptions

Privacy and safety concerns around location tracking were common, making location anxiety a key adoption barrier. However, temporary location sharing increased comfort, so the feature must be optional and clearly communicated.

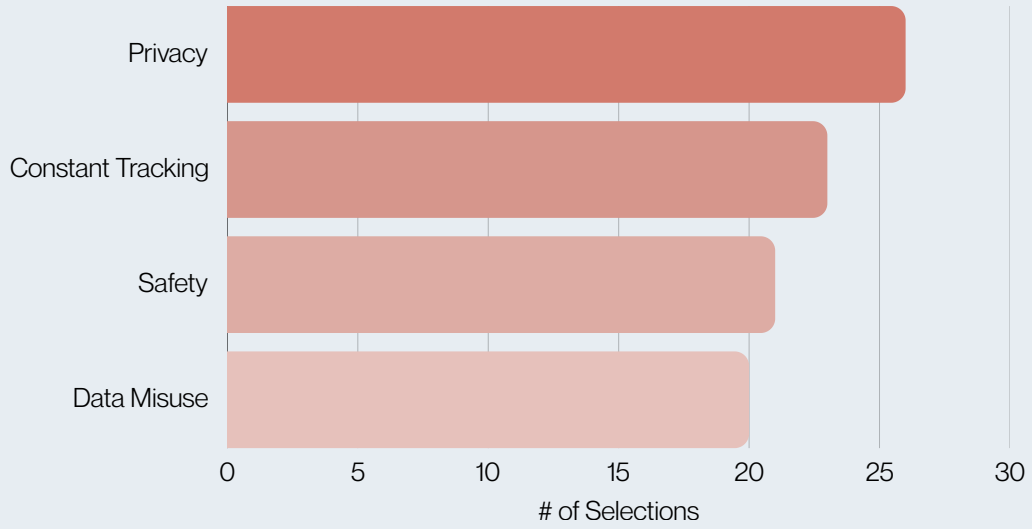
How do you feel about apps that use your location?

(1 Very Uncomfortable - 10 Very Comfortable)



Top 4 concerns about location-based apps

(Data from "Select all" survey question)



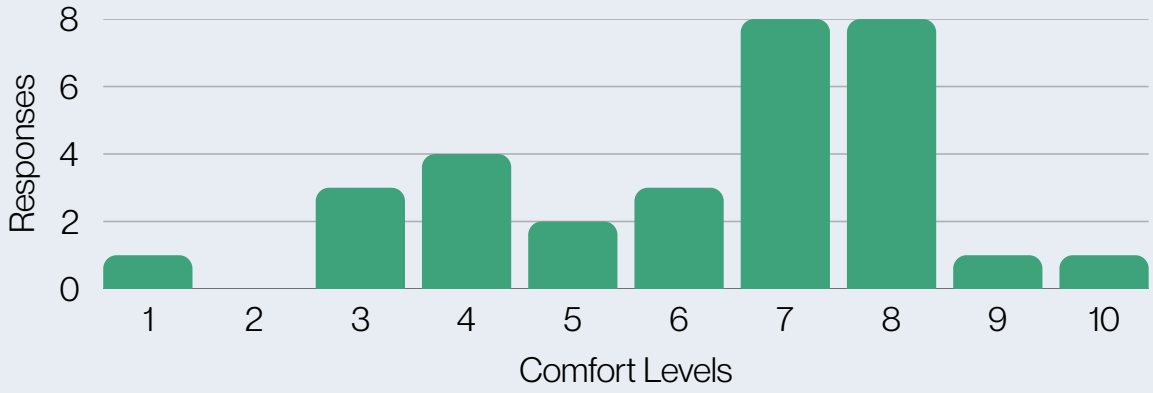
Survey Findings

Retention Potential

Students would most likely use the app during high-stress periods like midterms, finals, recruiting season, and registration week. Usage is situational rather than daily, positioning Congo as a high-intensity tool. Retention will depend on speed, reliability, low friction, and visible trust mechanisms.

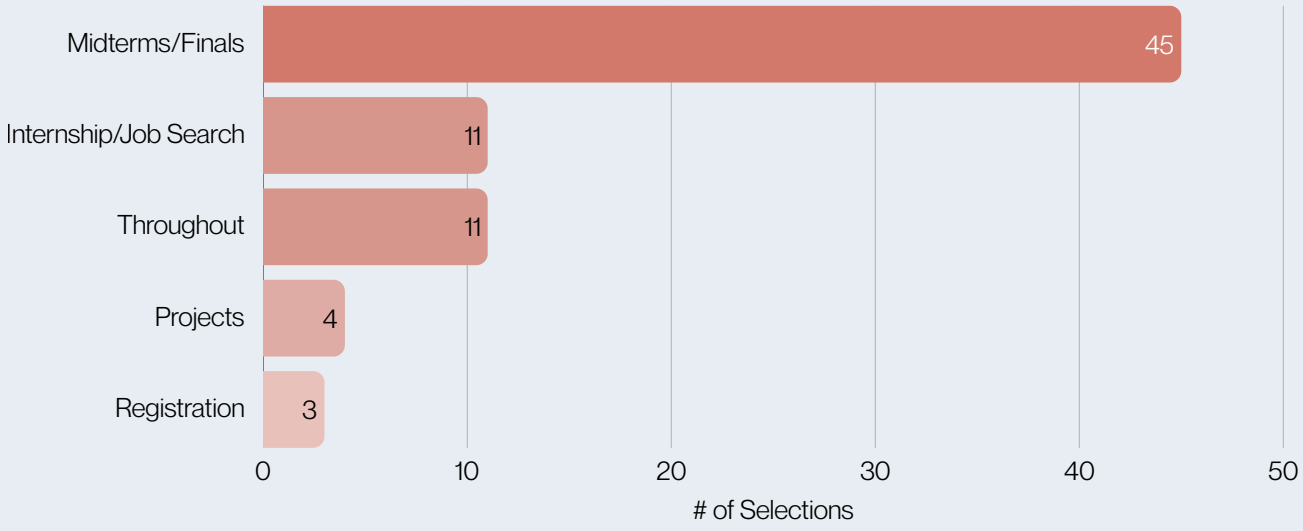
Likely to Use the App

(1 Very Uncomfortable - 10 Very Comfortable)



The App is Most Useful During:

(Data from "Select all" survey question)



Interview Structure

Questions:

16 questions, each with 2-4 follow up questions for interviewees to broaden their responses.

Conducting Interviews:

Each interview was about 15-30 minutes and in-person/virtual to gauge a deeper emotional insight on how UGA students problem-solve, seek help, trust information, feel about privacy concerns and their view on long-term adoption potential with a concept like Congo.

Number of Interviews:

6 total interviews.

Interview Findings

1) Academic Friction is Not Constant

Students do experience stress and urgency, especially with deadlines, exams and projects, but these moments are not continuous.

The use of Congo could succeed as a situational tool instead of a daily-use app.

2) Default → AI & Friends

The first search for help students go to are:

- Friends & classmates
- ChatGPT
- TAs/Professors

Congo would be used after all these options fail.

What can Congo offer that AI and friends cannot?:
Professor-specific insight, shared class context or rapid nearby clarification.

3) Trust is Built on Credentials

Students are more likely to accept help from someone who has taken the same class or professor, knows the information well, is more experienced, and/or shares the same major. **Congo needs to display proof of visible credentials of the helpers.**

Interview Findings

4) Asking for Help Carries Social Risk

On an emotional/mental level, many students view asking for help as a vulnerable action. They believe it makes them an "inconvenience to others" or "less smart", so there is an emotional friction.

Congo should implement:

- low-visibility requests
- anonymous matching
- micro/quick interactions

→ **why?** to reduce psychological barriers.

5) Text-Based Interactions are More Comfortable

Students prefer messaging first with short, quick clarifications. Online over in-person interactions adds a layer of protection and safety for most students.

Congo should prioritize text-first, low-effort interactions rather than meeting up in person.

Interview Findings

6) Location Tracking Anxiety

The continuous location sharing and public visibility of your real-time location can be daunting. The interviewees felt more comfortable with temporary location sharing and having it as an optional feature.

Location features should be optional and transparent in order for users to consider using Congo.

7) Adoption and Rention Depends on Early Success

- The interviewees stated that they would likely try the app once, but unanswered posts, negative experiences or slow responses would lead them to delete the app.
- Retention is highly sensitive to first-use success, responses and overall reputation.
- Incentives or recognition should be necessary to sustain engagement. Without a strong network density, reliability or motivated helpers, the platform risks are higher.

Congo should prioritize a firm density of helpers and guaranteed response mechanisms (incentivized helpers, school ambassadors, onboarding support, etc.) to ensure timely responses.

Key Takeaways

Survey - Key Takeaways

Our survey results revealed several important insights:

- Academic friction is recurring and often urgent.
- AI is heavily used, but not fully trusted.
- Students value speed but fear social awkwardness.
- Location tracking creates anxiety unless temporary and transparent.
- Trust systems (verification, ratings, public spaces) are non-negotiable.
- Usage will likely spike during high-pressure academic periods.

Overall, the data suggests Congo must balance:

- Speed + Trust + Low Social Risk to achieve both adoption and retention.

Interviews - Key Takeaways

Our interview results revealed several important insights:

- Trust is non-negotiable: Visible credentials, shared context, privacy controls, and verified identity should be transparent to accept help and use the app.
- Retention hinges on early success: The platform reputation on the first-time experience, response speed, and honesty will determine whether students will keep the app or not.
- Supply-side participation is uncertain: The motivation for helpers require incentives to maintain activity, honest work and prevent network decline.

Future Plans

Based on our findings from our user research, we will focus on ensuring that the future development aligns with the needs and perceptions of these users and students.

We will implement a real-time notification system and home-screen widget feature to ensure users are alerted immediately when they receive responses or when relevant questions are posted in their courses. This directly addresses concerns about response speed and retention, as timely engagement is critical to maintaining trust and preventing unanswered posts. Additionally, we will conduct iterative usability testing following further research to refine features based on real user behavior, particularly around matching, privacy settings, and interaction flows. Because helper motivation emerged as inconsistent in our interviews, we will explore a structured incentive system such as points, recognition, or reciprocal help credits to encourage sustained participation and prevent supply-side drop-off. These future developments aim to strengthen network density, improve first-use success, and create a more reliable and engaging peer-support ecosystem.