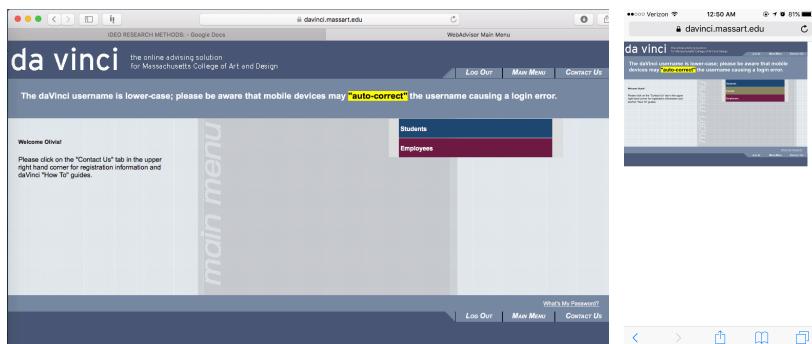


# User Research Report: DaVinci

BY ALONDRA ARMIJO MORALES

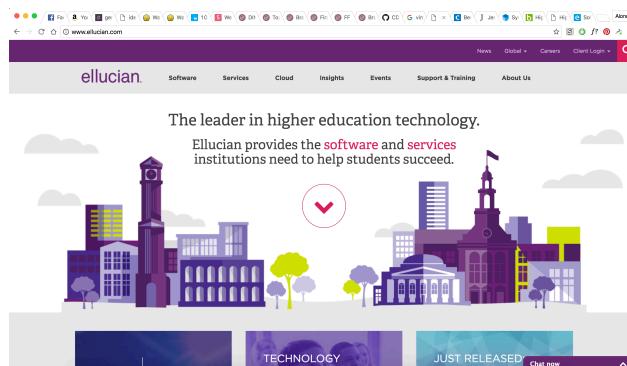
## What Is It? What Does It Do? What Is It For?

“DaVinci” is the name that MassArt has given to their version of the student portal WebAdvisor. WebAdvisor is a student management system that allows faculty, staff, and students to have access to courses in school as well as other smaller types of information. This system is what students use to have access to their current class schedule, transcript, major’s classes selection, advisor information, and personal information. It also serves as a platform for students to register for classes in a way that automatically registers with the school database.



## Why Is it Being Researched?

MassArt’s student portal, DaVinci - WebAdvisor - is very outdated. Not only is it visually unappealing but over the past couple of years, if not always, it has lost its usability. The functions of this website are all there but they do not fulfill the standards that students and faculty need met for this to be a useful tool for all. Although there are many reasons as to why WebAdvisor is so technologically behind, one is that the original creator of WebAdvisor, Datatel, Inc., joined its competitor SunGuard and formed Ellucian and haven’t updated their older software. Ellucian did create newer portals which are a more advanced version of what we see today in WebAdvisor. Ellucian does meet the standard for a student portal as well as its competitors although it too could be better.



# DaVinci's Program Evaluation

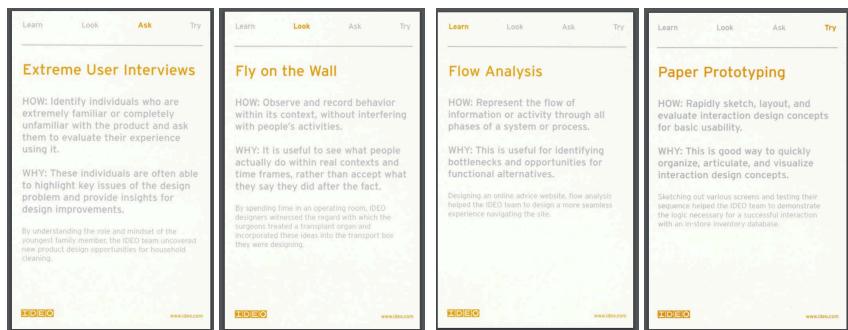
One of DaVinci's biggest problems would have to be its "Program Evaluation" page. This tab is seen twice in the students menu and can be very confusing for students, especially ones new to WebAdvisor. The "Program Evaluation" tab includes: the students grades in their classes, classes they've taken, classes they are taking, classes they haven't taken, number of credits per course, all of the student's credit information, the student's name, and the student's advisor's name. Not only is the phrasing of the tab confusing for it can mean many things to different students, but it holds a lot of information that if distributed properly, would make more sense.

The image contains two side-by-side screenshots of the DaVinci WebAdvisor software. Both screenshots show the 'Program Evaluation' page. The left screenshot shows a general view of the student's academic record, including a 'Mass. College of Art Academic Evaluation' report from 10/25/16. It lists the student's name (Olivia B. Sheldon), catalog year (2014), anticipated completion date (05/25/18), and email address (obshelton@massart.edu). Below this is a 'Program Summary' table showing institutional credits (60.00) and current credits (60.00). The right screenshot shows a more detailed view of the 'Program Evaluation' page, specifically the 'Studio Elective Requirements/Graphic Design (In progress)' section. It includes tables for 'A: Electives (Complete)', 'B: JUNIOR YEAR (In progress)', and 'C: SENIOR YEAR (Not started)'. The 'B: JUNIOR YEAR' table has one row: Course CGGD-301, Title Letterpress Printing, Needed 6 credits, Term 16FA, Grade A, Credits 3, Notes \*P. The 'C: SENIOR YEAR' table has one row: Course CGGD-301, Title Letterpress Printing, Needed 9 credits, Term 16FA, Grade A, Credits 3, Notes \*P. A note at the bottom says 'In Progress'.

## Research Findings

### Group Observations

My group was formed by David, Olivia, and I. We started by reading over the instructions for the assignment and deciding together how we thought we should do the project. We then proceeded to talking about the IDEO methods we had all picked and seeing which ones we had in common and keeping those and then deciding between the ones we didn't have in common. The final IDEO methods we decided on were:



### ASK

Narration - As they perform a process or execute a specific task, ask participants to describe aloud what they are thinking.

Extreme User Interviews - Identify individuals who are extremely familiar or completely unfamiliar with the product and ask them to evaluate their experience using it.

### LEARN

Flow Analysis - Represent the flow of information or activity through all phases of a system or process.

Competitive Product Survey - Collect, compare, and conduct evaluations of the product's competition.

## LOOK

**Fly On The Wall** - Observe and record behavior within its context, without interfering with people's activities.

Personal Inventory - Document the things that people identify as important to them as a way of cataloging evidence of their lifestyles.

TRY

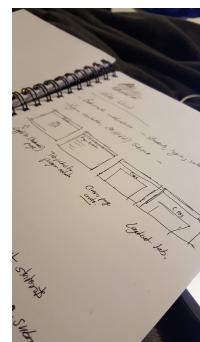
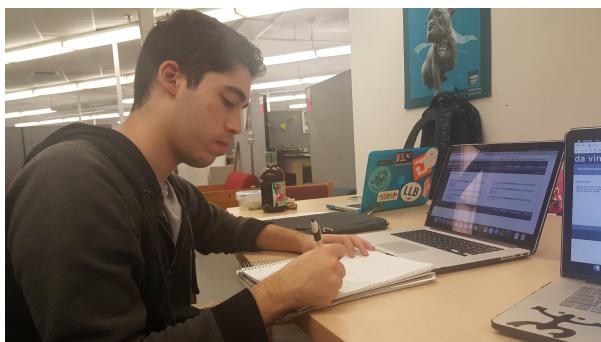
Paper Prototyping - Rapidly sketch, layout, and evaluate interaction design concepts for basic usability.

**Be Your Customer** - Ask the client to describe, outline or enact their typical customer's experience.

After having decided the eight IDEO methods, we started thinking about how we could apply them to the research we would acquire from each other and from our test subjects. Then, we all tested each other. We would watch how they would get to the website all the way to logging out while asking them questions and watching carefully what they were doing. Throughout this process, we made sure to make each other narrate the process to see their perspective of what they were doing, ask them about their overall experience, document the flow of what they were doing step-by-step, be observant of what they were doing, take notes on what the current user found most important, do sketches of what would be more useful based on what the user has said, and then compare our findings and sketches to what competitors have made - the IDEO methods were all used by the time we would be done with our subject as well as leaving us with very good information. This kept going until all of us were done.

This process was really helpful because I was able to learn what other students in my class thought about DaVinci and how it differs from mine. For example, my friends would login in by clicking on “login” and then “students” instead of the way I was used to doing it by clicking on “students”, “login”, “students”. While discussing about DaVinci, I was able to see what all of us found troublesome about DaVinci not only from a student’s point of view but from a designer’s point of view. We all found that the website had no hierarchy whatsoever, that it was built to satisfy the needs of having a student management system instead of something user friendly, and that it desperately needed an update. I was able to test both my partners, Olivia and David, and get their perspectives on the website and I saw how using DaVinci for them was not something that could be used to find information but something that would be used due to obligation when needed to register for courses or when desperate to know your grades or classes.

Interviewing my non-graphic design users was much different. One of the people I interviewed was my friend Soy who is an Illustration major at MassArt. I ran all of the IDEO methods listed above as well as asking her what she would want on the DaVinci page as an Illustration major. To this she replied that she thought that her, as well as many of her friends, would be most interested in having better way of contacting their advisor as well as a better way to navigate through the “search for sections”. She also mentioned that finding the best methods to make the website in general “navigatable” would be good enough. As for my non-MassArt subject, he is a recently graduated high schooler with no knowledge on student management systems so I started off by explaining what DaVinci was. After this, I made him complete certain tasks to see if he would be able to find things such as my current credits or my advisor’s name; this was done to be able to experience with him what a first time DaVinci user would experience. He originally was misled by the website’s name and thought it was a website where MassArt students could upload their work for personal use. Although this was a unexpected and interesting perspective, it shows how important language is especially for those who have had no previous experience with DaVinci as freshmen or prospective students.



# My Strategy For Fixing DaVinci

My plan for fixingDaVinci is by concentrating on working on the platform most students use for DaVinci being their laptops, therefore, I will be creating a website version of DaVinci. From here, I plan on making DaVinci very user/student based, so everything on DaVinci relates back to the students personal use; I plan on making this happen with having everything centered around the use of dashboards. Filtering will also be one of the key aspects throughout the website as well as clear vocabulary and hierarchy.

With my version of DaVinci, the user will be greeted by a homepage where they can login and have access to their student portal. Here, they will be able to register/search for sections, see their profile, program evaluation, and financial status. Upon clicking program evaluation, they will be taken to a page where they will be able to see what classes they must have completed for degree. This page will be strictly to see the student's progress with their classes based on their year and number of credits. It will also aid students to know how many credits they are missing for a certain section and what classes must be taken. Sections from here that will now have their own sections are the advisor name, the number of credits, and the grade. Based on my research, these things are important enough to have their own sections or subsections. The advisor name will now have its own subsection under the user's profile for them to contact when needed. The number of credits will also be placed in the students profile as a progress bar to show how far along they are to completing their BFA or their desired degree. Just as the other two, the grade will also be a subsection in the user's profile for them to be able to see their grades for their classes privately.

I believe the way these sections and subsections have been created will help students separate what is theirs and what they share with fellow classmates. By making some things more personal and not fitting them all under one tab, the navigation for the website will be more user friendly.

After the student has completed seeing what classes they need to take and how far along they are to completing the class, they can go into their profile and see their grades, the name of their advisor as well as their information, and their current class schedule. Having these clear divisions along with correct hierarchy is what will make this version of DaVinci better than its predecessor.

