**Project Concept Statement**

**Organization**: University of Maryland, College of Information Studies – Information Science Program at Shady Grove, Rockville MD

**Challenge Name:** Enhancing Digital Accessibility for Seniors at Shady Grove

**Category:** Design Challenge

**Organization Background:**

The **Information Science Program at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG)** is part of the University of Maryland’s College of Information Studies. This program provides **transfer students with a strong foundation in data, technology, and human-centered computing**, preparing them for careers in information systems, user experience (UX) design, and cybersecurity. A key focus of the program is **inclusive and accessible technology**, ensuring that digital tools are designed for diverse populations, including older adults and individuals with disabilities.

As part of the program’s commitment to **community engagement and social impact**, this challenge seeks to explore how **digital accessibility** can improve the quality of life for seniors who are part of the Shady Grove and Montgomery County community, particularly in navigating online resources, campus services, and educational technology.

**Challenge Background**

Older adults face significant challenges when accessing **digital services, online learning platforms, and campus resources**. Many struggle with **navigating complex interfaces, reading small text, and using voice-based technologies effectively**. While accessibility tools exist, they are often **underutilized or not tailored to the specific needs of seniors**.

This challenge is important because **ensuring digital accessibility is not just about compliance—it’s about inclusion**. By designing solutions that improve **usability, clarity, and engagement for older adults**, we can create a more welcoming and accessible environment at Shady Grove. The findings from this project will **help inform future campus initiatives, improve access to digital tools, and foster a more inclusive academic community** for lifelong learners.

*This challenge will provide* ***real-world experience in accessibility design****, offering students a chance to make a tangible impact on* ***digital equity for older adults*** *while applying* ***UX research, design thinking, and inclusive technology principles****.*

**What you’ll be provided:**

* Access to **campus spaces** where seniors engage with digital tools
* Interviews and surveys with **older adult learners and community members**
* **Existing digital resources** and accessibility guidelines used by the university
* Mentorship and guidance from **faculty in information science and accessibility research**
* Case studies and reports on **best practices in digital accessibility**

**Challenge:**

Students will analyze **current digital accessibility barriers for seniors on the Shady Grove campus** and develop **innovative solutions** that improve their ability to interact with **campus websites, online learning platforms, and digital communication tools**.

This could involve:

* Redesigning **campus websites or portals** to be more senior-friendly
* Exploring **voice interfaces or assistive technologies** that improve navigation
* Enhancing **digital literacy programs** to better support older learners
* Evaluating and improving **wayfinding and self-service kiosks** for accessibility

Students will take a **human-centered design approach**, working directly with senior users to **identify pain points, prototype solutions, and recommend improvements** that enhance usability and engagement.

**Deliverables**

* **User Research Report** – Findings from surveys, interviews, and usability testing with seniors
* **Prototype or Design Concepts** – Wireframes, mockups, or prototypes of improved digital tools
* **Accessibility Audit** – A review of existing digital platforms with recommendations
* **Implementation Plan** – A roadmap for how the university can integrate these changes
* **Final Presentation** – A summary of insights, design proposals, and next steps