

The first in the series of difficult decisions was one from a pure aesthetic design standpoint. We wanted to change the color scheme such that it looked minimal, yet still professional. At the start, it seemed to be a good approach to run with the color of the school, orange, and display that as the main dominating color throughout the site. However, this made things cluttered and jarring to look at. Eventually, through some experimentation and decision making, we settled at colors of white, gray, and black, with an accent of orange. This displayed fantastically as a professional environment but had enough accent to splash “Leicester University” onto the otherwise bland combination.

Secondly, we needed to decide how the layout of the navigation would look. We knew that we definitely wanted something that could be present on every single page in the University, such that the user can grow accustomed to where things are in terms of navigation and always be able to navigate back to home and main pages. At first we had thought a side navigation bar would be nice as a lot of University sites had layouts in that fashion, but we soon realized that those required a lot of vertical space - not ideal for translation into secondary pages. Thus, we settled with a top navigation bar which contained all that the important links with a drop down on the left-most item to house even more links.

The last and most difficult decision was figuring out which elements we wanted at certain levels of the navigation bar. From the start, we thought it would have made perfect sense to select main elements such as academics, research, business etc., but realized that there were so many types of elements that fell in-line with those that making clear group distinctions in the navigation bar would have been difficult for the user. Eventually we came to the conclusion that most logical division would be to orient the main top navigation bar elements toward user persons and to orient the left dropdown to cater to the more general aspects of a University - things like academics, research, directory, map, and so on. Ultimately, the top navigation bar cleverly contains five main elements that umbrella over other secondary elements: “University” “Visitors & Prospectors” “Parents & Families” “Staff & Students” “Alumni & Supporters”. The “University” tab would be the on-hover-dropdown of all the general university topics while the other four would be strictly user personas. The divide is extremely clear from a design standpoint because the four user persona elements are delimited by text, while the general university element falls under the University of Leicester logo.

Those three decisions were by far the most difficult to make in the redesign of the website. Everything else more or less stemmed flowingly from those decisions and fell into place quite nicely.