UI/UX DESIGN DOCUMENT

Sage Exchange

Modern Card-Based Interface Design

Version: 1.0
Design System Type: Card-Based Component Library
Date: February 12, 2026

1. Design Philosophy

Core Design Principles

1. Warm Professionalism

The design should feel like a trusted university advisor's office—approachable yet professional, modern yet timeless. We avoid both sterile SaaS coldness and overly casual consumer app aesthetics.

2. Card-First Architecture

Inspired by modern Dribbble design patterns, we use cards as the primary content container to create:
- Clear visual hierarchy through elevation and spacing
- Scannable information architecture
- Delightful micro-interactions on hover and click
- Modular, scalable layouts
- Responsive grid systems that adapt elegantly

3. Intergenerational Accessibility

The interface must work for both 68-year-old retired professionals and 24-year-old entrepreneurs:
- Large, clear touch targets (minimum 44px)
- High contrast ratios (WCAG AAA where possible)
- Progressive disclosure (don't overwhelm with options)
- Familiar interaction patterns

4. Trust Through Transparency

Every interaction involving money, time, or commitment must be crystal clear. No hidden fees, no surprise costs, no confusing flows. All pricing is shown upfront with clear breakdowns.

2. Visual Identity System

Color Palette

Primary Colors

Color	Hex Code	Usage
Deep Navy	#1A365D	Primary buttons, headings, trust elements. Conveys wisdom and authority.
Warm Gold	#D69E2E	Accent color, highlights, hover states, value indicators.
Sage Green	#38A169	Success states, confirmations, positive actions, growth metrics.
Cream	#FFFAF0	Main page background. Warm alternative to pure white, reduces eye strain.

Neutral Gray Scale

- **Gray 900 (#1A202C):** Primary text
- **Gray 700 (#2D3748):** Secondary text
- **Gray 500 (#718096):** Tertiary text, placeholders
- **Gray 300 (#CBD5E0):** Borders, dividers
- **Gray 100 (#EDF2F7):** Backgrounds, hover states
- **Gray 50 (#F7FAFC):** Subtle backgrounds

Typography System

Font Families

Headlines: Inter
- Weights: 700 (Bold), 600 (Semi-Bold)
- Usage: H1-H5, buttons, labels, UI elements
- Rationale: Clean, modern, excellent readability at all sizes

Body Text: Georgia
- Weights: 400 (Regular), 600 (Semi-Bold)
- Usage: Paragraphs, descriptions, long-form content
- Rationale: Professional, highly readable, slightly academic feel

Type Scale

Element	Size	Line Height	Usage
H1	48px	56px	Page titles, hero headings
H2	36px	44px	Section headings, card titles
H3	24px	32px	Subsection headings, modal titles
Body Large	18px	28px	Hero descriptions, important content
Body	16px	24px	Standard body text, card descriptions
Body Small	14px	20px	Secondary information, metadata

3. Card Component System

Following modern Dribbble card-based minisite patterns, our component library is built around modular, reusable cards with consistent spacing, elevation, and interaction patterns.

Expert Profile Card (Primary Component)

Visual Structure

Card Anatomy:
- Container: 360px wide (desktop), 100% width (mobile)
- Padding: 24px all sides
- Background: Pure white (#FFFFFF)
- Border: 1px solid Gray 200 (#E2E8F0)
- Border Radius: 12px (medium)
- Box Shadow: 0 1px 3px rgba(0,0,0,0.08)
- Transition: all 0.2s ease

Content Elements

1. Avatar Circle:
- Size: 80px × 80px
- Border: 3px solid Warm Gold (#D69E2E)
- Border Radius: 50% (full circle)
- Position: Top-left, absolute positioned

2. Expert Name:
- Font: Inter Semi-Bold, 20px
- Color: Gray 900
- Margin: 4px bottom

3. Professional Title:
- Font: Georgia Regular, 16px
- Color: Gray 700
- Example: 'Former FDA Medical Device Reviewer'

4. Stats Row:
- Rating: ☆ icon + '4.9' + session count '(23 sessions)'
- Separator: Vertical bar (Gray 300)
- Hourly Rate: '$85/hr' in Inter Semi-Bold
- Font: 14px, Gray 700

5. Expertise Tags:
- Style: Pill-shaped badges
- Background: Gray 100
- Border: 1px solid Gray 300
- Padding: 6px horizontal, 12px vertical
- Max visible: 3 tags, '+2 more' if overflow
- Gap: 8px between tags

6. CTA Buttons:
- Primary: 'Book Session →' (Deep Navy background)
- Secondary: 'View Profile' (white with border)
- Height: 44px (touch-friendly)

- Border Radius: 8px
- Gap: 12px between buttons

Interaction States

State	Behavior
Default	Standard elevation, subtle gray border, white background
Hover	Elevated shadow, scale(1.02), border changes to Warm Gold, cursor: pointer
Active/Click	Slight scale down to 0.98, immediate visual feedback
Unavailable	Opacity: 0.6, grayscale filter, 'Unavailable' badge in top-right, cursor: not-allowed

4. Spacing & Layout System

8px Base Unit System

All spacing values are multiples of 8px for consistency and visual rhythm:

Token	Value	Usage
xs	4px	Icon padding, tight gaps between inline elements
sm	8px	Small spacing, tag gaps, form element spacing
md	16px	Medium spacing, between related elements within cards
lg	24px	Large spacing, card padding, section spacing
xl	32px	Major section breaks, between card groups
2xl	48px	Page section dividers, hero spacing
3xl	64px	Hero sections, major page divisions

Card Grid Layout

Desktop (≥1024px):
- 3 cards per row
- Gap: 24px horizontal, 32px vertical
- Container max-width: 1200px
- Centered with auto margins

Tablet (768px - 1023px):
- 2 cards per row
- Gap: 20px horizontal, 24px vertical
- Side padding: 24px

Mobile (<768px):
- 1 card per row (full width)
- Gap: 16px vertical
- Side padding: 16px

5. Elevation & Shadow System

Elevation creates depth hierarchy and guides user attention. We use 4 elevation levels:

Level	CSS Value & Usage
Elevation 1	*box-shadow: 0 1px 3px rgba(0,0,0,0.08), 0 1px 2px rgba(0,0,0,0.04);* Usage: Cards at rest, subtle elevation for content containers
Elevation 2	*box-shadow: 0 4px 6px rgba(0,0,0,0.07), 0 2px 4px rgba(0,0,0,0.05);* Usage: Cards on hover, dropdowns, tooltips
Elevation 3	*box-shadow: 0 10px 15px rgba(0,0,0,0.1), 0 4px 6px rgba(0,0,0,0.05);* Usage: Modals, popovers, elevated panels
Elevation 4	*box-shadow: 0 20px 25px rgba(0,0,0,0.1), 0 10px 10px rgba(0,0,0,0.04);* Usage: Sticky navigation, floating action buttons, top-level overlays

Border Radius Scale

- **Small (4px):** Input fields, small buttons, chips
- **Medium (8px):** Cards, medium buttons, form elements
- **Large (12px):** Feature cards, modals, large containers
- **XL (16px):** Hero cards, prominent CTAs
- **Full (9999px):** Pills, badges, avatars

6. Button Component System

Button Variants

Primary Button

- Background: Deep Navy (#1A365D)
- Text: White (#FFFFFF)
- Font: Inter Semi-Bold, 16px
- Padding: 12px vertical, 24px horizontal
- Border Radius: 8px
- Height: 44px (medium), 52px (large), 36px (small)
- Hover: Background lightens to #2D4A7C, translateY(-1px)
- Active: translateY(0), subtle scale
- Disabled: Gray 300 background, opacity 0.6, cursor not-allowed

Secondary Button

- Background: White
- Text: Deep Navy (#1A365D)
- Border: 2px solid Deep Navy
- Padding: 10px vertical, 24px horizontal (accounts for border)
- Hover: Background Gray 50, border changes to Warm Gold
- Usage: Alternative actions, view/cancel options

Ghost Button

- Background: Transparent
- Text: Deep Navy
- Border: None
- Hover: Background Gray 50, text color changes to Warm Gold
- Usage: Tertiary actions, inline links, subtle CTAs

7. Form Input Components

Text Input Field

Specifications

- Width: 100% of container
- Height: 48px
- Padding: 12px horizontal, 16px vertical
- Background: White
- Border: 2px solid Gray 300
- Border Radius: 8px
- Font: Georgia Regular, 16px
- Placeholder: Gray 500

States

- **Focus:** Border color changes to Deep Navy, 4px outline rgba(26, 54, 93, 0.1)
- **Error:** Border color Error Red, background rgba(229, 62, 62, 0.03)
- **Disabled:** Background Gray 100, cursor not-allowed
- **Success:** Border color Sage Green (optional)

Label & Helper Text

- **Label:** Inter Semi-Bold, 14px, Gray 900, 8px margin-bottom
- **Helper Text:** Inter Regular, 13px, Gray 600, 6px margin-top
- **Error Text:** Inter Regular, 13px, Error Red, 6px margin-top

Textarea

Same styling as text input, but:
- Min-height: 120px
- Resize: vertical only
- Line-height: 24px for readability

8. Accessibility Guidelines

Color Contrast Ratios

All color combinations meet WCAG AA standards minimum, AAA where possible:
- Deep Navy on White: 10.4:1 (AAA)
- Gray 900 on White: 12.6:1 (AAA)
- Gray 700 on White: 7.2:1 (AAA)
- Sage Green on White: 4.8:1 (AA)
- Warm Gold on Deep Navy: 5.1:1 (AA)

Touch Targets

- All interactive elements: minimum 44px × 44px
- Spacing between adjacent targets: minimum 8px
- Mobile buttons: 48px height for easier tapping

Keyboard Navigation

- All interactive elements are keyboard accessible
- Visible focus indicators (4px outline)
- Logical tab order follows visual hierarchy
- Skip navigation link for screen readers
- Modals trap focus until dismissed

Screen Reader Support

- Semantic HTML throughout
- ARIA labels on icon-only buttons
- ARIA live regions for dynamic content
- Image alt text for all meaningful images
- Form labels properly associated with inputs

9. Responsive Design Behavior

Breakpoint System

Breakpoint	Range	Layout Behavior
Mobile	0 - 767px	Single column, full-width cards, stacked navigation
Tablet	768px - 1023px	2 columns, optimized card sizing
Desktop	1024px+	3 columns, max-width container, hover states active

Mobile-Specific Adaptations

- **Navigation:** Hamburger menu, full-screen overlay
- **Cards:** Full-width with 16px side margins
- **Typography:** Slightly larger (H1: 40px instead of 48px)
- **Buttons:** 48px minimum height, full-width for primary actions
- **Spacing:** Reduced by 25% from desktop values
- **Modals:** Full-screen on mobile, slide-up animation

10. Animation & Micro-interactions

Animation Principles

- **Duration:** Fast (150ms) for small elements, Medium (250ms) for cards, Slow (350ms) for large modals
- **Easing:** ease-out for entrances, ease-in for exits, ease-in-out for movements
- **Purpose:** All animations serve to provide feedback, guide attention, or indicate state changes
- **Performance:** Use transform and opacity only for 60fps animations
- **Accessibility:** Respect prefers-reduced-motion

Key Micro-interactions

Card Hover Effect

- Transform: translateY(-4px) + scale(1.02)
- Shadow: Elevation 1 → Elevation 2
- Border: Gray 200 → Warm Gold
- Duration: 200ms
- Easing: ease-out

Button Press

- Transform: scale(0.98)
- Duration: 100ms
- Immediate visual feedback for user action

Modal Entrance

- Overlay: Fade in from opacity 0 to 1 (200ms)
- Modal: Scale from 0.95 to 1 + fade in (250ms)
- Easing: ease-out
- Exit: Reverse animation, ease-in

Loading States

- Skeleton screens for card loading (pulsing gray rectangles)
- Spinner for button actions (18px, Warm Gold)
- Progress bars for multi-step processes

END OF DESIGN DOCUMENT

Sage Exchange Design System v1.0

For design questions or component requests, contact the design team.