

How Design Thinking Can Increase Student Engagement with the GEC

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5th GEC
“Innovation Across
Borders”

How might we increase the GEC’s outreach so that more students engage with the GEC?

01 Design Problem

Participation in the Global Engagement Conference (GEC) has grown over the past years, with students and community members using the event to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another. While this growth is promising, our team is exploring how we might get even more students involved— both as attendees and as presenters.

Using design thinking principles to guide our design process. Our next step is to conduct user research through student interviews and surveying GEC attendees. By hearing from students about their experiences, needs, and concerns regarding the GEC, we hope to uncover insights that will shape how we approach our design solution. We aim to develop thoughtful, student-centered solutions that make the GEC more accessible and engaging.

02 Background

The Global Engagement Conference is an annual conference hosted by UW Tacoma’s Institute for Innovation and Global Engagement (IIGE). Students from several area institutions are invited to present research and projects that align with the conference’s chosen theme.

For students, the GEC is an opportunity to share their work, both by presenting on stage at one of several themed panels, or by presenting a poster during the scheduled poster session. Students are also invited to participate in the GEC as attendees and learn about their peers’ work.

03 Design Thinking

Empathizing

We will conduct the following research methods: Surveys and Interviews. This will be done to understand in a closer perspective the barriers and diverse ideas about the GEC. This research will be conducted with students, visitors, and participants – 15 target users will be interviewed/surveyed.

Our research focuses on the following topics:

- What motivates students to present/attend at the GEC?
- What do they like and dislike about the experience?
- What challenges or barriers prevent students from participating?
- How much do they know about the GEC? (its purpose, the presenting process, etc.)

Defining

Through our research, we will identify key insights. Our current understanding is that many students lack awareness of the GEC's importance and the opportunities it offers. This may contribute directly to the design problem of lower student engagement as both attendees and presenters. Students may not recognize the benefits, such as skill development, networking, and exposure to diverse perspectives, hindering their motivation to participate.



04 Stakeholders & Roles

Stakeholders:

- Institute for Innovation and Global Engagement (IIGE)
- UW Tacoma

Users:

- Presenters
- Student Attendees
- General Public



05 What we hope to learn

Our team hopes to gain relevant insights after defining our research project and our user focus, to increase student participation at the Global Engagement Conference. From our study, we hope to understand the diverse needs and perspectives of conference attendees, recognizing that motivations and barriers to participation vary.

We seek to understand how these barriers prevent students from participating or disseminating information about the event. We also seek to learn how we can implement effective communication strategies for the event and its participants. Our team hopes to learn about how students are motivated, what they enjoy or would like to see at the conference, and what suggestions they can make. Our work on this project highlighted the importance of collaborative teamwork.

By leveraging diverse perspectives and skills, we established a project that highlights these. We also developed a greater appreciation for the design thinking process, understanding that the initial research phase is only the beginning of a journey toward developing effective, student-centered solutions for the Global Engagement Conference.