Mobile Tech Company

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April 6th 2015

Dr. Monika Cwiartka

University of Victoria

3800 Finnerty Rd

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Dear Dr. Cwiartka:

Attached is the report *Assessment and Recommendations of UVic Mobile* we arranged to write for you on March 1st 2015.

This report identifies problems and recommends improvements for UVic Mobile. It includes an introduction to the current state of the University of Victoria’s mobile application called UVic Mobile. It then covers the results our survey of current university students. This report concludes with recommendations for improvements of UVic Mobile.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity for our firm to submit this report to you and are excited to hear from you in the future.

Sincerely,

James Ryan

James Ryan

Undergraduate Student

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250-555-5555

Attachment: Assessment and Recommendations of UVic Mobile

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| University of Victoria |
| Assessment and Recommendations of UVic Mobile |
|  |
|  |
| **James Ryan Josh Davies Rui Ma Mohammad Abousaleh** |
| **4/6/2015** |

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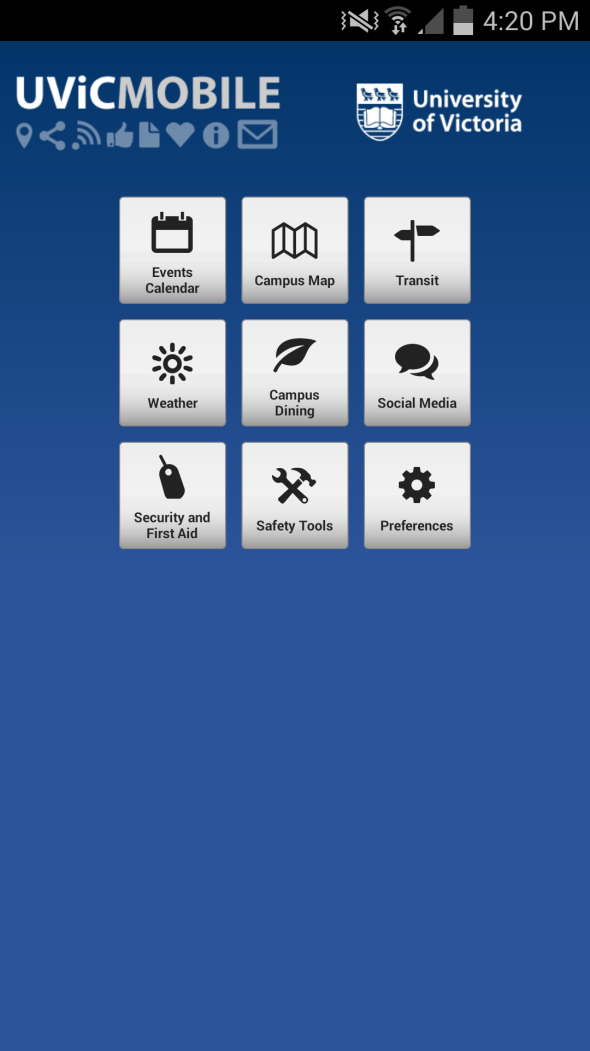
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# Abstract

The University of Victoria hired our firm to assess and give recommendations for their mobile app, UVic Mobile. The client wanted find out what needed to be fixed to make UVic Mobile a successful app. We surveyed 30 current students at the university to learn their opinions on UVic Mobile, and what they felt was needed to improve the app. We found that students were not happen with the current version of UVic Mobile and wanted more functionality from it. We recommend adding core student services, removing redundant features and a complete re-haul of the user interface. If these recommendations are followed UVic Mobile will become a successful mobile app that supplements students learning while on the go.

# Introduction

UVic Mobile is a mobile application created by the University of Victoria designed for use on portable devices, such as smartphones or tablets. It is used for communication between the University of Victoria and members of the university including students and staff. The users of the UVic Mobile application that this report will be focusing on are the students.

## Importance

A mobile application is important to students because it provides information for students and communication with the university while on the go. It is important that the mobile application is done well to keep students informed about their education and keep up to pace with current events at the university. If the app is poorly developed, UVic Mobile provides no benefit to students and would not allow for effective communication between the students and the university while on the go. It is all about allowing a streamline and always connected experience for students.

## Current Version

UVic Mobile was released on April 23, 2013, and no updates to the app have been released as of February 10, 2015. **Figure 1** shows what UVic Mobile looks like. Each grey square is a button that brings the user to one of the features that UVic Mobile offers. **Table 1** on **Page 4** gives an outline of each of these features.

Figure 1: UVic Mobile's Main Menu

Table 1: List of UVic Mobile's Features

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **What does it do?** |
| Events Calendar | Allows users to find out what events are happening around campus. The events are broken up into the following categories: alumni, athletics, conferences, exhibits, films, lectures and seminars, music, theatre and other events. |
| Campus Map | Shows an interactive google map of the campus with important locations and building names pinned with a marker. |
| Transit | Shows the next five busses leaving UVic. |
| Weather | Tells the user the current weather and predicted weather for the next week. |
| Campus Dining | Allows the user to see a map of dining locations. Allows the user to select a dining location and see what is being served for the next week. |
| Social Media | Gives links to the universities social media accounts to follow. |
| Security and First Aid | Allows the user to see the campus security location on a map, go to the campus security website or directly call campus security from the app. |
| Safety Tools | Allows the user to send their location via email to campus security. It also has a “Loud Alarm” that plays for approximately 3 seconds. |
| Preferences | The user can send app feedback, share this app, check for an app update or enable/disable push notifications from this menu. |

## Expectations

The general expectation from students is that the UVic Mobile app allows connected experience regarding various aspect of their education including

* classes,
* registration,
* and life around campus.

Feedback for UVic Mobile on Google’s Play Store and Apple’s App Store has expressed a number of expectations. Students expect access core student services like CourseSpaces and MyPage from the app. Uvic Mobile is expected to allow students to

* keep track of current grades,
* look at due dates,
* communicate with staff,
* and check Webmail.

Students like the ability to browse what meals are currently being served in the cafeterias along with future meals. The focus group that we chose knows what they want in a mobile app which is why we took a student survey for their feedback.

## Why the Client Requested This Report

The University of Victoria requested this report to be completed to improve their current mobile app. With an updated app they hope to enhance user experiences with the app. The client wants to make their mark in the app market to give the best experience to their students among other competitive universities. Since release of UVic Mobile, it has been falling behind the competitors in quality and the client wants to fix that. Currently the client is interested in improving the user experience for prospective and current students of the university. This report’s deliverables include what features should be implemented, what features need to be improved, and what features need to be removed. Our recommendations will allow the University of Victoria to improve their mobile application for better user experience.

Next, we will explain our method of surveying current students. Finally, we will discuss our recommendations for the UVic Mobile app based on our survey results.

# Methodology

We narrowed the user base of the UVic Mobile app to current students of the University of Victoria. Students are the users that will benefit the most from a mobile app. The University of Victoria also expressed that they wanted to improve the user experience for students. With that in mind we decided that taking user feedback was a must. To do this, we created an online survey targeted at students to find out what they thought of the current state of UVic Mobile. The survey consisted of the following questions:

* How would you rate the app overall?
* How would you rate the design of the app?
* Is the app useful?
* If you use it, why do you use the app?
* What would you suggest to improve the app?

The results of the survey are included within **Appendix A** at the end of this report. We used Google Forms as the platform for hosting the survey. The survey was distributed through the University of Victoria section of a popular website called Reddit. For the survey we narrowed the results down by removing respondents who were not University of Victoria students.

Once we finished surveying students, we compiled all the results. We looked for trends in the responses of the survey, and based our recommendations on these trends. This allowed us to emphasise our recommendations around common responses and ignore the outliers.

# Results

Our client, The University of Victoria, contracted our firm to give our thoughts on their current mobile app. The client aimed to find out what is currently being done well by the app and what needs to be done to make it better for students of the university. Our client contracted us to give recommendations for the next update to UVic mobile. We wanted to give recommendations to our client based on the following questions:

* What do current students use UVic Mobile for right now,
* What do current students want from the next iteration of UVic Mobile?

We approached answering these questions with a survey of current students of The University of Victoria.

## Survey Results of University Students

We surveyed current University of Victoria students for feedback on the current iteration of UVic Mobile. Our client aims to improve UVic Mobile to accommodate current and prospective student’s needs from a mobile app. From this survey we hoped find out what current students who have used UVic mobile think about what the app is right now and what they feel is needed to improve a future iteration of UVic Mobile.

The raw data for our survey will be included within **Appendix A**. Here we outline the general trends that we saw within student’s answers out of the thirty participants in the survey.

**Figure 2** shows the breakdown of how students rated UVic Mobile overall out of 5 in the survey. Seventy-three percent of students gave the app an overall rating of 2/5 or lower. Note that a 5/5 rating was not given.

Thirty eight percent students who suggested improvements for the app mentioned improving the design of UVic Mobile and the user interface (UI) in their submission. We asked the students if they thought UVic mobile was useful to them. Sixty percent of users said no, while the other forty percent thought it was useful to them.

Figure 2. Overall Rating of UVic Mobile by students Rating out of five

Multiple students suggested integration with CouseSpaces, Webmail and My Page was needed to improve the app. Forty-four percent of the suggestions to improve UVic Mobile included adding this functionality to the app. Users want increased functionality of the app to be able to do more useful activities with UVic Mobile.

Figure 3. Rating of UVic Mobile’s design by students Rating out of five

We asked the participants to rate the design of UVic Mobile out of 5. **Figure 3** shows the breakdown of how the participants rated the design. The majority of survey participants gave UVic Mobile’s design a poor rating. Sixty-three percent of the participants gave UVic Mobile’s design a 2/5 or lower and only thirty-seven percent gave an average rating. Just like the overall rating no participants gave the design a perfect rating of 5/5.

Users expressed a concern with the user interface (UI) of UVic Mobile. “Fix the UI. The scaling on it is broken on my device,” was stated by one entry on the survey. We found that UVic Mobile’s UI has trouble scaling properly with Android mobile devices that have varied screen sizes. One student stated that “the basic interface is simple to the point of being ugly.”

# Discussion

Our client, The University of Victoria, contracted us to help recommend improvements for an iteration of their mobile app. The client hoped to find out what students wanted from a mobile app that would allow for a more connected way of maintaining their education. In this section, we discuss our interpretation of our survey data. The results of the survey showed us that students are not happy with the current version of UVic mobile. Seventy-three percent of participants of the survey do not find the current version of UVic Mobile useful to them.

With the new ways students are taking in information through mobile media, like cell phones and tablets, The University of Victoria needs to adjust and take advantage of these platforms. Without an improved version of UVic mobile, The University of Victoria will fall behind other competitive universities in the mobile app market. Current students are not the only ones that benefit from a successful university mobile app, prospective students also have the potential to benefit from a mobile app.

Prospective students take many factors into consideration when choosing which institution they will attend for their post-secondary education. One of these factors includes how well the university communicates with their students. The ability to communicate while on the go is becoming more a necessity, as students are always on the go. For The University of Victoria to keep up with other universities like The University of British Columbia, UVic Mobile must have the edge on student satisfaction over competition in the mobile marketplace. If UVic Mobile continues to not satisfy student’s needs and not adjust with the changing market, students may choose to attend another university over The University of Victoria.

As technology advances our ability to communicate with each other through mobile platforms, UVic Mobile must adjust with it to keep on the leading edge. With an improved way to communicate with the university, UVic Mobile can bring a student’s education the the fullest of their potential.

## Limitations

A limitation of our study includes the sample size of the survey we conducted. Because of time constraints, we surveyed 30 students of the university. This is an extremely small portion of the student demographic. The small sample size was large enough to show trends, but is too small to show a proper representation of the over 20,000 students.

The survey was advertised only on the University of Victoria section of a popular website called Reddit. The users on this site generally have a better understanding of the technology around them, and more experience with the mobile app market.

A future study should be conducted to properly represent what students want from a mobile app. We suggest a sample size of at least 1,000 students. The participants should be students from all areas of study. We also suggest increasing the amount of questions, and include questions similar to the following:

* What are your expectations of UVic Mobile?
* What parts of the design do you feel need improvement?
* What features are not useful to you?
* What features are useful to you?
* What features would you implement in the next version?

The survey should also be conducted thought multiple medians like online and in person. With a larger sample size and a broader range of participants the survey will represent the student population better and allow the client a better understanding of what UVic Mobile needs to do.

# Recommendations

Our client, The University of Victoria, contracted us to recommend improvements for their current mobile app, UVic Mobile. The client hoped to find out what students wanted and what improvements should be made to create a more connected way of maintaining their education for them. In this section, we will give our recommendations based the result of our survey.

## Add Student Services

Multiple students in the survey stated that they wanted the functionality of core student services from the UVic website within UVic Mobile. These services include the ability to

* check grades,
* communicate with staff,
* look at timetables,
* look at tuition summaries, and
* check Webmail.

Access to these services is a must for the UVic Mobile to be a successful app. These features need to be implemented directly into the UVic Mobile app, and should not be implemented from the mobile website for the best user experience. With the addition of core student services to UVic Mobile, the usefulness to students will increase and more students will use UVic Mobile to help supplement their education.

## Remove Features

Many of the features within UVic Mobile are redundant to features within apps used more often by users. These features include

* transit,
* weather, and
* campus map.

We recommend that these features are removed from the next iteration of UVic Mobile. By default, Android and iOS devices come with pre-installed apps dedicated to do what these features aim to do with a more refined experience. For example the campus map in UVic Mobile is just a version of google maps with fewer features, which makes it obsolete to google maps itself. With the removal of these features services UVic Mobile won’t have features that are viewed to be useless or redundant to pre-installed apps on their devices by students.

## Revamp the Design

The survey showed us that users are not happy with design of UVic Mobile. We recommend completely scrapping the current design of UVic Mobile and starting from scratch. We suggest using Google’s Android Development Guide and Apple’s iOS Development Guide as guidelines for the new design of UVic Mobile. The current color scheme of blue and grey should not be used for the next design. We recommend that the colors for buttons and the background don’t contrast each and aren’t as harsh as the current blue and grey.

Navigation throughout UVic Mobile is also a problem. The back button, if displayed on screen needs to stay in place when scrolling through menus. If users are on devices with dedicated back buttons, which includes most android devices, the back button should be removed to prevent redundancy. The current navigation of the events calendar should be scrapped as well. Just display a typical calendar, highlighting or emphasizing days with events in some way. Safety Tools and the Security and First Aid sections should be combined into one section. There is no need for a separate menu item for each, and has too much complexity the current format.

## Get up to Date

Since release in April of 2013, no updates have been released for UVic Mobile. Without updates to UVic Mobile, the app has fallen behind in the mobile market over the last two years. For a mobile app to be successful there needs to be frequent updates. These updates should be used to fix problems with the app, and improve the app based on user feedback. The next iteration of UVic Mobile must be updated frequently, improving the app with each update. We are recommending the next version of UVic Mobile have regular updates as respondents of our survey noted issues or bugs with the app. These bugs could be fixed each update. With regular updates UVic Mobile will stay up to date with user feedback on the app creating greater user satisfaction with the app.

If these recommendations are followed UVic Mobile can become are competitive university mobile app for students. UVic Mobile will become an asset to current students to help create an always connected and streamline experience with their education.

# Conclusion

Our client, The University of Victoria, contracted our firm to assess and recommend improvements for their current mobile app, UVic Mobile. The client wanted to find out what the app is doing well and what needed to be fixed for their next iteration of the app. We decided to gather feedback from current students through a survey to gain an understanding of what students thought of UVic Mobile. From the survey we learned, that students are not happy with the current state of UVic Mobile and want more functionality in the app that will allow the task of keeping track of their education. We also learned that the aesthetics of the app are not up to par with expectations. If our recommendations are followed, the client will have a more successful and competitive university mobile app over competitive universities. These improvements will also improve student’s access to information while on the go, helping them manage their education. Thank you allowing our firm to complete this assessment and suggest improvements for UVic Mobile.

# Appendix A

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Timestamp** | **How would you rate the app overall?** | **How would you rate the design of the app?** | **Is the app useful?** |
| 12/02/2015 15:24:28 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 12/02/2015 15:29:28 | 3 | 3 | No |
| 12/02/2015 15:30:37 | 3 | 3 | No |
| 12/02/2015 15:40:17 | 2 | 2 | No |
| 12/02/2015 16:09:19 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 12/02/2015 16:28:22 | 2 | 2 | Sometimes |
| 12/02/2015 17:52:16 | 2 | 3 | No |
| 12/02/2015 18:04:52 | 1 | 2 | No |
| 12/02/2015 18:23:30 | 2 | 3 | Sometimes |
| 12/02/2015 18:37:51 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 12/02/2015 18:52:35 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 12/02/2015 19:13:38 | 1 | 2 | Sometimes |
| 12/02/2015 19:23:00 | 1 | 2 | No |
| 12/02/2015 20:21:23 | 2 | 3 | No |
| 12/02/2015 20:31:39 | 2 | 2 | Sometimes |
| 12/02/2015 21:26:56 | 3 | 2 | Yes |
| 12/02/2015 21:45:23 | 1 | 2 | No |
| 12/02/2015 23:50:35 | 3 | 3 | Sometimes |
| 13/02/2015 00:11:48 | 2 | 2 | Sometimes |
| 13/02/2015 01:34:47 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 13/02/2015 01:39:44 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 13/02/2015 06:52:48 | 4 | 4 | Yes |
| 13/02/2015 08:28:51 | 3 | 3 | Sometimes |
| 13/02/2015 14:59:47 | 4 | 3 | Sometimes |
| 13/02/2015 17:29:30 | 3 | 2 | Sometimes |
| 13/02/2015 23:55:00 | 2 | 2 | No |
| 15/02/2015 13:32:43 | 1 | 1 | No |
| 15/02/2015 23:20:43 | 2 | 1 | No |
| 22/02/2015 17:33:15 | 2 | 4 | Sometimes |
| 24/02/2015 22:12:20 | 1 | 3 | No |
| **If you use it, why do you use the app?** | | | |
| Don’t use it because it is really broken. The UI is terrible and sometimes the app does not function. | | | |
| It’s just not useful, I’ve only used it once to call security. I have other apps for transit, I follow my department on twitter and just generally have everything else covered | | | |
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| I would use it for weekly events. | | | |
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|  | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | | | |
| I only use the Transit feature to check which buses are leaving next. | | | |
| Transit and food | | | |
| I downloaded it as a first year student and I couldn’t even use the map so I deleted it. | | | |
| I seldom use it. | | | |
| I avoid it whenever possible, but even the mobile site it bad | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | | | |
| Check cafeteria menu | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | | | |
| Map | | | |
| Very rarely, but i do like the emergency and alarm functions as a single woman who as to bus home at night sometimes. | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | | | |
| Almost solely to see bus times so I know when to leave my office. | | | |
|  | | | |

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| --- |
| **What would you suggest to improve the app?** |
| Improve the design to follow new Google lollipop design and apple iOS 8 design regulations |
| More personalization, integration with coursespaces and uvic email would be great. |
|  |
| Include the ability to see your timetable, class schedules, lab usage, maybe library room bookings etc. There is barely any functionality in this app that makes it anything more than a gimmick |
|  |
| Spatial awareness – when you walk past a classroom, how cool would it be to know what’s going on in there! |
|  |
| Fix the UI. The scaling on it is broken on my device (Samsung Galaxy S4 mini). |
|  |
|  |
| Make it not broken |
|  |
| Make it more relatable. At least incorporate the one card in it. |
| Integration with personal online tools for students. |
| Integration with UVic online account (for webmail, class schedules, ONECard, etc.) |
| Make a better UI and more utility/ more live updates (whats going on today on campus) |
|  |
| Petter mapping component, easier searching function. |
| Pretty much anything. Adjust the scaling to a ratio so that it fits all smartphones |
|  |
|  |
| Add soup of the day! Oh and when you scroll down event list, you have to scroll all the way back up to press the back button to go to previous page. Make the back button stationary on the screen. Good app though. |
| Advertise is. To be honest, I had no idea we had an app and when I asked all the friends at my table, neither did they. Not trying to be facetious, I just thought I’d let ya know you may wanna work on exposure. |
|  |
| Better design |
| The basic interface is simple to the point of being a bit ugly – even something as a more interesting background than just the blue would be a plus.  Random thing that annoys me is the little app icon, it seems like its squished together or something. A nicer one would have just the emblem or “UVic”. The hard thing for the developers of the app is right now, there is very little reason for me to have it. All of the functions can be found in other apps I use more often. Maybe spend less time on the app and more time fixing the mobile version of online services on the uvic site |
| **What would you suggest to improve the app? (Continued)** |
| MyPage, Coursespaces and Connex. Better design and functionality |
|  |
|  |
| Allow for NetLink login to access CourseSpaces, Webmail, or My Page, etc. |