

Written Concept Narrative: Rally

Executive Summary: College campuses are full of people, yet millions of students battle with the mental challenge of loneliness. When John Antonio started at the University of Delaware, he transitioned from daily high school sports practices and built-in friendships to eating and studying alone. His story is far from rare, as it reflects on a broader issue: nearly 65% of college students experience loneliness (Rock), with rates exceptionally high among underclassmen who are casual athletes. Rally eases barriers by making pickup games, potential teammates, and available courts instantly visible, putting underutilized facilities to use, helping students stay active, and engendering a sense of belonging. Rally isn't just about finding a game-it's about finding your place.

Problem: Loneliness and social isolation affect roughly 65% of college students, who are also four times more likely to experience severe psychological stress than the average individual (Rock). This is a mental health issue, especially for first-year and transfer students arriving on college campuses without established support networks. Research also shows the vast majority of college students fail to meet physical activity expectations, and the average student gains an estimated 1.6–3.0 kg (roughly 3-6 pounds) throughout the four years of college (Bailey, Caitlin P., et al.). This further emphasizes the need to address issues of unhealthy habits. In fact, a recent analysis projected that adolescents who played organized sports had lower symptoms of depression and anxiety compared to those who did not participate in sports (Khan, Asaduzzaman, et al.). Playing pickup sports can build friendships and foster belonging, yet organizing games and practices is challenging, as students struggle to find reliable, compatibly skilled players through unstructured group chats or overly competitive, inflexible intramurals. Poor communication hinders the ability to connect and find people to play with. Moreover,

campus open courts and fields are often not easily accessible or are priority booked for school-sponsored sports. Upon interviewing campus staff, we found that many schools lack a mechanism for students to book campus facilities for open play, and large blocks are often reserved for school teams. Through interviews and surveys we conducted with students, university facility managers, university student life representatives, and university athletic directors, we confirmed that there is a shortage of available university spaces for students to connect and play their desired sports. Many students are also unaware of which campus courts or fields are available for free play. While this information exists on college websites, students rarely think to look for it. We found there is a structural mismatch: students want to play but lack access to both teammates and venues.

Solution: Rally brings key aspects of pickup sports into a mobile app, simplifying the process of finding games, teammates, and available playing spaces. The app uses filters to match teammates based on skills, builds real-time teams, and shows partner facilities. It improves teammate reliability by using user ratings and group chats organized by sport, skill level, and location. Rally partners with publicly accessible private facilities (PAPFs) to offer student discounts and rotating promo codes for off-peak hours. Rally gives these facilities a direct pipeline to motivated students, turning off-peak court time into revenue, with skill-based matching and dependable scheduling. Rally also lists the courts and facilities each college campus designates for free play, accessible to students. Lastly, Rally supports features like sports position filtering and the ability to log your game score. Rally is a platform that offers both technical and social solutions to streamline game organizing and student connections.

Unique Value Proposition: Rally stands out from other apps like GroupMe and MeetUp by offering distinctive features to sports communities, such as skill filters, availability matching,

and shared availability scheduling, which eliminate clutter and enhance reliability. In contrast to Strava, which tracks exercise, and Team Reach and Team Snap, which manage organized teams, Rally is designed for individuals seeking to connect with other athletes to form pick-up teams or find sports partners in real time. As a safety feature, Rally will verify the user's identity as university students. Ultimately, Rally's focus is to build a vibrant sports community that is inclusive of the casual college athlete.

Target Market: Rally is free for students. Its revenue-generating customers are PAPFs that will pay a monthly fee to be listed. Rally's Target Attainable Market (TAM) includes 21,700 PAPFs located near colleges nationwide. Our Service Attainable Market (SAM) narrows to 195 facilities near campuses in the Philadelphia, Wilmington (DE), Baltimore, and DC regions, while our Service Obtainable Market (SOM) focuses on 50 facilities within 10 miles of 12 campuses surrounding Delaware and Philadelphia. This tight launch radius keeps outreach efficient and costs low. Additionally, the density creates a growth loop where increased student demand drives facility adoption and scalable expansion.

Revenue Model: Rally's financial model, designed so facilities, not students, carry the cost, generates revenue through monthly facility subscriptions. During the initial launch and adoption phase, facilities are offered a discounted partner rate of \$100 per month, increasing to \$125 as usage stabilizes and value is demonstrated. Our conversations with 10 PAPFs validate the pricing model. Most commented that they would recover the subscription cost with just 2 to 4 additional bookings per month; an extra perk is filling off-peak hours that would otherwise remain unused. Rally's operating costs include app hosting, maintenance, and ongoing development. To reduce early capital risk and accelerate development, Rally plans to leverage grant funding aligned with community impact and youth athletics, which requires a 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. As a

nonprofit, Rally would be eligible for grants such as the Fund for Delaware Collaboration, offering up to \$30,000; the Delaware Community Foundation Special grants, of \$7,000 to \$10,000; and Dick's Sporting Goods community grants, of up to \$25,000. Using a conservative estimate of \$34,000 in grants from these sources, we would offset Minimum Viable Product (MVP) development, pilot programs, and early campus launches, allowing Rally to reach break-even as early as year 3. Without grant funding, Rally is projected to break even in Year 4, at which point the standard facility subscription is \$125 per month. At this rate, Rally maintains a sustainable profit margin above 20 percent, supporting continued platform growth, customer support, and feature development, while keeping the app free for students. We have developed a pro forma, and it is ready for distribution.

Current Progress: Rally has already made meaningful progress validating both the problem and the opportunity. Through our survey of 67 undergraduates at the University of Delaware, we found that students consistently reported frustration with GroupMe and Discord chats that fall apart; more than 80% of respondents expressed interest in the Rally model—importantly, expressed enthusiasm to use Rally as long as the app delivers reliable scheduling and player matching. PAPFs also shared that they struggle to consistently reach college students, making Rally's student access especially valuable and prompting several facilities to request early onboarding. Financial modeling further supports Rally's feasibility, showing a realistic path to breakeven and scalable upside as new campus communities and partner facilities join the platform. These projections provide a realistic path toward sustainability rather than relying solely on entrepreneurial competition prize money or outside investment. A beta model has been built with development and testing in progress. The next significant milestone is building out the MVP and core database, a process estimated to take roughly two months. Completing this phase

will allow Rally to begin pilot testing with the UD campus community and nearby facilities, collecting real usage data and feedback. It also positions the company to pursue mission-aligned grants, such as opportunities through the NFL Foundation or Beyond Sport, which specifically support community sports innovation. Together, these steps move Rally from concept toward a tested, scalable solution.

Why This Team: We created Rally because sports have always been our way to connect, stay active, and build community. College-aged siblings and friends have shared the frustration of arriving on campus without the built-in community they once had through organized high-school sports. Our team brings complementary strengths to bring Rally to market. Claire oversees project management, setting direction and goals to ensure our team runs smoothly. She is also responsible for grant procurement. Ajay is responsible for managing key relationships, serving as Rally’s primary point of contact with PAPFs, university student life coordinators, and the app development company. Amelia leads financial planning and is responsible for budgeting, forecasting, pricing strategy, and key performance metrics. Lastly, Simreen leads user experience and digital marketing efforts for Rally, playing a vital role in designing the user interface, iterating on user feedback, and increasing app awareness and adoption.

Works Cited

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