

Connecting Students to UWT's Resources

Oluwaseyi Faleke
Technical Writing

ABSTRACT

Students are under a lot of stress while they go to school. There are a multitude of outside factor that affect our lives while we collectively receive an education. The UWT offers numerous resources to all students, but there hasn't been much engagement with these resources especially while we've been in a pandemic.

Students have a hard time recognizing these resources are available, and how to take advantage of them. This is the problem we are trying to solve.

In class, my team and I used user interviews to narrow down the scope of the problem, and to better identify our target audience. We used sketching and prototyping to design the project we were envisioning, which ended up creating a prototype we called the Husky Helper (a hub where students can find resources and support). Usability testing was used to measure the experiences students had with the prototype .

The User Interviews did confirm that students weren't connecting well with the available resources, but also revealed that they did not know where to go to find them.

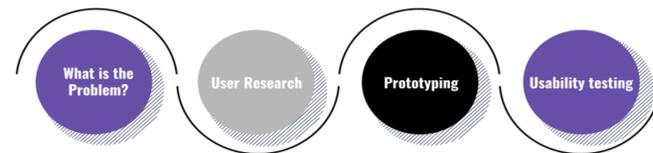
After the usability test was conducted, the team determined that there were a few things that still needed to be done. The most vital being to conduct more usability tests on a higher-fidelity prototype. The purpose of the Husky Helper is to make sure students are knowledgeable of and able to use the services, and support offered by the UWT facilities and faculty when necessary.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Design Problem: The class had an opportunity to solve a problem at UWT. We set out to understand the confusion and lack of interaction users had that centered around the University of Washington Tacoma Campus Resources website.

This is the problem we set out to solve:

"How might we connect UWT students to academic, personal and professional resources so they can persist in their education and accomplish their goals?"



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These are the results of the Usability Testing.

Users indicated preference over:

- Clarity
- Organization
- Icons

Users indicated confusion over:

- "Lack" of direct communication
- Specific terminology
- Layout on specific pages.

Future Steps

Things to Fix

- Components to add:
- More links
 - Adjust the layout of some pages.

Prototype

Work on creating more of a hi-fidelity prototype to execute a more fleshed out idea.

Usability Tests

Conduct more usability tests to determine results for:

- Terminology
- Information Architecture

METHOD(S)

User Interviews

After defining the problem and narrowing the scope and defining who our audience was (UWT students), we decided to conduct user interviews. User Interviews help in understanding the user and finding out more about the problem from the user's point of view. **Since we are in a pandemic, we talked to 9 students over zoom about their experience with the existing resources on campus.**

Sketching

My team and I sketched multiple iterations of the homepage and different grouping styles. The plan was to produce a simple layout so users would not feel overloaded, **2 out of 9** participants mentioned this during the user research. We were intentional on creating a hub of resources and focused on these three themes due to our findings during user research.

- Ease of use.
- Organization
- Information Architecture.

Prototyping

After delegating over different designs, my team decided to move onto the prototyping phase. We decided to create a high-fidelity prototype because we wanted to replicate the experience of being on the website. Figma was the tool we decided to use.

We focused on and created the:

- Homepage
- Prominent resources landing and auxiliary pages

Usability Testing

To test how the site worked and what users thought of it, we conducted a usability test with 8 users.

User Interview Findings

Claim: Reflecting on their FY experience, students don't know about resources, and are bombarded by info they can't retain all at once.

Evidence: At least 2 out of 3 interview participants mentioned this, it's part of their job.

Claim: UWT Faculty didn't fully understand some of the resources available for students.

Evidence: 3 out of 3 faculty that were interviewed do not use the resource page to connect students to them.

Claim: The resources that stick with students are the ones in the syllabus since it's required to be there.

Evidence: 3/6 interviewees had related to or mentioned this statement.

Claim: Students don't know who to talk to in order to access resources.

Evidence: 6 interviewed students could not find a way to connect to advisors.

Claim: Students aren't knowledgeable about resources unless they work for the school.

Evidence: 9 out of 9 interview participants mentioned this, it's part of their job.

CONCLUSIONS

I have learned a lot of high-level skills completing this project, some of which I had the chance to showcase in this document. There are a lot of information and sketches in this document that were done over the course of the quarter, so I made sure to be intentional with the information I included. With the amount of research, sketching and prototyping done collaboratively, I was able to advance my skills in empathy, collaboration, research and Figma. I learned better ways of communicating with the client and my team. It was fun to see this project come together with the skills that were learned and used along the way.

