

# The College Six Usability Study

February 2023

Team

Kat Klima, Service Designer

Sarah Burghardt, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

# Table of Contents

**Section 1** Study Details

**Section 2** Themes

**Section 3** Insights & Recommendations

# Study Details

# Project Background

Like many governmental bodies, our agency has a ton of resources that are not very well known by the public. Using a Design Sprint methodology was our solution to changing that. After discussing the major problems facing our agency and talking to experts within our field, we landed on solving the the following:

**Long term goal:** Get more school staff to use Office of Higher Education resources

**Sprint questions:**

- How might we increase awareness and use of our resources?
- How might we lessen the work for counselors and school staff in their communications with students?

# Study Details

## Research Questions

How might we increase awareness and use of internal resources?

How might we reduce the work of counselors and school staff in their communication with students and families?

## Participants

5 participants

5 female school staff located in the Twin Cities metro, central, and northern Minnesota.

## Methodology

Approximately 30 minutes

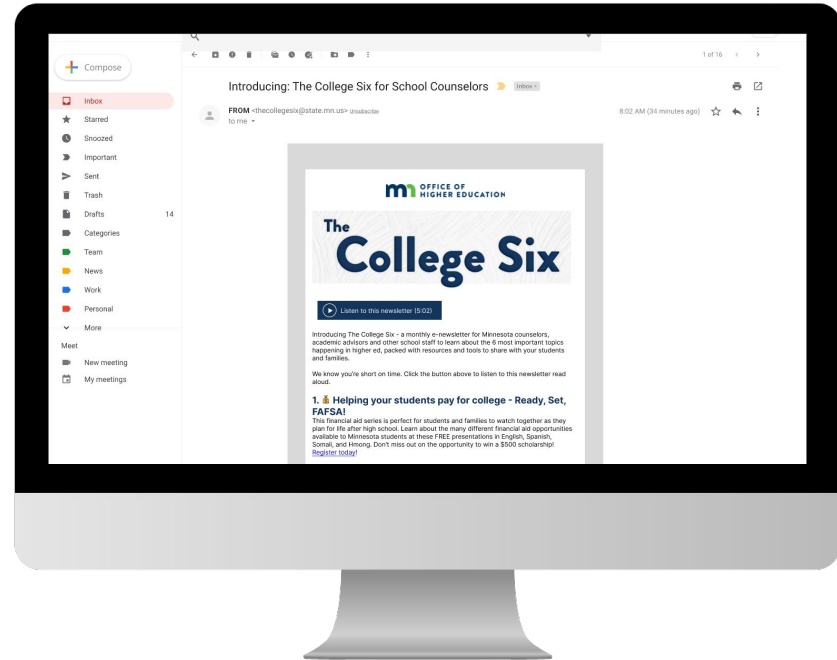
United States, remote

Moderated usability study

Users were asked to perform tasks on a high fidelity prototype

# Prototype / Design Tested

The prototype of The College Six can be viewed [here](#).



# Themes

# Users loved the clean, concise layout.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 5 out of 5 participants referenced their appreciation of the layout.

“The clear format is easy on the eyes.”

— Ramzia, School Counselor

## 1. 💰 **Helping your students pay for college - Ready, Set, FAFSA!**

This financial aid series is perfect for students and families to watch together as they plan for life after high school. Learn about the many different financial aid opportunities available to Minnesota students at these FREE presentations in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. Don't miss out on the opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship! [Register today!](#)

## 2. 🌟 **SELF Loan: A trustworthy loan from the State**

Looking for student loan advice to offer your seniors? Having to pay back tens of thousands of dollars in debt sounds like a lot of money - and it is! That's why we want to help students manage their loans responsibly. SELF Loan helps students become familiar with budgeting for payments and get ahead of the game. [Learn more about the SELF loan.](#)

## 3. 🎓 **Grant spotlight: Future Together Grants**

Minnesota Future Together grants help students attend college without taking on student loans. The grant allows eligible Minnesota residents to receive a tuition-free pathway for earning a certificate, diploma, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at any public institution in the state. You read that correctly: tuition-free! Still not convinced? [Check out this blog post.](#)

## 4. 📖 **Stock up your student support office: Helpful publications at no cost**

Is your student support office in need of helpful publications to offer your high schoolers on the college-going process? OHE publishes four booklets intended to inform students and families about selecting a college and the many ways to pay for it. Minnesota schools and organizations can bulk order the entire series at no cost! [Click here to view and order OHE publications.](#)

## 5. 💖 **Student success story**

Sometimes the best way to connect with a student is through storytelling. Each month, we'll feature a student who has found postsecondary success in an unconventional way. Tou Vang, 30, of Coon Rapids has advanced his in-demand career at Innovize Medical Manufacturing quickly with the help of the Dual Training Grant. This financial aid program allows Minnesotans to engage in (paid!) on-the-job training while earning an industry-specific certificate, credential or degree in Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Agriculture or IT. Oftentimes, the grant covers the tuition entirely! [Click here to read Tou's story.](#)

Have a student success story of your own to share? Email us at [Communications.OHE@state.mn.us](mailto:Communications.OHE@state.mn.us).

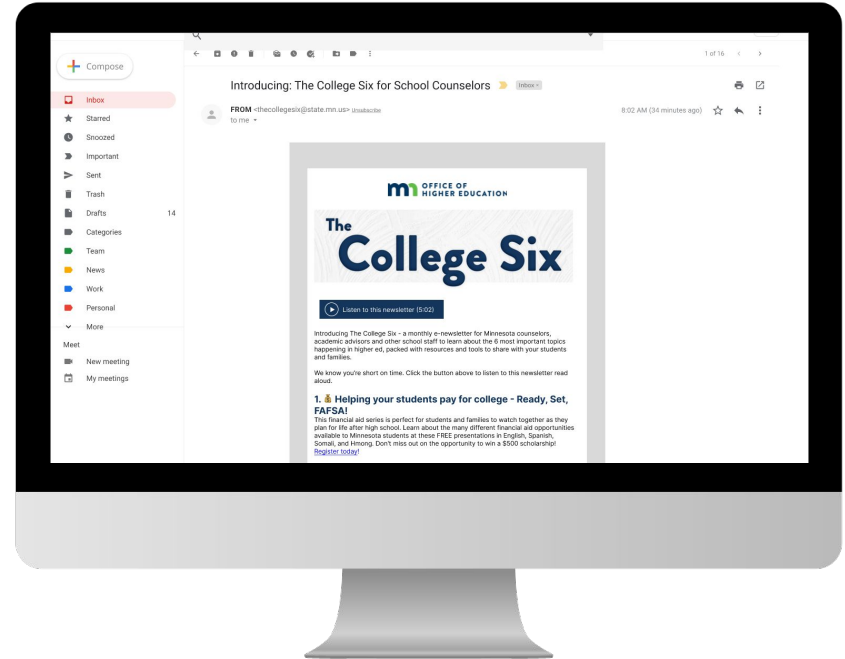
# The newsletter was easy for users to navigate.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 4 out of 5 participants were able to find all instructed pieces of information in 5 seconds or less.

“Seems browsable and manageable; there isn’t anything click-baity or one-sided, paid-sponsorship type emails.”

—Audrey, Academic Dean



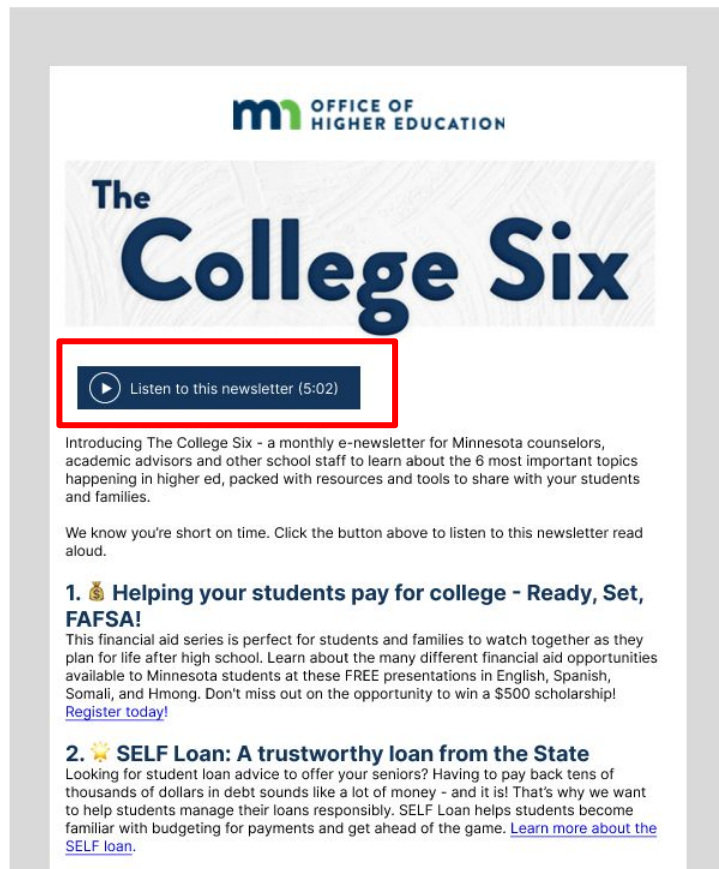
Users appreciated the ability to have the newsletter read aloud to them.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 3 out of 5 participants expressed their desire to use the feature during their interview.

“Being able to hit play and listen to it when I'm driving home or on the way to work would be great!”

—Margaret, Academic Dean








# Users liked the emojis.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 3 out of 5 participants referenced their appreciation of the small pictures (emojis).

“This is very relevant to this era in terms of the emojis—they keep catching my eye! Ooh, what’s by the fire emoji?”

— Ramzia, School Counselor

-  **Helping your students pay for college - Ready, Set, FAFSA!**  
This financial aid series is perfect for students and families to watch together as they plan for life after high school. Learn about the many different financial aid opportunities available to Minnesota students at these FREE presentations in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. Don't miss out on the opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship! [Register today!](#)
-  **SELF Loan: A trustworthy loan from the State**  
Looking for student loan advice to offer your seniors? Having to pay back tens of thousands of dollars in debt sounds like a lot of money - and it is! That's why we want to help students manage their loans responsibly. SELF Loan helps students become familiar with budgeting for payments and get ahead of the game. [Learn more about the SELF loan.](#)
-  **Grant spotlight: Future Together Grants**  
Minnesota Future Together grants help students attend college without taking on student loans. The grant allows eligible Minnesota residents to receive a tuition-free pathway for earning a certificate, diploma, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at any public institution in the state. You read that correctly: tuition-free! Still not convinced? [Check out this blog post.](#)
-  **Stock up your student support office: Helpful publications at no cost**  
Is your student support office in need of helpful publications to offer your high schoolers on the college-going process? OHE publishes four booklets intended to inform students and families about selecting a college and the many ways to pay for it. Minnesota schools and organizations can bulk order the entire series at no cost! [Click here to view and order OHE publications.](#)
-  **Student success story**  
Sometimes the best way to connect with a student is through storytelling. Each month, we'll feature a student who has found postsecondary success in an unconventional way. Tou Vang, 30, of Coon Rapids has advanced his in-demand career at Innovize Medical Manufacturing quickly with the help of the Dual Training Grant. This financial aid program allows Minnesotans to engage in (paid!) on-the-job training while earning an industry-specific certificate, credential or degree in Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Agriculture or IT. Oftentimes, the grant covers the tuition entirely! [Click here to read Tou's story.](#)  
  
Have a student success story of your own to share? Email us at [Communications.OHE@state.mn.us](mailto:Communications.OHE@state.mn.us).

# Users completely missed the “if you only do only thing” section.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 0 out of 5 participants mentioned this section at any point during their interview.

## 5. ❤️ Student success story

Sometimes the best way to connect with a student is through storytelling. Each month, we'll feature a student who has found postsecondary success in an unconventional way. Tou Vang, 30, of Coon Rapids has advanced his in-demand career at Innovize Medical Manufacturing quickly with the help of the Dual Training Grant. This financial aid program allows Minnesotans to engage in (paid!) on-the-job training while earning an industry-specific certificate, credential or degree in Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Agriculture or IT. Oftentimes, the grant covers the tuition entirely! [Click here to read Tou's story.](#)

Have a student success story of your own to share? Email us at [Communications.OHE@state.mn.us](mailto:Communications.OHE@state.mn.us).

## 6. 🙌 ! If you only do one thing...

Share the Ready, Set, FAFSA sign up link with your students. The popular webinar series hosted this month every Tuesday at 7 p.m. is translated live into Spanish, Somali and Hmong - helping more families understand the process. Don't let your students miss out on the opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship! [Share this registration link today!](#)

## 🔥 Share this College Search Tool with your students!

Finding the right type of education after high school can be a challenging task. Students can use the new MyHigherEd College Search Tool that makes it easy to compare any Minnesota college by campus location, student-to-teacher ratio, area of study, degree level, and how much students make after they graduate. It's free and specific to only colleges in Minnesota.

[Try the College Search Tool](#)

## POLL

What topics do you want to hear more about?

- ☐ College Affordability
- ☐ Community and Technical Education Pathways
- ☐ Student Tools or Resources
- ☐ Real Student Stories
- ☐ Something else?

[Click to answer poll question!](#)

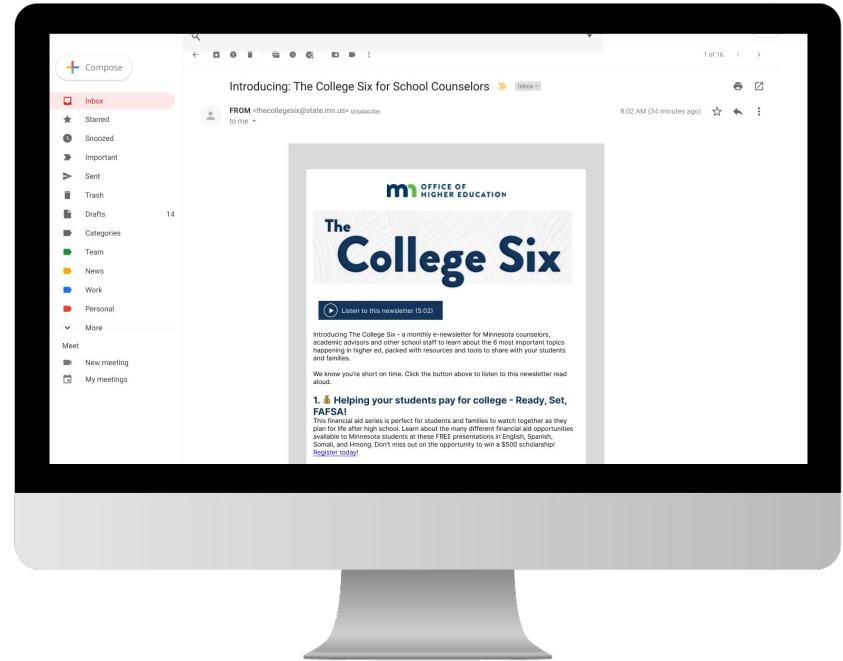
# Users need more information on helping the Muslim student population with student loans.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 3 out of 5 participants mentioned difficulty advising Muslim students how to pay for college because Islam prohibits interest accruing loans.

“I just worked with a Somali girl that's going to the U of M to accept her acceptance offer. It was \$280. But she shared with me—and I didn't know this until this year that she said that—that she can't hit defer because, being a Muslim woman, her family cannot take out loans and they can't pay acceptance fee.”

- Audrey, Academic Dean



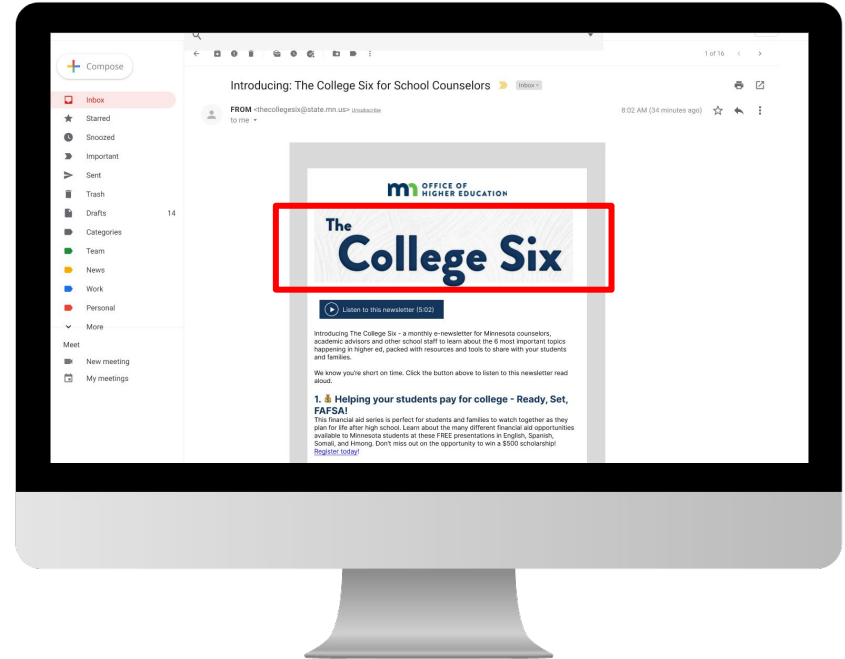
Users might need a different title for this product.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 5 out of 5 participants were confused by the title.

“The College Six sounds like a sports headline!”

—Hannah, Postsecondary Pathway Coordinator



# Some users had never heard of the SELF Loan.

Supporting evidence from the usability study.

- 2 out of 5 participants admitted to being unfamiliar with the SELF Loan.

"I don't really know anything about SELF Loan!"

—Joy, School Counselor

## 1. 💰 Helping your students pay for college - Ready, Set, FAFSA!

This financial aid series is perfect for students and families to watch together as they plan for life after high school. Learn about the many different financial aid opportunities available to Minnesota students at these FREE presentations in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. Don't miss out on the opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship! [Register today!](#)

## 2. 🌟 SELF Loan: A trustworthy loan from the State

Looking for student loan advice to offer your seniors? Having to pay back tens of thousands of dollars in debt sounds like a lot of money - and it is! That's why we want to help students manage their loans responsibly. SELF Loan helps students become familiar with budgeting for payments and get ahead of the game. [Learn more about the SELF loan.](#)

## 3. 🎓 Grant spotlight: Future Together Grants

Minnesota Future Together grants help students attend college without taking on student loans. The grant allows eligible Minnesota residents to receive a tuition-free pathway for earning a certificate, diploma, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at any public institution in the state. You read that correctly: tuition-free! Still not convinced? [Check out this blog post.](#)

## 4. 📚 Stock up your student support office: Helpful publications at no cost

Is your student support office in need of helpful publications to offer your high schoolers on the college-going process? OHE publishes four booklets intended to inform students and families about selecting a college and the many ways to pay for it. Minnesota schools and organizations can bulk order the entire series at no cost! [Click here to view and order OHE publications.](#)

## 5. 💖 Student success story

Sometimes the best way to connect with a student is through storytelling. Each month, we'll feature a student who has found postsecondary success in an unconventional way. Tou Vang, 30, of Coon Rapids has advanced his in-demand career at Innovize Medical Manufacturing quickly with the help of the Dual Training Grant. This financial aid program allows Minnesotans to engage in (paid!) on-the-job training while earning an industry-specific certificate, credential or degree in Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Agriculture or IT. Oftentimes, the grant covers the tuition entirely! [Click here to read Tou's story.](#)

Have a student success story of your own to share? Email us at [Communications.OHE@state.mn.us](mailto:Communications.OHE@state.mn.us).

# Insights & Recommendations

## Research insights

Test  
different  
product  
names

Users were confused by the product title; thought it sounds like a sports headline or scholarship.

“If you only do  
one thing”  
section

Not a single user engaged with this section during the interviews.

Helping  
Muslim  
students

Users want more info on how to help students who can't take out student loans.

Read aloud  
feature

Users really liked the ability to listen to the newsletter

Loved the  
simplicity

Users enjoyed the simplicity of the product.

## Recommendations

- Test different product titles with target users
- Add section about helping diverse student populations, like Muslim students
- Incorporate “if you only do one thing” section into the list of six things
- Continue to make the ‘read aloud’ feature available

## Next steps

- Make changes and create second iteration
- Conduct second usability study

Thank you!