

# DESIGN & PROTOTYPING: CAMPUS EVENTS APP.

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# USER REQUIREMENTS: CAMPUS EVENTS APP.

## Overview

### CAMPUS EVENTS MOBILE APP

Currently, locating information regarding campus events at Western requires a complex number of tasks. Students must navigate to several websites in order to locate all the necessary information about events in order to attend. The creation of a Campus Events Mobile App would rectify these issues, making gathering information easier for interested students, which in turn would positively impact events attendance.

The design goal of the Campus Events Mobile App is to create a unified, user-friendly place where students can quickly and efficiently locate information regarding campus events including date, location & maps, and registration information. Users should be able to filter, search and share this information with ease. Having considered the type of information users expect to find as well as their mental models regarding how they categorize different types of events we have created a preliminary design.

### DESIGN AND PROTOTYPING

Initially, when planning the app, we took inspiration from the newly released *Western Now* App. Its primary page which features the date in a horizontal bar across the screen, events listed below, and a search bar and drop-down menu offers many of the features that we hope to include in our app. Another positive aspect of mimicking the appearance of the *Western Now* App was that it provides a level of consistency across Western apps. Similarly its chrome is generally universal in appearance, requiring very little learning by the user. In order to modify the *Western Now* interface to accommodate our app, we would move the search function to the top right of the page, separating it from the drop-down menu found on the left. The menu would offer eleven categories of events from which users could browse. However as we progressed with our design, paying particular attention to the information gathered through our discovery research and how that information was reflected in our scenarios, we realized that users very rarely search for events by date, which is the focus of the *Western Now* App. We therefore looked for alternate models that would more closely meet the requirements of our users.

Because users tend to want to either browse or search through categories rather than dates, the primary page of our app focuses on these features. Using a roulette wheel design, users can now quickly scroll through the various types of events and their related subcategories to find the types of events that interest them. While we lose the more universally expected interaction, we believe that the positive benefits outweigh the negative aspects. Because categories and subcategories can be displayed on one page with this design, fewer steps are required to reach the level of description that users are seeking. Furthermore, the wheel is an appealing, interactive design that is fairly intuitive so we believe there will be very little learning required. However, because it is an unusual approach, we have decided to make the view which was inspired by the *Western Now* App available as an alternate. Users can switch back and forth between these two views by selecting either a calendar or wheel icon found at the top-left of the screen.

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Regardless of the interface being used to locate events (whether calendar or wheel view) clicking on an event will bring up the events page. This page will include all information regarding time, location, registration, parking, tickets and a map. Events pages will also allow users the option to add events to a calendar, highlight events of interest and share with friends via email, Facebook or Twitter. The event page is designed to prevent students from having to search in several other places in order to plan attendance at the event. Therefore all information included will be structured in a predictable and easily identifiable manner. Consistency across the format of events pages will help students to locate information of interest with little effort.

We have a fairly clear idea about how the app will function. However, we still need to address categorization in more detail. We assume that many events will appear in more than one category in order to make them easily findable regardless of users' different mental models. At the same time, categories need to function well as filters so that results are not overwhelming. As we move forward we will continue to work with the categories in order to create a balance between findability and usability.

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## Design Scenarios & Claims

### SCENARIO 1: SEARCHING THROUGH CATEGORIES

Emma is a science student who struggles with test anxiety. After struggling through her final exams last semester, she has been actively looking for ways to improve her test taking skills. A guidance counselor recently informed her about some "test preparation workshops" offered by the Student Services that may help Emma improve her test skills.

Curious and eager to overcome her difficulties with tests, Emma opens the iWestern application on her phone and selects the Campus Events micro app. Once open, Emma sees a wheel listing event categories along with subcategories associated with those categories listed on the side. She sees the search icon in the top right hand corner, but not knowing precisely what event she is looking for, or the proper name for "test preparation workshops", Emma uses the wheel to navigate through the categories. She quickly spots the category "Skills Workshops" which lists a subcategory "Test-Taking". She taps that subcategory, noticing the hover effect, and is redirected to a scrollable list with clear distinguishable date headers. Because her schedule is generally free on Thursdays, Emma scrolls to the first date header labeled "Thursday" — "Thursday, March 20th, 2014" to be exact. The event *Preparing for Multiple-choice Tests Presentation* is offered that day. Emma taps the event. A new page loads; it contains important information about the event including a summary of the workshop, how to register for the event, the cost (free!), and time. The information is clearly laid out in segmented spaces. A link to the registration site is available, as well as options to 'add to calendar', 'share', and a map link. Emma is able to register quickly thanks to the direct link, and then add the event to her phone's calendar. She decides to explore the 'share' option. Because she is self-conscious about her struggles test anxiety she does not want to share the event on social media, but as email is one of the 'share' options, Emma quickly forwards the event information to one of her close friends who also experiences test anxiety.

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#### **A wheel containing event categories with subcategories listed on the side**

- + visually appealing and engaging
  - + permits immediate browsing, eliminating a step for users who generally do not search for events by date
  - + allows users to see categories and subcategories in a small space
  - + relatively intuitive
  - deviates from past format, or the format users may expect
  - requires an additional step for those listing/posting the event as they are obliged to categorize their event
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#### **Clear distinguishable date headers**

- + dates are not repeated with each event listing
  - + able to distinguish what events occur on what dates easily
  - + visually appealing and subliminally helpful
-

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- requires more screen space
- 

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## Event information is clearly laid out in segmented spaces

- + type of information (time, location, cost, etc.) will be clearly identifiable no longer running together
  - + clear headers will allow users to pinpoint the information most relevant to them
  - + visually appealing
  - requires more screen space than previously needed
  - scrolling will almost certainly be necessary
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## Option to 'add to calendar'

- + provides an expected convenience to users
  - + uses standard share icon
  - takes up space and pushes other event information out of screen space thereby necessitating scrolling
- 

## SCENARIO 2: BROWSING FOR EVENTS

Sven is an international student from Norway who downloaded both the iWestern app and the Western Now app to his iPhone during his campus orientation. He finds the Western Now app really helpful for keeping track of his class schedule and for finding the buildings that his classes are held in. Determined to make the most of his experience studying in Canada, Sven also wants to attend many campus events to get a richer sense of Canadian academic life. Sven opens the iWestern app on his phone and quickly spots the "Campus Events" micro app. Tapping on the icon, he sees unfamiliar layout. However, he spots the standard calendar icon in the left hand corner and taps it. He quickly recognizes the more traditional calendar layout to be similar to the Western Now layout. He notes that the icon in the top left hand corner has transformed from a calendar to a wheel. He realizes that he could return to the wheel format by clicking the wheel icon, but being familiar with the current design Sven feels comfortable jumping right into browsing through events that might be interesting to him in the calendar format. After scrolling through the current day's events and the events of the next couple of days, Sven decides to search for a special seminar series he heard about through his department. He selects the familiar search icon and is surprised to find categories listed below the search bar. Although this is unexpected it is not at all unwelcome as Sven finds this function was very helpful in achieving his task even if it is not necessarily be most intuitive. This is far more conducive to browsing events he may be interested in then perusing the events listed under the dates. Without this function Sven may have unknowingly glossed over events that are potentially interesting to him. He selects "Lectures & Colloquiums" and continues to browse the listed events. When he finds an event that is of particular interest to him (*Rotman Institute's Neurophilosophy Speaker Series* on March 12th) he taps it and is pleased that there is a map feature similar to the one in the Western Now app to help him find his way to the event.

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## **Traditional calendar layout similar to the Western Now layout**

- + familiar to students who use Western Now layout
  - + highly browsable
  - + visually attractive and generally intuitive layout
  - shows past dates
  - some features may not behave the same as they did in other apps
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## **Icon in top left hand corner allows you to switch between wheel and calendar format**

- + provides users with flexibility in how they choose to browse or search for events
  - + icons take up little space and are identifiable
  - users may not be familiar with wheel icon
  - diverts from the usual models
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## **Standard search bar with a drop-down menu of categories**

- + search icon takes up minimal space yet provides a necessary and expected service
  - + drop-down menu of categories facilitates searching if typing seems onerous or user does not know what terms to search
  - drop-down menu is subtly integrated into search service
  - not necessarily intuitive that the opportunity to search by event categories will be available by tapping the search icon
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## **Map feature**

- + provides useful and often needed information to users
  - + mimics map feature in Western Now app
  - users will likely have to scroll to view map feature
  - takes up screen space
  - app will accordingly use more phone storage
- 

## **SCENARIO 3: SHARING**

Jillian is really excited about the upcoming opera "Gisela in her bathtub & City Workers in Love" that Western's Faculty of Music is putting on. She wants to invite friends. She opens the iWestern app in her phone and selects the Campus Events icon.

She spots the search icon quickly and types "gisela" into the search bar. This quickly gives two results: the March 14th showing and the March 15th showing. Because she has already bought her ticket for the Friday showing she selects the March 14th event. All the pertinent information her friends will need to attend this event is accessible in this centralized location. They will be able to read a brief summary of the event, learn the time, location and cost of the event, follow the link to purchase their tickets, access a map in case they have difficulty finding the location, and even find parking information. Jillian taps the familiar "share" icon and shares the event through Facebook.

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## **Relevant information accessible in a centralized location**

- + users need only access one page to find event details, learn the time and location, link to find additional information, buy tickets or register, find directions and parking information
  - + spares users considerable time tracking down and locating the information they may need to attend an event
  - information provided must be correct as users will likely not look elsewhere to confirm correctness
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## **Sharing capability**

- + users can share through social media, or email it to themselves or their contacts
  - + allows users of the app to promote listed events instead of relying heavily on the event organizers
  - + permits users to perform an expected task with little time commitment or effort
  - ~ depends on users being familiar with share icon
  - share icon means that event information now requires more space than was previously necessary
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