Virtual Classroom

Design Exercise • LinkedIn • 2022

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Design an experience that helps college students
discover and connect to their classmates.

On LinkedIn today:

- Discover classmates by searching by name, finding connections through connections, alumni/followers of University page.

- Connect to classmates by engaging with posts they made, using the chat, mutual groups, and University page.

Limitations:

- University pages are too broad and often connecting with classmates is easier outside of LinkedIn.

- Being part of the same groups and messaging gives a sense of connection, but often classmates are left out, do not engage or participate.

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To better understand how current college students discover and connect with their classmates, I sent out a quantitative survey to 50 Bay Area students and found that:

- 18% use LinkedIn to connect with classmates
  - Other applications used: 100% use WhatsApp/IMessage, 84% use Slack and 70% use Instagram

- 100% answered they rather use mobile devices to connect with classmates

- 100% answered they prefer connecting with classmates in an environment with students only, without the presence of faculty
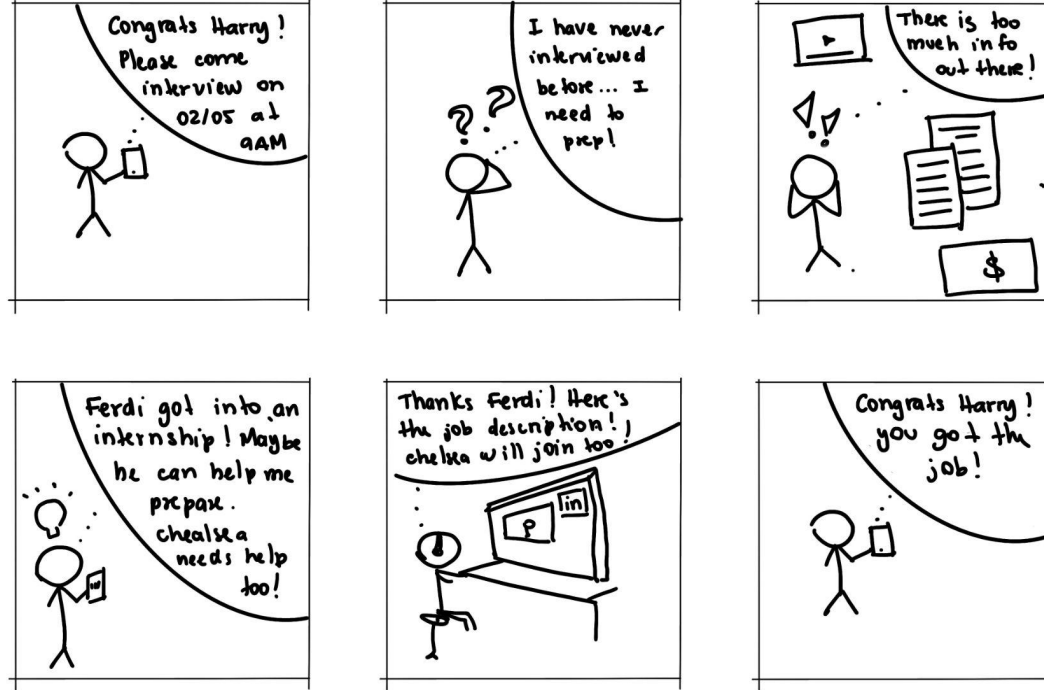
- 84% have an active LinkedIn profile

Harry is a graduate student who needs a way to get advice and coaching for his upcoming job interview because he feels like he has less experience than his peers.

He makes a post on LinkedIn asking for help. Many people Harry doesn't know answer him. Ferdi, his classmate, texts him on another platform and offers help.

How can this interaction happen within LinkedIn? How can they practice? There are no available tools today to facilitate a practice interview between Harry and Ferdi.

Goals: LinkedIn is a place where people can connect to people they know, to share professional experience and opportunities.

- To communicate with classmates and connect regarding jobs and interviews

- To share job opportunities

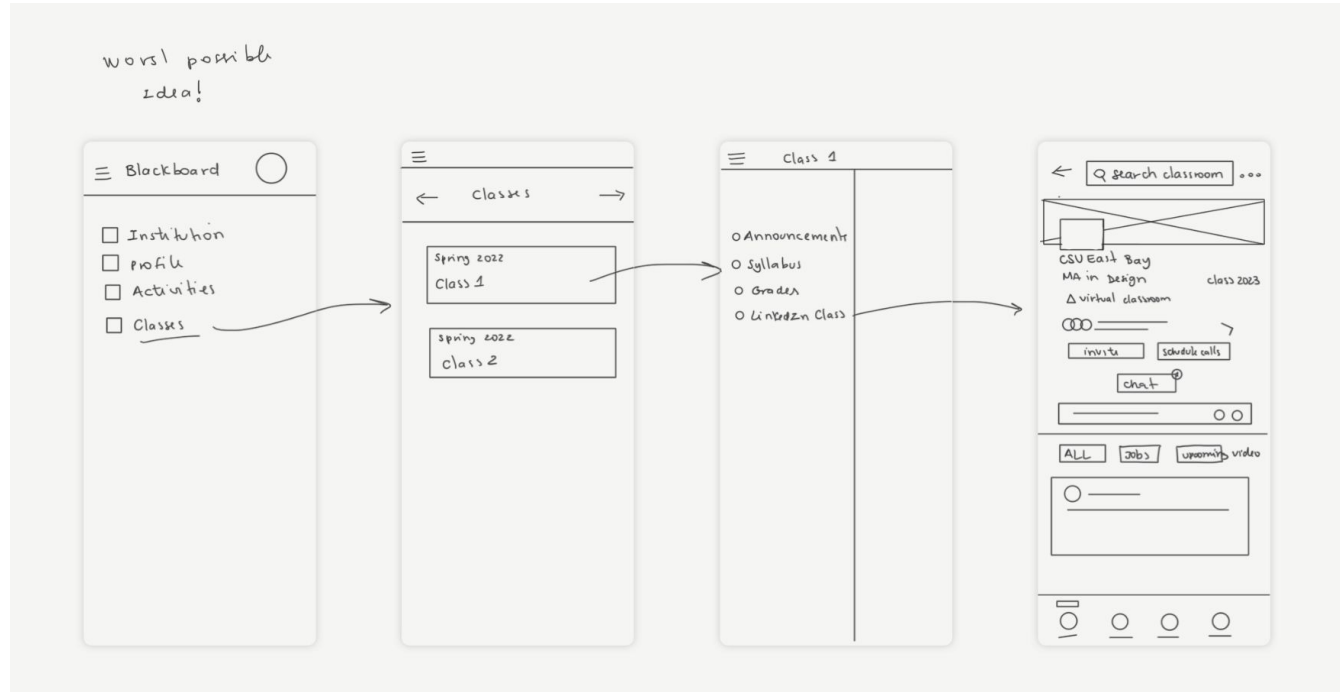- To keep tabs on future jobs, referrals, portfolio updates from former classmates

Pain-points:

- Having everyone in the same place: LinkedIn is too broad and often users find content in LinkedIn and share with classmates using other platforms

- Job opportunities for classmates: to send job opportunities, users have to share to their connections or groups, but it is impossible to target only classmates

- Messages: Users have to send messages individually to each person or make chat groups, but these are mixed with all other LinkedIn messaging interactions
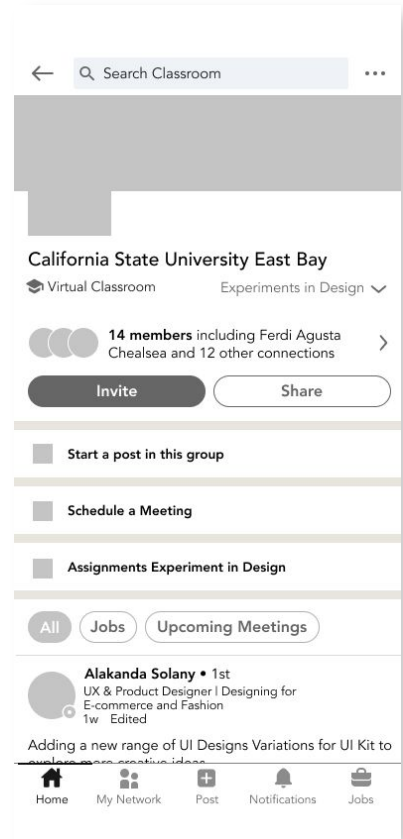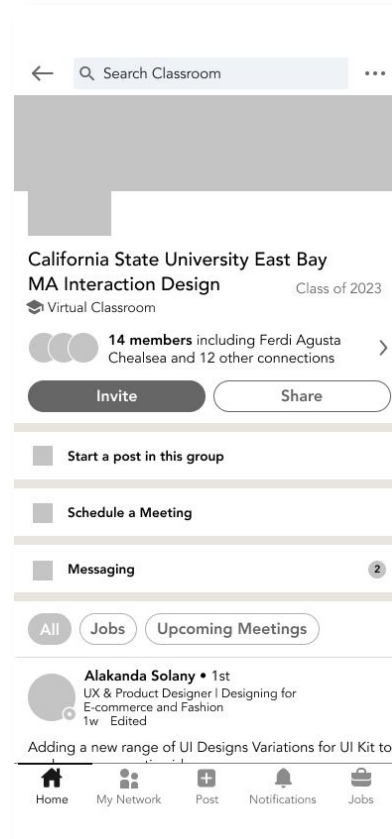
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LinkedIn virtual class space integrated with Blackboard or other software used in Universities. This idea proved to be the worst during research, where none of the survey answers had Blackboard/other as a form of connection with classmates, and 100% answered they would rather have a student oriented space, without faculty.
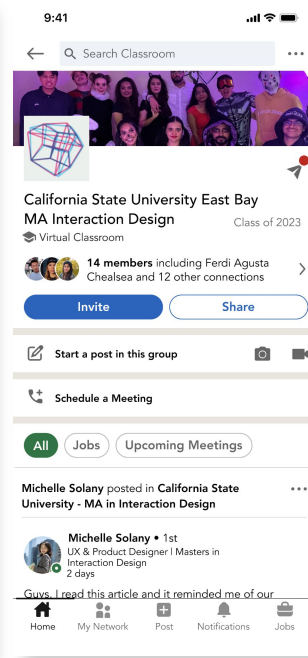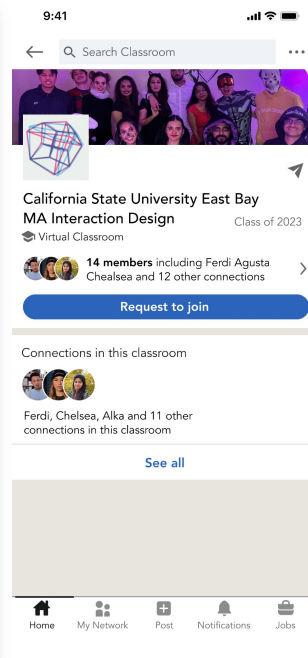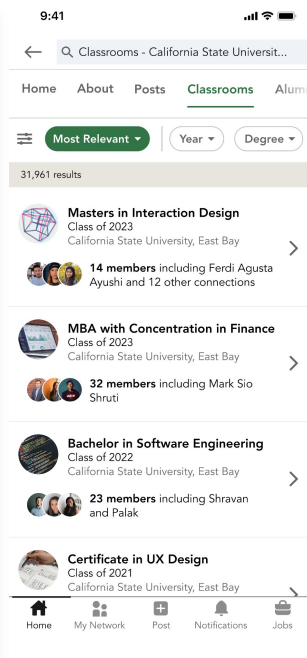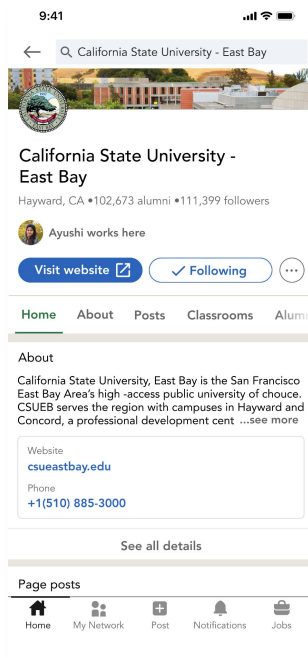
While brainstorming ideas and creating low fidelity wireframes, different layout ideas and additional features were included in the designs and experimented with. A few that did not make the cut were:

- Having a separate university login for virtual class;
- Inviting guests for a set period of time;
- Choosing your class when adding school to Education;
- Creating a separate LinkedIn class chat Application;
- Locating messages in the center of screen;
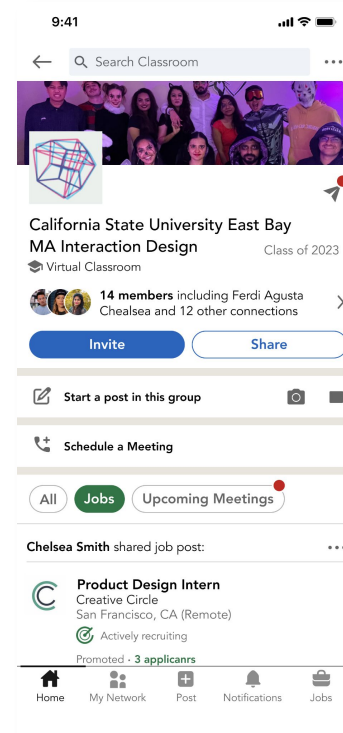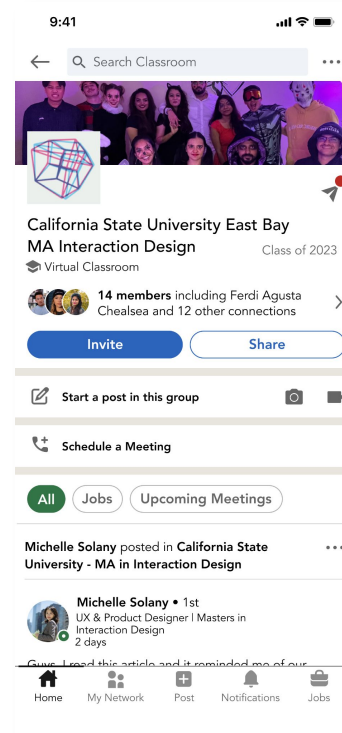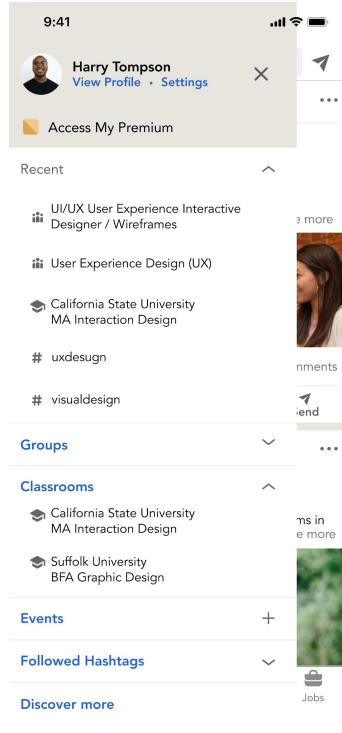- Creating multiple courses within virtual classroom.

DISCOVER

To Discover classmates, virtual classrooms can be created and are located in the university's LinkedIn page. It is a place managed by the students in that class, who can give access to other classmates once they are members of the virtual space.
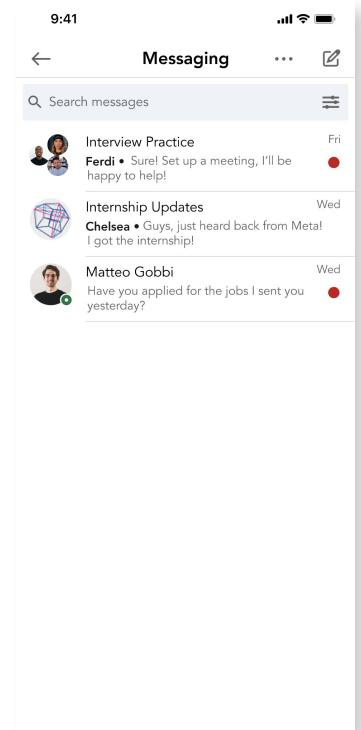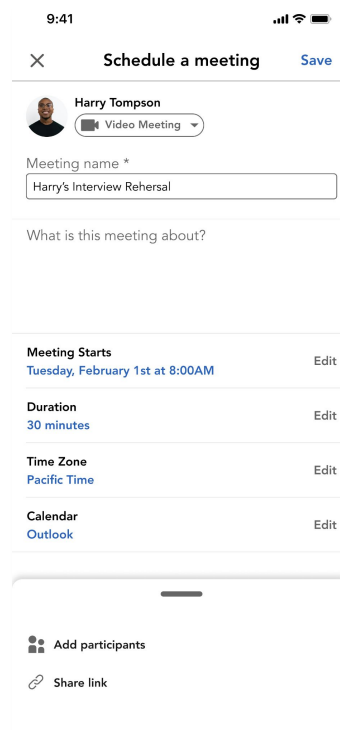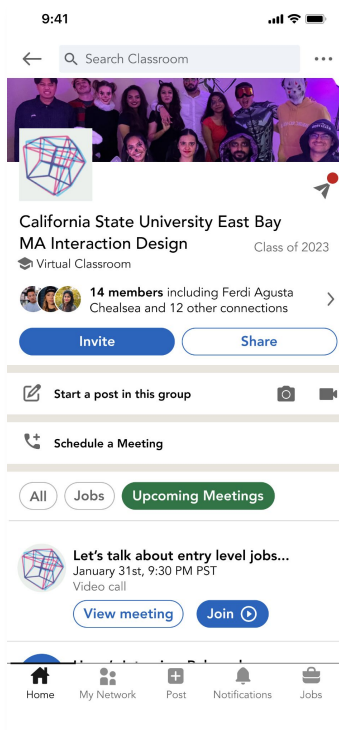
CONNECT

To Connect with classmates, students can access their virtual classroom through their profile menu. In the virtual space, they can create posts and share them privately. In addition, they can also share job postings directly from the LinkedIn's jobs tab, which will appear in the virtual classroom jobs tab.
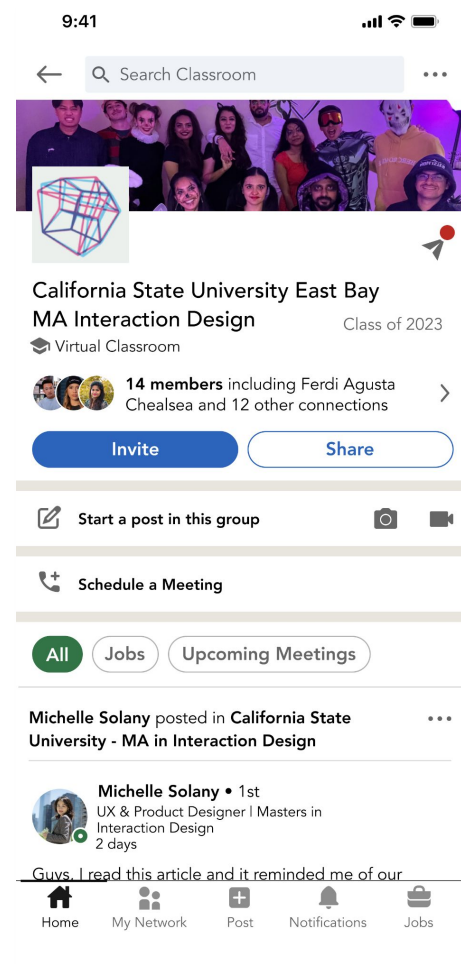
CONNECT

Classmates can also use other features within the virtual classrooms to Connect. The messaging system is exclusive to the classroom and is divided in by subjects, created by students, or private between two students. Classmates are also able to create voice and video meetings within the virtual class, and use the feature to practice for interviews, share professional tips and give career advice.
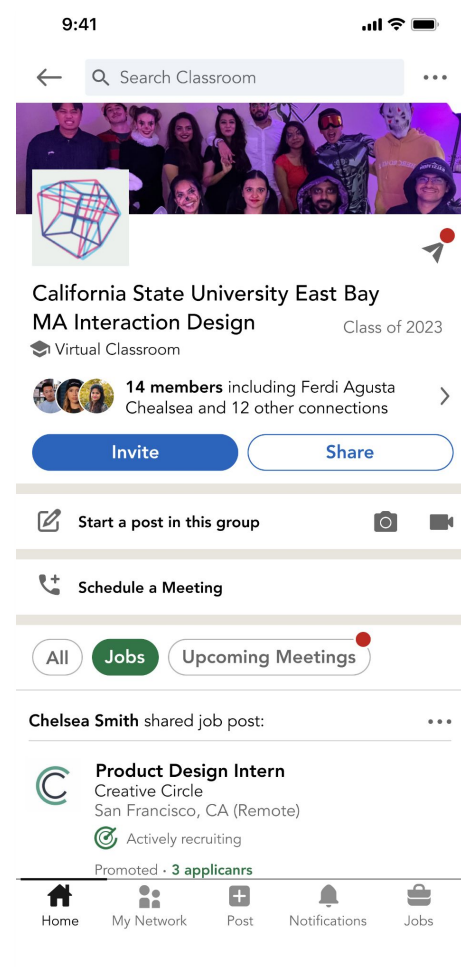
Having everyone in the same place:

By creating a virtual classroom where students from the same program year can connect and interact with each other, reduces the need to use other platforms to share content posted directly on LinkedIn.
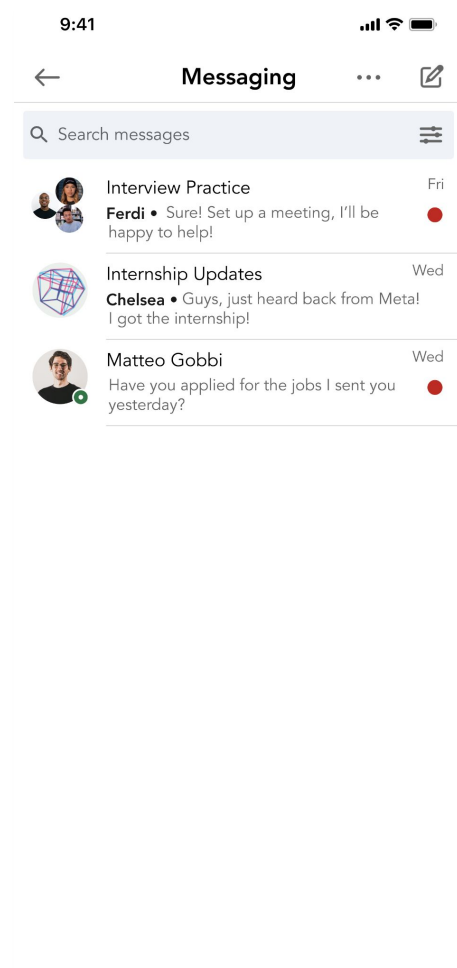
Job opportunities for classmates:

The Jobs tab within the virtual classroom is a place where users can see jobs posted or recommended by their classmates. Using the exciting job tools, users would be able to share jobs directly to their virtual classrooms.
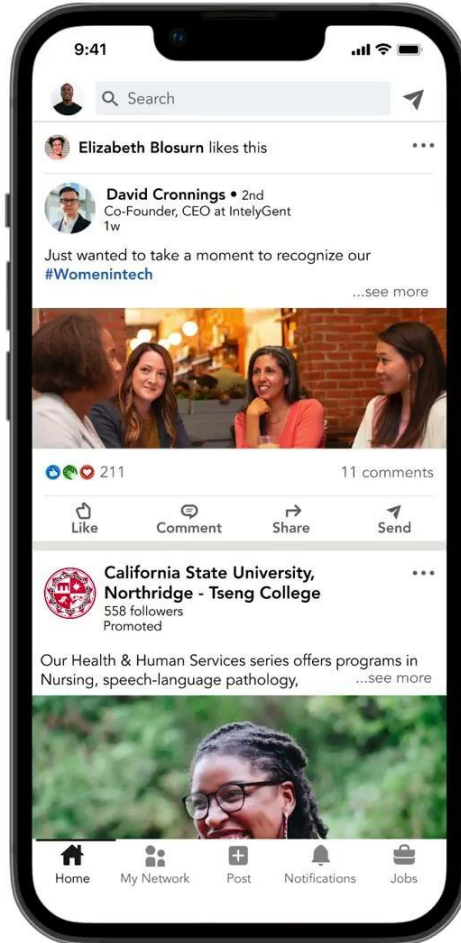
Exclusive Messages:

A messaging system exclusive to the virtual classroom could facilitate communications with classmates within LinkedIn. Chats and group chats would appear not only in the general messaging screen, but also within the virtual classroom, making it easier for users to find classmates' specific chats and threads.
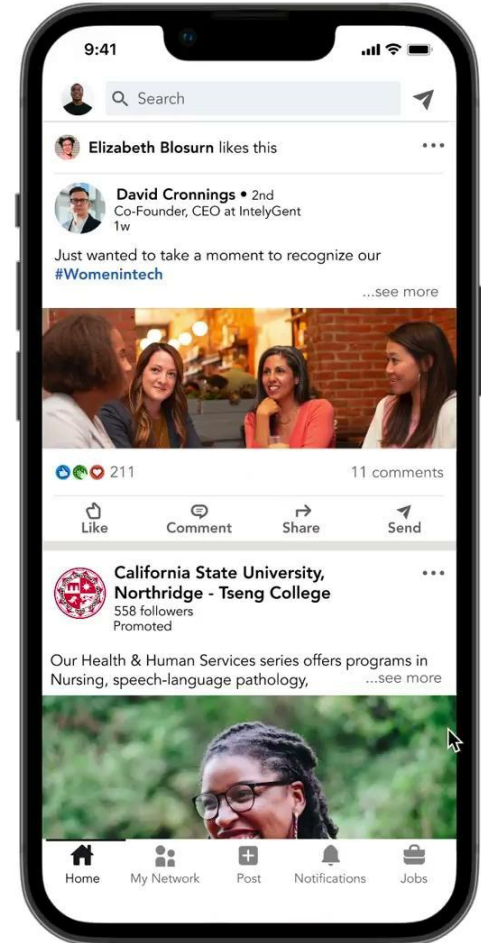
PROTOTYPE

Discover

Connect

Click the screens to play!

As a next step to this project, I would like to further develop additional features to make a complete prototype:

- Creating the virtual classroom
- Inviting/sharing access to the classroom
- Sharing job posts from LinkedIn's job page directly into the classroom's job tab
- Screen that shows virtual meeting (probably mostly used on Desktop)

The Virtual Classroom feature would assist students in connecting with classmates by allowing them to have a space dedicated to professional interactions, within a platform that has many tools that would make this experience ideal.

By having access to tools like sharing job posts with classmates, having exclusive chats within the virtual class and creating meeting rooms inside LinkedIn, students would be encouraged to use the platform to connect with classmates in a professional environment, creating meaningful professional connections even before they enter the workforce.