

Executive FollowUp

A productivity and organization tool

Design Problem

How do you provide enough structure to students in the upper high school years and early college years so that students can be successful academically? Is there a way to provide a system that students can actually grow in their ability to manage their time and workload? Can a student, then, turn these skills into success in their academic life and adulthood?

Section 1: Introduction

Some high school and college students struggle academically. They may have diagnosed learning disabilities, or they may exhibit a lack of planning skills (or, both). As they progress in school, the structure of early education years is slowly reduced. There is less academic support, and more self-reliance is required. Parents, school counselors and students will turn to tutoring, or traditional psychotherapy to maintain some of this scaffolding a little longer. Once the student gets to college, there are few structural supports. They enter an environment with few constraints and a lot of open time.

The problem to be solved is this: How do you provide enough structure to students in the upper high school years and early college years so that students can be successful academically? Is there a way to provide a system that students can actually grow in their ability to manage their time and workload? Can a student, then, turn these skills into success in their academic life and adulthood?

In order to see if we can find a solution to this problem, we have targeted a user population that includes late teen-aged students, in the last two years of high school or the first two years of college. These students include those who have found some academic struggles and consider themselves “procrastinators” when it comes to academic work. An ancillary population would be parents of these students who have these aspirations for their children.

All members of the population currently utilize a web-based technology that the school system provides. In addition, the only reported support for organizational skills comes from students in high school. This comes from teachers or parents and no specific technology.

My solution will provide regular, consistent, on-going support to students and engender planning skills that they can apply to all areas of their lives. The high-level goals are to train students to set small goals and provide regular follow-up on the status of those goals. I believe this can be done at a reasonable cost. This solution is, ideally, meant to be used in conjunction with a weekly meeting with a mentor or coach.

The system allows the users to complete the following activities:

- the ability to create a preparation plan for each of their assignments for each of their courses, scheduling smaller preparation sessions over the course of time.
- the ability to understand the level of effort is necessary for different kinds of assignments
- the ability to “at-a-glance” see the assignments are due today, as well as what assignments are coming up.

In order to support the activities listed above, the following key tasks can be completed in the prototype:

- add, edit, delete and view courses, assignments and preparation plans
- housekeeping tasks of user registration, user login (with the ability to do facial recognition), logout and change of id and password
- complete initial setup, including option to import courses and assignments from an external data source or a setup wizard to guide the user through initial steps