

# Career Navigator

**Product Teardown:** Platform connecting final-year international students with mentors who have navigated the same pathway & visa restrictions in North America

*Guiding Professional Development*



# Why This? Why Now?

Career Navigator aims to bridge a gap observed that international students face when approaching graduation in their final year - navigating a job market in a new country with visa restrictions.

**1.9M+**

International students  
across US + Canada (2024)

*IIE / Inside Higher Ed, 2024*

**418K**

On OPT in the US alone:  
26% of all F-1/M-1 students

*Congress.gov / NAFSA, 2024*

**\$55B**

Economic contribution  
to the US economy

*US Dept of Commerce, 2024/25*

**4.13/5**

Career development satisfaction:  
lowest category globally

*Studyportals Global Survey, 2025*

## Graduating student numbers growing fast

~194,554 obtained OPT work auth in 2024, a ~21% increase YoY.  
The pipeline of students who need this is accelerating, not slowing.  
(SEVIS, 2024)

## No one owns / tackles the gap

None of the Competitors, i.e. Handshake, LinkedIn, Interstride,  
combine **visa eligibility guidance** with **mentor matching** for North  
America's F-1 (USA) / Study Permit (CAN) holders.

## Urgency to fill gap is real

OPT windows are 12 months (36 for STEM). A student who graduates in  
May 2026 without a job offer by October is in visa jeopardy.  
Every week matters.

# Identifying the Problem + Research Findings

## Problem

- No unified system or platform connecting international students with mentors to offer support navigating a foreign job market
- Low confidence pathways into internships and full-time positions eligible for visa.
- Final year International students lack a structured, personalized career guidance that is relatable to their journey, leading to a disconnection.

## Key Findings

- **43%** reported lack of knowledge in knowing where to start and began losing interest due to current job market and rise of AI.
- **47%** prefer personalized guidance matched to their goals than general career advice.
- **61%** of trial users don't continue platform subscriptions due to disconnection to services provided and unfulfilled goal.
- **0** platforms prioritize combining both visa eligibility and mentor matching for both US and CAN.

## Research

How was data gathered?

**Tools:** Google Survey Forms & Excel

**# Interviewed:** 7 Students

**Demographic:** International Final Year Undergrad Students

**Location:** Canada & US (Northeastern locations)

## Selected User Persona



**Amara**

*21-year-old, Senior at University of Windsor, ON. CAN*

**Goal:** Securing a visa eligible job within 6 months of graduating.

**Pain-point:**

- PGWP eligible for 24 months and needs to work for at least 1 year.
- Having a difficult time finding community or a dedicated mentor with similar past/path to support job search journey in new country.

# Competitor Analysis – The Gap

| Feature                    | Handshake | LinkedIn | Interstride | Career Navigator |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|-------------|------------------|
| Visa Eligibility Check     | N         | N        | Y           | Y                |
| Mentor Matching            | N         | N        | N           | Y                |
| Personalized Visa Matching | N         | N        | N           | Y                |
| Both US + Canada           | N         | Y        | N           | Y                |
| Free for Students          | Y         | Y        | Y           | Y                |

# Introducing Career Navigator

## User Pain

- No mentor who understands my visa situation
- Don't know which jobs I'm eligible for
- Career tools give generic, inapplicable advice
- Can't articulate my skills to recruiters



## Product Outcome

- ↑ % of users who connect with a relevant mentor within 30 days
- ↑ % of users who identify 3+ eligible roles after onboarding
- ↑ Assessment completion rate (engagement signal)
- ↑ Mentor request send rate (action signal)



## Features to Tackle Pains (MVP)

- Mentor profile DB + search + messaging system
- Visa eligibility guidance modules (OPT/CPT + Study Permit)
- Clarifying assessment questions
- Personalized mentor recommendations from assessment output

## Solutions and planned releases:

### RELEASE 1

## Student Onboarding & Assessment

- Secure login + student profile
- Clarifying career assessment questions
- Assessment output → mentor profile

### RELEASE 2

## Mentorship Portal & Visa Guidance

- Mentor profile database
- Search, filter + messaging system
- OPT/CPT + Study Permit modules

### RELEASE 3

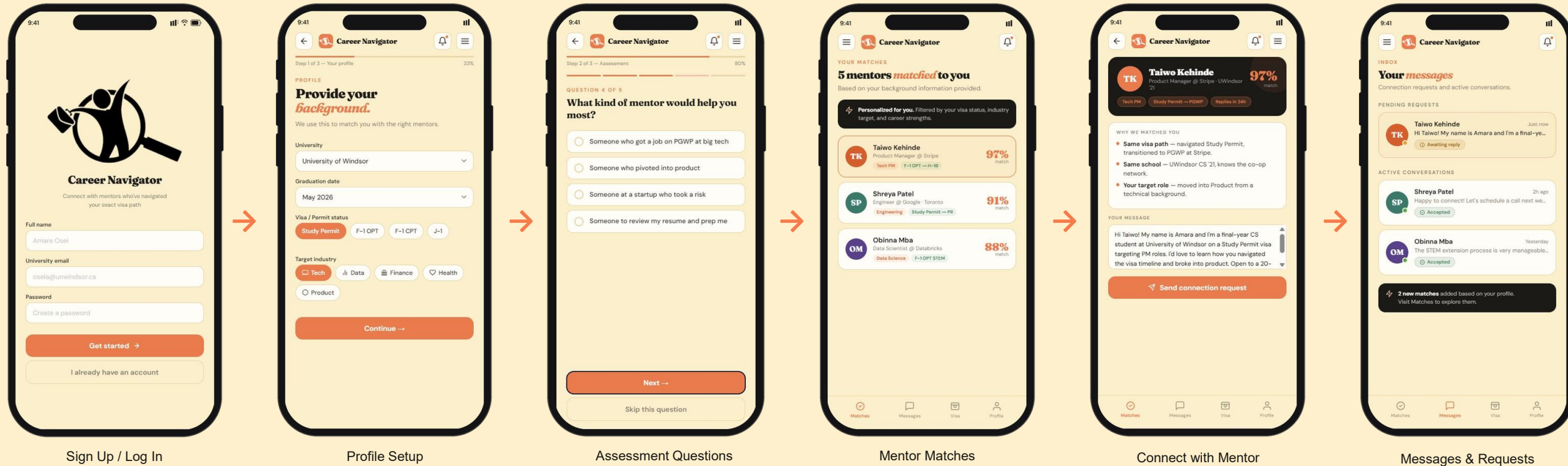
## Career Insights (Post-MVP)

- Job market insights dashboard
- Salary & role descriptions
- Sophomore persona onboarding

# Features In Scope vs Features Cut

| In Scope for MVP                                                                                                                                            | Cut out + why                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Secure Login + Student Profile</b><br>Table stakes. Required for personalization and mentor matching to function. Profile scope kept minimal.            | <b>End-of-Semester Summary</b><br>Not urgently needed. Phase 3 at earliest.                               |
| <b>Visa Eligibility Guidance Modules</b><br>OPT/CPT + Study Permit. No competitor does this well. Directly addresses the job market matching pain.          | <b>Weekly Career Reminders</b><br>Engagement comes after value is delivered.                              |
| <b>Skills &amp; Career Assessment (10 Qs)</b><br>Lightweight by design. Output personalizes mentor recommendations, this is the engine, not just a feature. | <b>Progress Tracking &amp; Analytics</b><br>Retention feature but solving core point comes first.         |
| <b>Mentor Search + Profile Database</b><br>Core value prop. Connects Amara to someone who has done this before. Without this, nothing else matters.         | <b>Salary &amp; Role Dashboard</b><br>Doesn't solve Amara's primary JTBD.                                 |
| <b>Mentor Request &amp; Messaging</b><br>Matching without contact is useless. Discovery and connection must ship together.                                  | <b>LinkedIn / Portal Integration</b><br>High effort required, zero unique value at prioritized MVP stage. |

# Career Navigator User Flow



# Metrics, Strategy and Potential Pitfalls

## Success Metrics

- 70% Assessment Completion observed during onboarding.
- 40%+ Match showing recommendation relevance.
- 25%+ Request send rate to show users taking action.
- 35%+ one month retention, expecting users to return after first session.

## Launch Strategy

- **Pre-Launch:** Tutorial videos, A/B testing, launch to Beta group to identify bugs.
- **Soft Launch:** Monitor system performance and real time metric tracking during Beta.
- **Post-Launch:** Review KPIs (completion, match rate, reply rate), User feedback interviews, optimize and scale.

## Potential Pitfalls

- Platform works best when mentors are active.
- Changes to Visa Information. System needs to be updated.
- Assessment questions may be lightweight and may not produce user trust.



## Mitigations

- Manual human-curated matching for first 100 users.
- Implement automated API refreshes from government sources – phase 2 development.
- Refine based off user feedback post phase1 launch.

# Thank You!

[\*View My Portfolio\*](#)

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