Elephant

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Introduction

Elephant is a web-based application that allows college applicants to better understand how they would fit at each of their top schools and to put their best foot forward in their applications. This app not only provides easy and organized access to the latest and most relevant admissions information, but also helps students connect with real college student mentors to answer questions and provide guidance on essays and the application process through one-on-one consultations. Adopting an intuitive, elegant design, Elephant aims to make college applications simpler, more transparent, and more equitable than ever before.
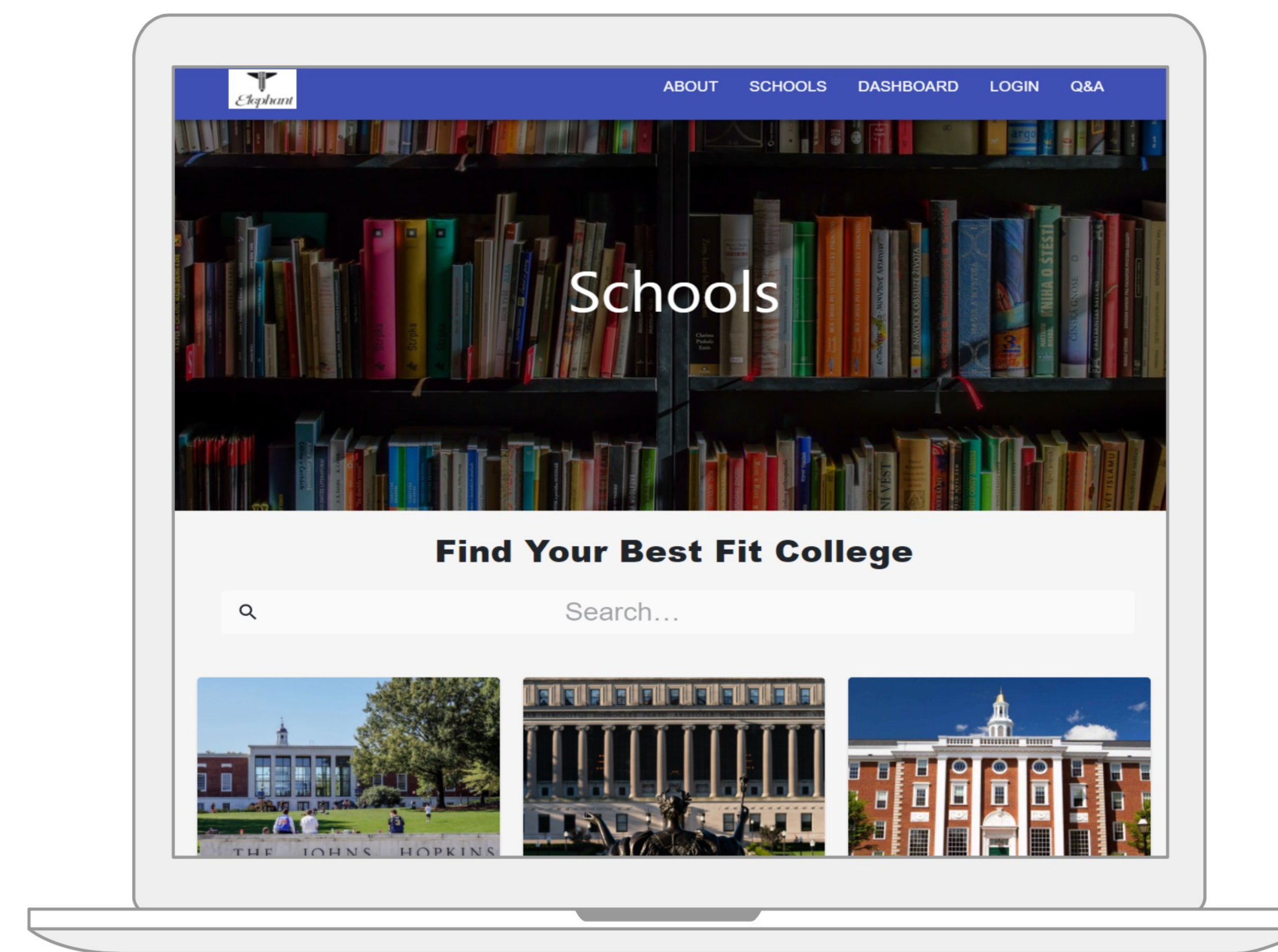
Background

The US undergraduate college application landscape is complex to navigate with test prep companies, extracurricular summer camps, college tours, and so on. For any typical student applying to college, the process can be stressful and anxiety-ridden. A student's time is filled with essay deadlines and a myriad of uncertainties. An estimated 75% of high school students report feeling stressed often and on average report their stress at nearly 35% higher levels than the average adult. In addition, many students only have a surface-level understanding of the schools that they are applying to. This issue makes it particularly difficult for students to find their true best fit school and these problems are only amplified for students applying from abroad. Current methods of application guidance are largely limited to school websites, high school guidance counselors, and college consulting firms. While all these methods help the problem to a degree, they don't offer a centralized, easily accessible way for students to consolidate all relevant details and seek guidance from students who were successful in admissions at each school.
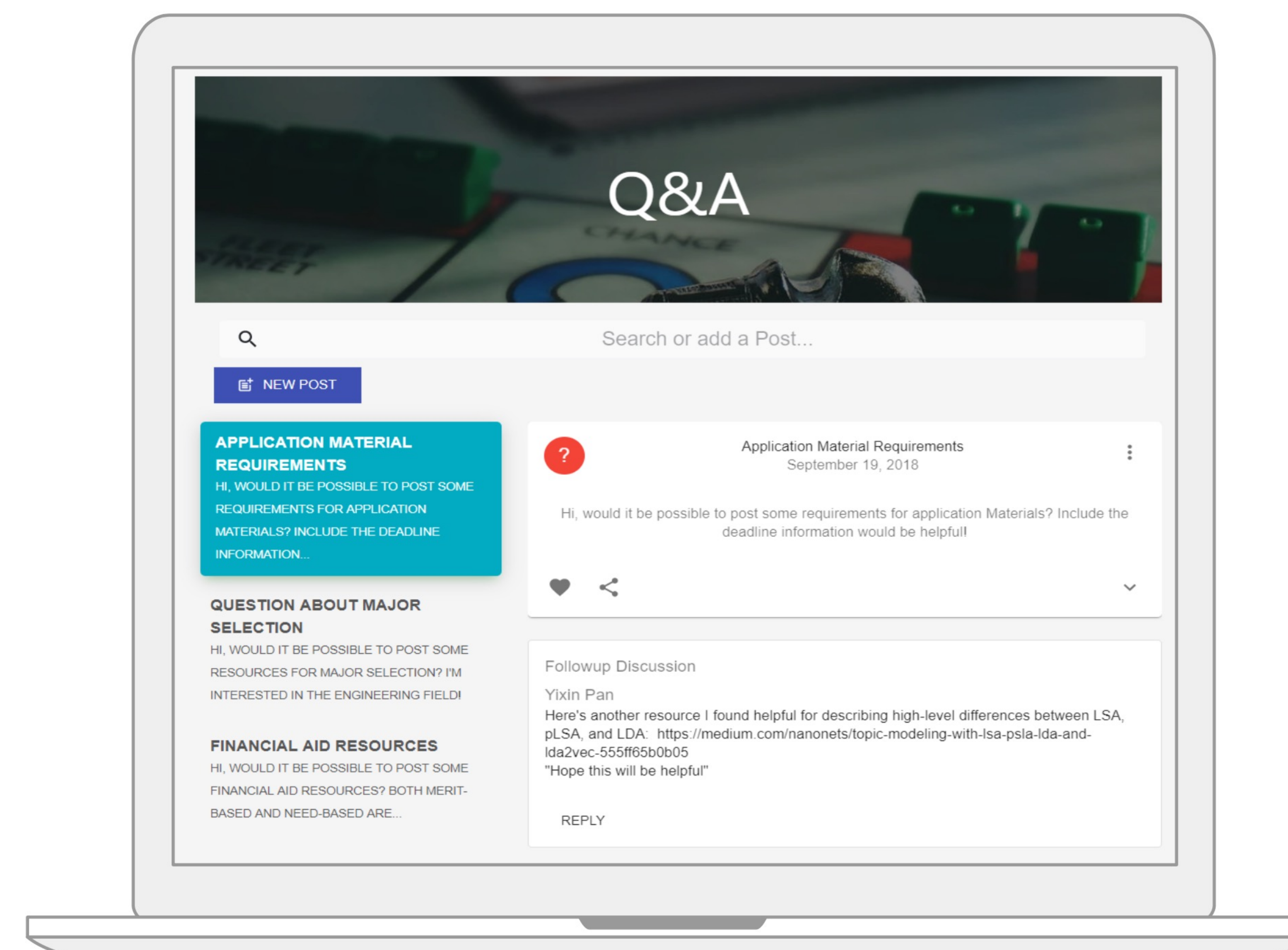
Current Work

Over the course of the Spring 2020 semester, our team has developed an alpha version of Elephant that allows students to take advantage of all 3 of the app's core features to some capacity: Easily accessing updated information on each school, view common questions for each school with trusted mentor answers, and schedule consultations with mentors for essay help or school fit assessment.
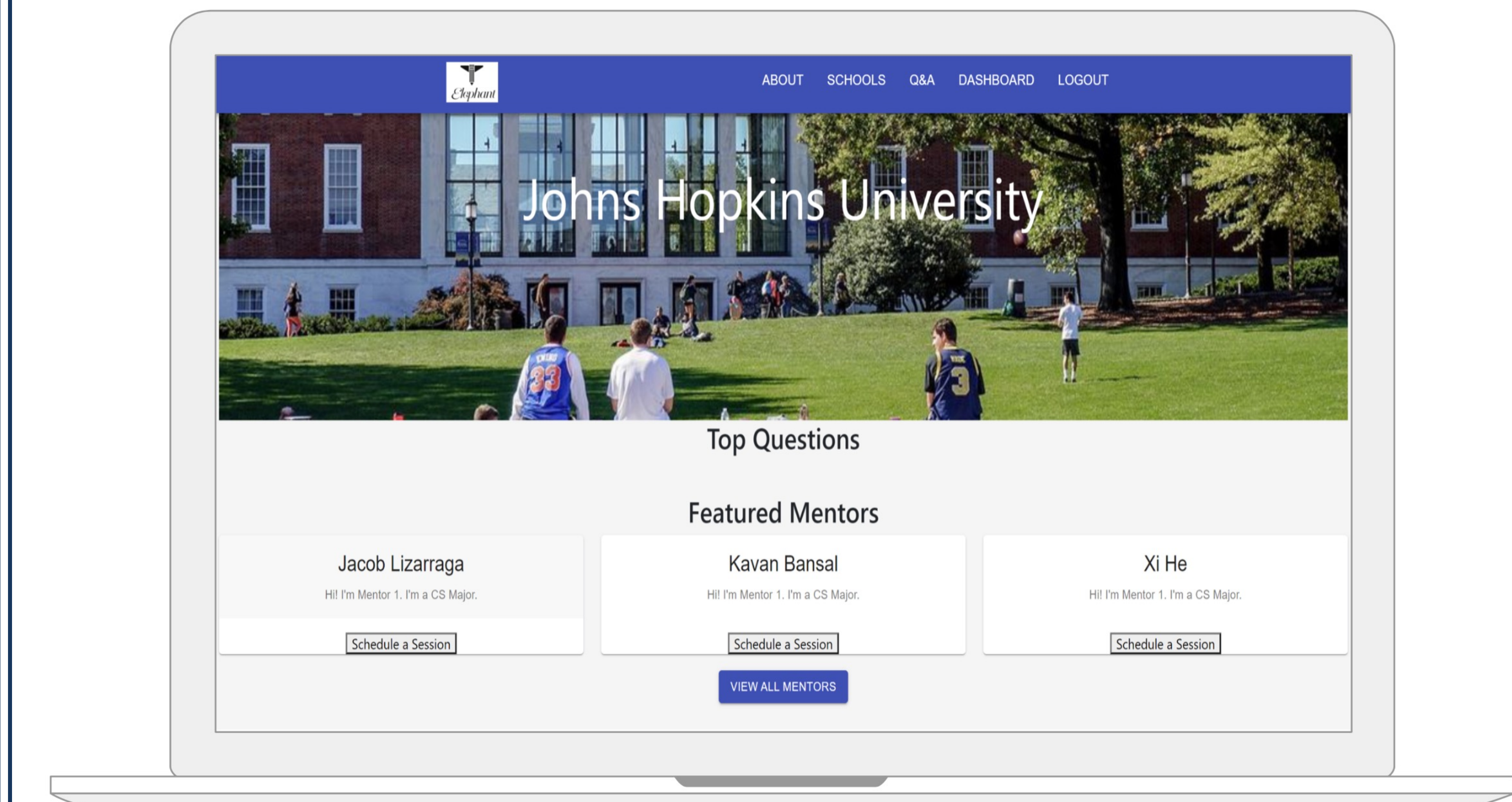
Our Application

Figure 1 — Schools Page
Offers easy access to all top schools in one place, with school list growing over time

Figure 2 — Question and Answer Page
Provides answers to top applicant-submitted questions from verified college student mentors

Figure 3 — Example School Profile Page
Gives students an overview of the school, key statistics and deadlines, access to Q&A, and access to mentors they can schedule consultations with

Next Steps & Conclusion

We plan to continue developing Elephant, targeting a launch this Summer, allowing a limited group of students to use our app to assist with their college applications before expanding. Before this launch however, we plan to add and refine features like in-app messaging, payment, and school filtering/algorithmic fit assessment. These features should allow Elephant to deliver greater value to our initial user base, and we plan on continually improving and building upon Elephant based on feedback from these users. Through this project, our team has been able to apply and strengthen both our web development and entrepreneurship skills. Through our network of college mentors, Elephant aims to deliver value to college applicants at an affordable price. By building upon our work from this semester, we believe we can truly make college applications more equitable and less stressful than ever.