



## Wellesley College's Challenge

Wellesley College has long stood as an elite institution for some 2,400 undergraduate women. Situated in sleepy Wellesley, Massachusetts, the selective women's liberal arts college has served as a magnet for women across the globe and is deeply rooted in tradition. In the spring of 2020, many of these traditions and staples of Wellesley were cut short when COVID-19 forced the closure of campuses across the nation. The challenge was then how to minimize the impact for the remaining students as well as ensuring the incoming freshmen had the same rituals as their predecessors. Wellesley has always relied on a high-touch admissions process to normalize the women's college experience. The annual April open house is a staple of that process and typically yields about 50% of incoming students, as it allows prospects to truly envision what the all-female atmosphere would mean for them. With the shutdown occurring a month before the open house, Wellesley's staff had nine business days to pivot strategies before admissions decisions were released. And, even if they were able to stabilize their enrollment process, what would that mean for their seven-day orientation program that took place the week before classes?

## Results

Tasked with yielding their class in six weeks with no in-person programming, the admissions team at Wellesley turned to Wisr's private Enrollment Yield and Melt site to replicate the peer-to-peer connection that traditionally conveys the spirit of the institution. An additional draw was the ability of the Wisr Customer Success team to draft personalized marketing materials and program launch emails. Wellesley saw success from day one with 50 percent of the admitted class members signing up and activating their #iwillatwellesley Admitted Student Group account from the first Wisr-powered launch email.

Elements of the platform utilized on the site included real-time discussion boards, the one-to-one chat feature, and virtual admissions events. The results found that 71% of students who engaged on the platform eventually yielded. Intending to induct 581 students into the Class of 2024, Wellesley ultimately surpassed this with 601 new Wellesley women. From there, the orientation team began to adapt to online programming as well.

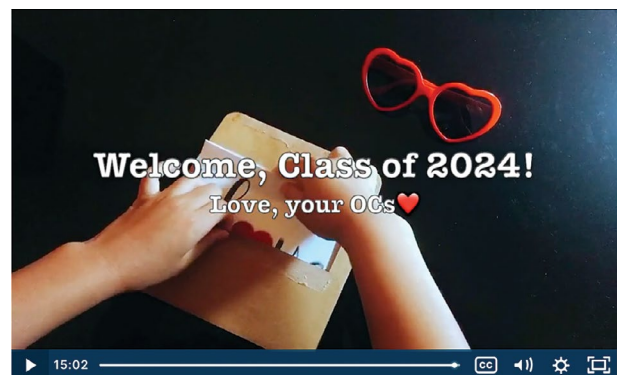
**316** discussion topics created in 20 active communities

**65%** of accepted students engaged with Wisr site

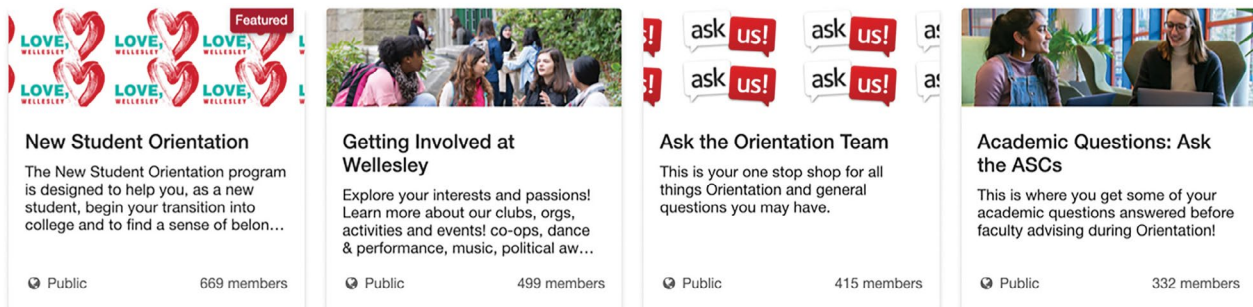
**407** admitted students initiated connections

When transitioning such unique orientation programming online, Shanté Brown, Dean of First-Year Students, knew that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work for Wellesley. "There were a lot of companies that would use actors or pre-built modules, but Wellesley is a women's college so we couldn't have those modules being narrated by men with men in the background," said Dean Brown, recalling her search for solutions. "The biggest difference with Wisr was not only could I upload my own content, but students could interact with one another." With the admissions team having implemented Wisr's Yield and Melt programming, the students coming into orientation were already familiar with the platform and its capabilities, making it an easy transition.

With any Wisr platform, institutions are equipped and encouraged to give their site the personal touch that their in-person programming would have allowed. For Wellesley's orientation team a top priority was translating their New Student Welcome virtually. Traditionally in an auditorium with the orientation team leading a high energy rally, the team was tasked with conveying that enthusiasm in a virtual format. The result was a moving tribute to the school in the "Love Letters to Wellesley" video. Word of the video, containing impactful testimonials from students, quickly spread beyond orientation to the president, vice president, and the board of trustees.



Another benefit Wellesley saw was the collaboration and bonding that occurred between the orientation leaders. Not only did the platform create connectivity between them and the incoming students but it allowed them to work together and truly experience the benefits of working as a team. The leaders created their own community using the platform to share best practices and success stories.



## Looking Forward

Wellesley College is strongly rooted in traditions spanning from orientation through undergrad and culminating in the final year. As such, many are looking forward to traditional aspects being reinstated once the global emergency is resolved. However, there have been elements to an online orientation that have served as a silver-lining during this tumultuous experience. "Traditionally, it would be two people running an orientation program with the logistics of finding rooms, food, and rain space," said Dean Brown. "This was not the same kind of burden as that and it was fairly easy to use. We did have to train the staff, but all of the students had used the admissions site already, so they knew how to navigate the site." While Dean Brown and her students are no doubt looking forward to getting back to the basics, there are elements of Wisr that they can see weaving into their programming in the future.

“ Here’s the real bottom line—we were able to yield our class plus some coverage for melt without the traditional campus visit that was such a big producer of our final enrollment class. It’s been very easy to work with Wisr, and the team there has been very responsive. We’re really excited to move forward with them.

**Jessica Ricker**  
Director of Admission