LinkedU: Experience Report

(Keegan, Jason, Zack)

LinkedU was a challenging project that taught us all quite about working in a group. We first started by giving Keegan our name, email, and phone number so that we could all keep in contact. We set up a group chat using SMS and used that for the first part of the project. The following week in class we set up a date and time to meet to discuss what use cases which person was working on. We decided on meeting every other Sunday at 5:00 pm, and had planned the meetings to last between one to two hours.

The first meeting went very well! Keegan mentioned that from his experience with a previous class, using GitHub to keep all the code in sync helps save time and headache when combining all of the code. We also used GitHub’s wiki feature to keep track of our meeting minutes and what use cases were assigned to which person. Jason set up a Slack chat for use to use and integrated our GitHub so that we would receive updates when people turn stuff in. This helped us to know when to get latest to avoid code merging issues. We also decided to keep track of meeting minutes on the GitHub wiki. This allowed us to mark down who was present at the meeting, when the next meeting was, what was assigned to be completed by the next meeting, and what we went over during that meeting.

We kept our meetings like this until the week before the prototype was due. We moved the meetings to every Sunday since there was so much going on and we also had paperwork to do together. We started using Word Online to allow us all to contribute to the document at the same time. We did most of our paperwork like this. We also had meetings the day or two before a major part was due so that we could all go over and double check everything was working. If it was not working we would fix any bugs we came across.

For the project we decided to use a Bootstrap theme that Keegan had paid for, for a previous project. He set up the initial template that the rest of us copied when making our pages. For us to start the project we needed to have a sign-in/sign-up functionality made as well as a database to connect to. Keegan made this in the first week before our second meeting so that during the second week the rest of the group could get their parts done. This was slightly delayed because getting a database for the group took longer than expected. Jason was the main guy to set up the database and found a database we could use to populate our universities table.

For Keegan the most difficult part of the project was setting up the reset password. He talked with the rest of us to get ideas on how it should be done. We had decided on having a user enter their email and we would send an email to the user with link that would reset their password. Everything went great until he tried deleting the reset credentials in the database after a certain amount of time. He initially had an idea on what to do, but our user did not have enough privileges to do that. He researched for more options, but eventually had to give up on this and just delete it manually if the user never successfully reset their password. Another difficult part was the logic being the sign-in page. That ended up being quite a long page of code and to debug it he found a website called code2flow.com to help understand it. This greatly helped and made it much easier to find out where he was going wrong.

For Jason, the trickiest thing to get right was the Wizard control form used to edit the Student and University profiles, and it was much more difficult than anticipated. Because of the nature of the Wizard, it posts back with every step, and dynamically added controls do not persist. But he wanted to have the option to add as many programs or extracurriculars the user wants, so he didn’t want to code into the page a set number of options. After further research, he discovered that in order to have dynamic controls in a wizard control, one must implement a repeater control in the wizard page, and the items being added should be custom user controls. This is the approach that Jason ended up taking. Though the implementation was not very intuitive, it allowed the form to hold all of the user’s information between page loads, when navigating to and from the wizard page with the repeater, and to load the page with existing information when the user edits their profile.

For Zack, there were a couple different difficult parts throughout the project. The first of which was the PayPal checkout page. It was so difficult because it was hard to conceptually plan out how it should be done, what features were necessary, and what features would be overkill. I watched many different videos on PayPal stores, and even attempted to create a cart system originally. However, I found this to be overkill for the use of our project, as we would potentially only have a handful of items to purchase (advertising), and it was all digital goods. Because of this, I created a simple single payment option for one day on the home page. The second thing that was very difficult to create was the schedule an appointment feature. Normally when you schedule an appointment, you are scheduling it with another person, and you know each other’s available times. However, this was not the case for LinkedU. My solution to this was to offer a range of dates and times that the user could select to schedule an appointment, and then send an email to the person they are requesting the appointment with. In this email, there are instructions of how to confirm the appointment. In order to do so, they just have to reply to the email, as the user has been added to the ReplyTo field. A second email is also sent to the requestor, giving them confirmation that an email was sent to the University their interested in. I had researched various ways to create an appointment scheduler, however none of them really fit the theme and design of our website. One last thing that was very difficult was not a specific thing, but keeping the design and formatting consistent throughout all the different pages, to make the website look more professional.