

Collaborative Social Media in Medical Student Affairs

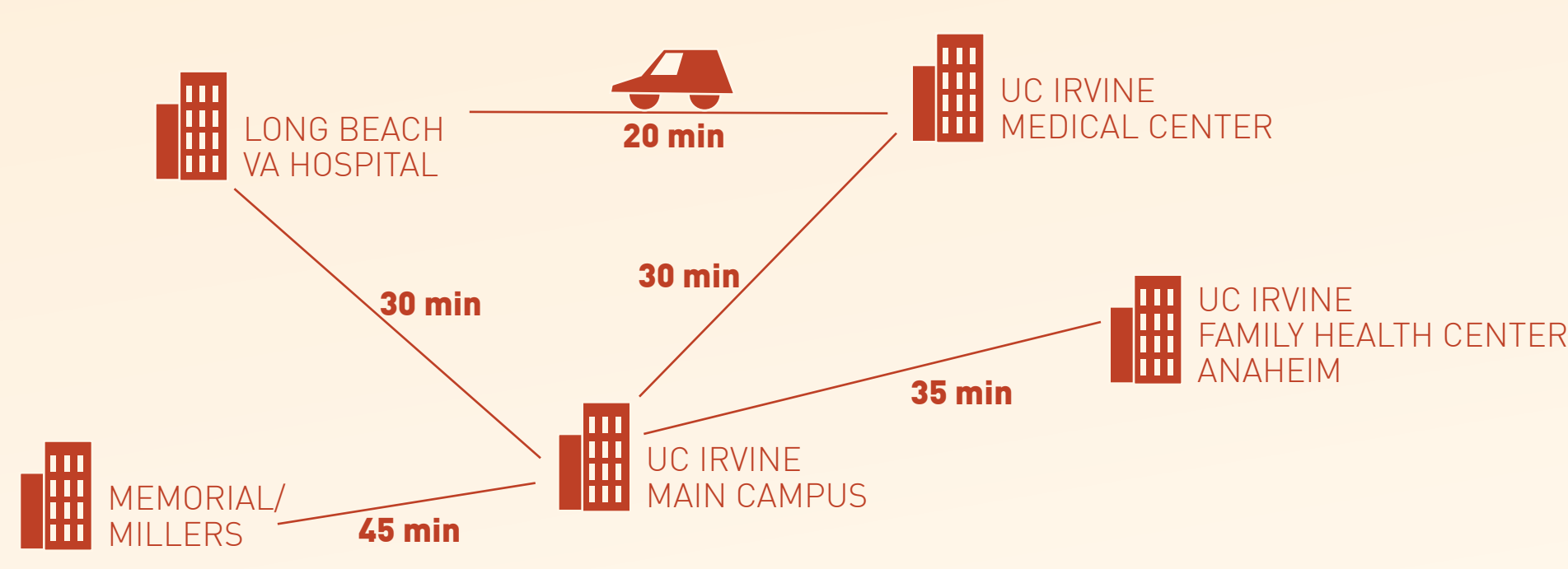
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__About P=MD

P=MD, a student-run online system, links students at the University of Irvine, School of Medicine's (UCI-SOM) distant medical campuses across Orange County and Los Angeles County. The system includes Web 2.0-based features such as discussion boards, wikis, news feeds, integrated calendaring, collaborative note sharing, and groupware. P=MD stimulates UCI medical student academic and extracurricular life. Social media-based IT systems such as P=MD can improve the collaborative, collegial environment in residency and hospital settings, forge informal links among specialists, and stimulate dialogue in medical societies.

__The problems

__ PHYSICAL SPACE: UCI-SOM's students are spread across more than five cities in two counties. This sprawling arrangement results in fragmented communication amongst students. Competing medical schools, such as UC San Francisco and Northwestern University in Chicago, have more centralized physical campus locations that enable spontaneous interactions and a sense of place.



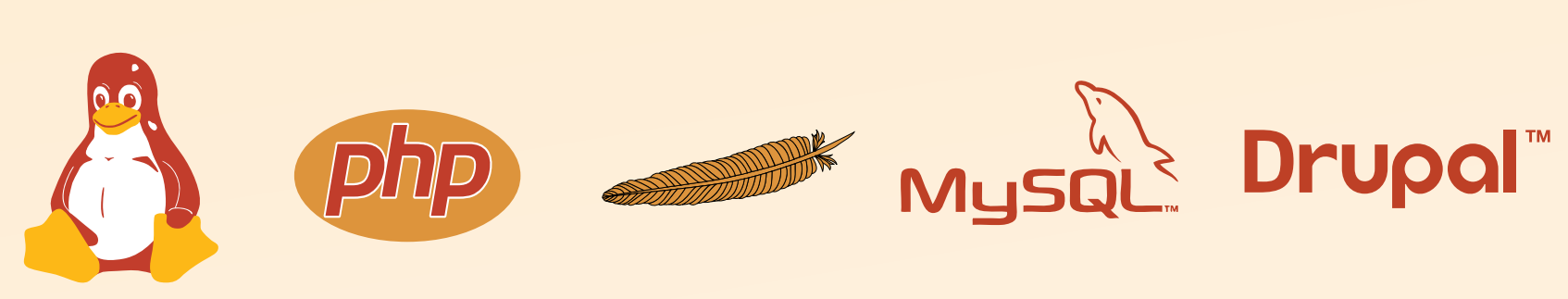
__ INFORMATION OVERLOAD: As a result, communication amongst students is largely performed through e-mail lists, Facebook, an undeveloped school intranet, and multiple club websites on different domains.



__ LACK OF MARKETING: UCI-SOM has not actively promoted one of its valuable points of differentiation: an enthusiastic, active student body with over 15 student organizations and daily events. A public website that harnesses this stream of information can be used to market UCI-SOM to alumni, to donors, pre-medical applicants, and the community.

__The solution: P=MD

The P=MD system runs on a customized Drupal 6 open-source content management system, which powers sites such as WhiteHouse.gov, The Economist, and Examiner.com. The system runs on a LAMP software stack (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP).



One medical student has spent over 500 hours engineering and developing this project on his spare time; countless student volunteers have contributed content and maintained the community. Current features include:

- discussion boards
- voting & polling systems
- stream-of-information homepage
- subscriptions & groups for each organization & class
- per-group and site-wide calendars
- user profiles & messaging
- quotes board
- wiki with revision-history & WYSIWYG HTML editor

As a result, communication has become easier at UCI-SOM.

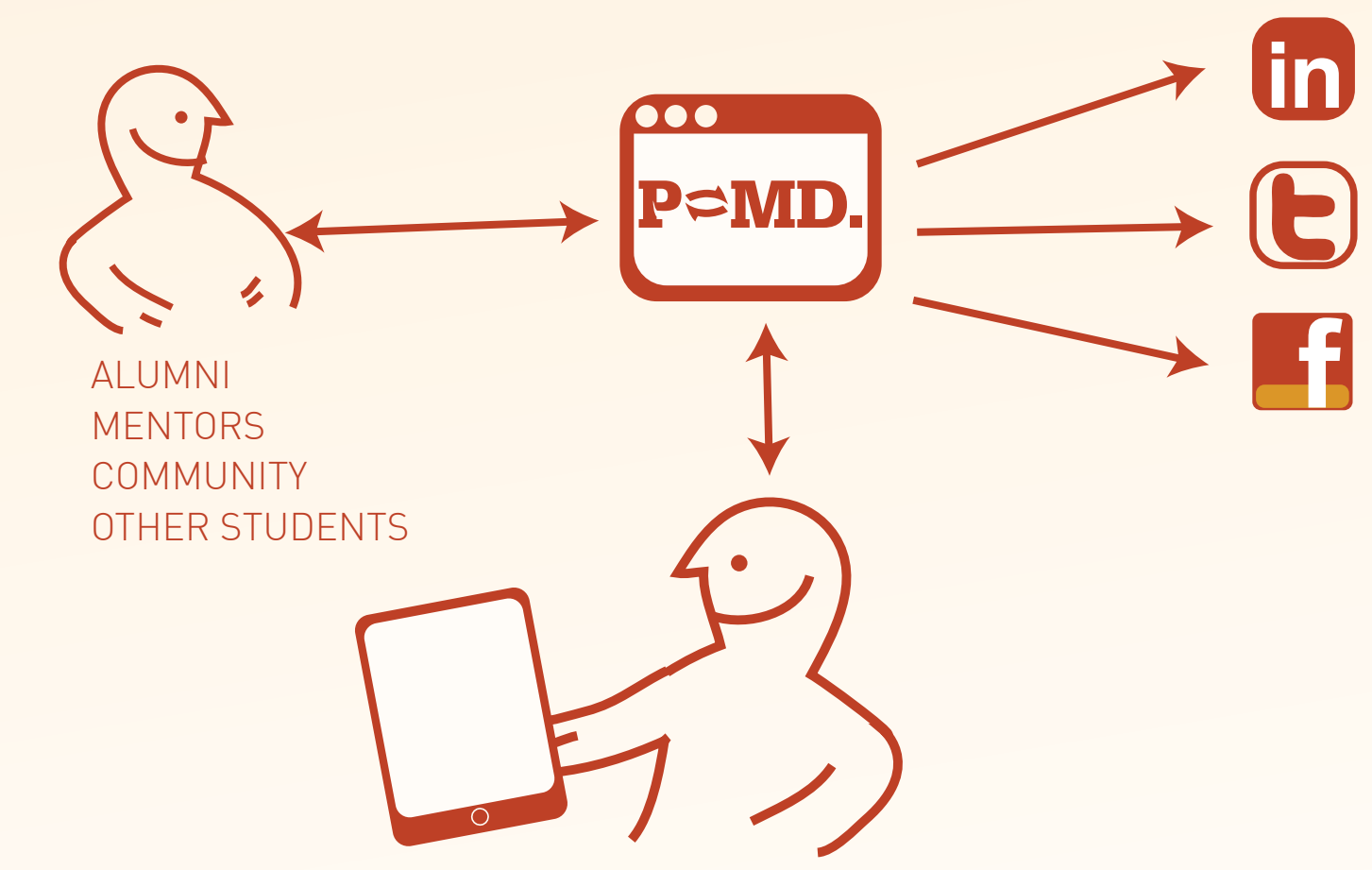
The website has also introduced intangible elements: culture of sharing and collaboration among students. Since its introduction, P=MD has welcomed over 400 users and more than 10,000 posts.

__Challenges & the future

The site does not have an established team to continue further development, as it has been completely administered by medical students. We're forming a team to make this website sustainable for future generations, exploring the possibility of establishing a non-profit organization and soliciting grants to fund software and UX development.

Features in the works include:

- virtual mentoring
- Twitter and Facebook status push
- iOS and Android mobile interfaces
- volunteer scheduling for clinics and special events
- public-facing website for student organizations & clubs
- auctions & marketplace



www.ucimedstudents.net/about

special thanks to UCI-SOM Class of 2011 & 2012