

UX Project

UAH Tuition Calculator Evaluation

Prepared for: UAH Office of Marketing and Communication (OMC)

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Date: November 21, 2025

[UX Project Presentation](#)

Executive Summary

This document is a report of Team Oak's findings from the UX study on the UAH Tuition Calculator. Due to the calculator's development in a compressed timeframe, it has not yet undergone a formal UX review. Team Oak tested the tool on both incoming and current UAH students on laptops and mobile devices. Team Oak aimed to observe navigation habits, identify any accessibility issues, and gather feedback from users. Preliminary results indicated that, once found, the calculator works well. However, it is challenging to locate on the UAH website. Participants in the study expressed confusion about the website's placement, scrolling expectations, and the absence of links to fees. This report provides an overview of the project's purpose, methods, participants, findings, and recommendations from the team.

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Introduction

The Office of Marketing and Communications at UAH has requested qualitative and quantitative analysis, as well as feedback, from students on the UAH Tuition Calculator. Team Oak proposed a study involving incoming and current UAH students to gather ideas, receive feedback on areas for improvement, and collect data on user accessibility, to make the calculator as efficient as possible for users. The purpose of this document is to clearly outline and present the study's findings to the client. Team Oak decided to conduct a one-on-one user-based study to help provide suggestions for improvement and recommendations for the client. The study was necessary to help the client better understand positive and negative feedback on the calculator. Questions on its use, functionality, and navigation were key to understanding user accessibility.

Test Outline

Testing Environment

Team Oak conducted each usability test one-on-one at various times and locations on campus to capture natural user behavior. Observers used a shared Google Doc to record their observations and the participants' responses. Participants interacted with the UAH Tuition Calculator on both laptop and mobile devices while under observation for their actions and feedback.

Procedure

1. Each participant received an overview of the study and instructions to navigate to the Tuition Calculator on the UAH website at their leisure
2. Each participant spent 10 minutes using the calculator, with observers noting moments of confusion, ease, and engagement
3. Each participant responded to a series of structured questions on navigation, layout, clarity, and overall experience
4. Each participant repeated this process on their mobile device and then answered questions about layout differences and device preferences

Data Collection and Analysis

Observers carefully noted nonverbal reactions and moments of pause, like when a participant struggled to find the UAH Tuition Calculator. The observers also noted any verbal comments on navigation, layout clarity, and document usability. They then recorded the feedback and behavior in a shared Google Doc throughout the testing process.

Using a brief task prompt and a structured set of post-task questions embedded in the Google Doc, the observers gathered data. Each session followed a scripted procedure: participants used the UAH Tuition Calculator and then answered a sequence of usability questions about navigation, ease of input,

layout, and device comparison. During testing, observers completed a lightweight observation checklist, logging participant quotes and visible reactions.

Team Oak's Research and Development specialist compiled all entries in the shared document by categorizing notes and quotes into themes such as navigation difficulty, layout feedback, and device experience, and stored them in an aggregated, anonymized form for analysis. Team Oak then reviewed the summarized data collaboratively to identify recurring patterns and guide Team Oak's findings and recommendations.

Screenshots for Visual Aid

The screenshot shows the UAH Undergraduate Admission website. The header includes navigation links: ABOUT UAH, EVENTS, MAP, GIVING, ALUMNI, DIRECTORY, I AM A..., and a SEARCH bar. Below the header is a blue navigation bar with links: Admission & Aid, Academics, Research, Campus Life, Athletics, and News.

The main content area is titled "Costs are based on 2025-2026 Tuition and Fees". It includes a sub-header "Please use the following calculator to help plan your costs per term at UAH." and a prompt "Select your residency status and enter the hours you plan to register for in each college.".

On the left, there is a sidebar menu under "UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION" with links: Undergraduate Admission, Discover UAH, Apply for Admission, Financial Aid, Scholarships, Cost of Attendance, Grants, Loans, Work Study, Co-Op / Internships, Frequently Asked Questions, Course Program of Study, and Contact Financial Aid. A red box highlights the "Undergraduate Admission" link, and a note states: "Each participant struggled with locating the tuition calculator without a direct link to the page".

The main form area includes a "College Class Hours" section with a dropdown menu for "College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences" and a "0 hours" input field. A red circle highlights this section with the note: "This section is clear and easy to understand for users". Below this are dropdown menus for "College of Business", "College of Education", "College of Engineering", "College of Nursing", and "College of Science", each with a "0 hours" input field.

On the right, there is a "Cost of Attendance" section with a large "\$0.00" display and the text "Estimated Tuition Cost 0 hours / 1 semester". Below this is a table of costs:

Item	Cost
Tuition	\$0.00
College Fees	\$0.00
Infrastructure Fees	\$0.00
Charger Course Pack	\$0.00
Estimated Total	\$0.00

A red circle highlights the "Charger Course Pack" row, and a note states: "One participant requests that this be optional".

On the far right, there are three yellow buttons: "Apply to UAH", "Visit UAH", and "Request Info".

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION	
Undergraduate Admission	–
Discover UAH	+
Apply for Admission	+
Financial Aid	–
Scholarships	+
Cost of Attendance	
Grants	
Loans	
Work Study	
Co-Op / Internships	
Frequently Asked Questions	
Course Program of Study	
Contact Financial Aid	

An example: in between the FAQ and Course Program of Study sections

For clarity, participants in the study requested that the Tuition Calculator be easily accessible through the UAH sidebar panel. Teak Oak suggests putting the Tuition Calculator under the Financial Aid section of the Undergraduate Admission sidebar

The calculator does not include the following:

- Course Fees
- Honors College Fees
- International Fees
- Parking Fees
- Meal Plans
- New Student Housing Costs and Information
- Returning Student Housing Costs and Information
- Charger Card

Participants would like hyperlinks to the first three categories shown in the bullet point list: Course Fees, Honors College Fees, and International Fees. This will keep this section of the calculator concise.

Charger Course Pack can be moved down here underneath Charger Card as an option rather than a required tuition cost.

Participants

Five incoming or current UAH students participated voluntarily in this study. Each participant received a number (1–5) for the purpose of anonymity. All participants had a basic familiarity with college websites, but they were first-time users of the UAH Tuition Calculator. The sample size, consisting of five incoming or current UAH students, reflects a typical pilot usability round for formative UX testing, and the participants represent the tool's intended audience.

Findings

General Observations

- Participants commonly struggled to locate the Tuition Calculator on UAH's website
- After finding and using the UAH Tuition Calculator, participants described it as simple, concise, and functional
- The placement of links and lack of visibility within the site structure caused the most confusion

Key Themes and Responses

- **Navigation and Accessibility**
 - The calculator is difficult to find; participants suggest adding a homepage link to UAH's **Financial Aid** section within the **Undergraduate Admission** sidebar
 - **Participant 1**– "It's complicated to find the calculator on UAH's website, but the calculator itself is straightforward."
- **Interface and Layout**
 - Despite the clean design, some participants expected results to appear automatically beneath input fields
 - **Participant 2**– "The only instance in which the layout was questionable was where you scroll past the calculator and see all that isn't included in the total sum of tuition."
- **Content and Links**
 - Participants requested hyperlinks to the course, honors, and international fees at the bottom of the calculator. Additionally, one participant suggested making the Charger Course Pack an optional hyperlink instead of a requirement in the tuition cost
 - **Participant 1**– "Take out the Charger Course Pack and have it as a link with the other sections since it is optional."
- **Device Comparison**
 - Participants preferred the laptop version; the mobile version required additional scrolling and initially caused confusion on the location of the tuition cost. Testees confirmed they could tell this tool was meant to be accessed on a website. The Tuition Calculator is usable on mobile, but does not seem designed for primary mobile use. Laptop and mobile differences are a prominent issue in website layout, but if the infrastructure allows, expand on more accessibility in terms of mobile use
 - **Participant 3**– "There was a little bit of difference. On my phone, I had to scroll more to see everything, but it still worked fine."
 - **Participant 5**– "It's odd that something so important isn't highlighted more clearly."
- **Overall Experience**

- Participants had a positive experience after accessing the UAH Tuition Calculator, as they found it clear, accessible, and overall easy to navigate; however, they still expressed frustration with discoverability
 - **Participant 2**– "The website is simple and effective, but finding the calculator should be easier."
 - **Participant 4**– "It looks professional but not very inviting. I expected something more obvious or easier to locate, but once I found the calculator, it worked smoothly."

Conclusions and Recommendations

The UAH Tuition Calculator does a good job of clearly presenting tuition information when accessed. Participants expressed overall satisfaction with the navigation, layout, and formatting of the calculator. In the study, Team Oak identified discoverability issues on the UAH parent site and a lack of representation in the sidebar panel as the primary concern. Most participants were more upset with its buried placement rather than its functionality. As a result of this buried placement, Team Oak provides the client with the following recommendations:

- Add a hyperlink to the **Financial Aid** section of the **Undergraduate Admissions** page located in the UAH sidebar
- Include hyperlinks to optional fees, like course, honors, and international fees
- Change the Charger Course Pack from required to optional
- Consolidate related links under a menu for tuition and fees
- Adjust the mobile layout to minimize scrolling as a result of confusion on location and emphasize results

Appendix A

Privacy Note: The data presented is anonymized and aggregated, and no participant is identifiable.

Questions and Responses

1. What were your first impressions of the website?

- a. **Participant 1**– "I don't like it because it seems like there's one specific way to find it. It's complicated to find the calculator on UAH's website. The calculator itself is pretty straightforward."
- b. **Participant 2**– "The website was simple and effective. There were no busy graphics in the way, which would have made it confusing for users. The website was simple and straight to the point."
- c. **Participant 3**– "At first, I thought the website looked simple, but it ended up not being very easy to navigate. I expected the calculator to be easier to find or highlighted somewhere obvious. After I finally did find it, everything went fine."
- d. **Participant 4**– "It looks professional but not very inviting. I expected something more obvious or easier to locate, but once I found the calculator, it worked smoothly."
- e. **Participant 5**– "It was hard to find, but once I got there, it worked fine."

2. Did you find the website user-accessible and easy to navigate?

- a. **Participant 1**– "The calculator was user-accessible in that once you actually got to it, it was easy to navigate and tells you the steps you need to take in order to figure out your tuition. Navigating to the website was a difficult part. Didn't know if I could find the website without a link being sent to me."
- b. **Participant 2**– "The calculator was easy to use and navigate, and I had no problems doing so."
- c. **Participant 3**– "The calculator itself was simple and clear once I got to it."
- d. **Participant 4**– "The calculator itself was easy to use, but getting there was not."
- e. **Participant 5**– "The website looks neat, but it's not super intuitive. The calculator page itself is straightforward, though."

3. Were there moments when you found yourself questioning the structure or layout of the website?

- a. **Participant 1**– "There were no moments where I found myself questioning. Why do they automatically try to put the Charger Course Pack into the total cost?"
- b. **Participant 2**– "The only instance in which the layout was questionable was where you scroll past the calculator and see all that isn't included in the total sum of tuition."
- c. **Participant 3**– "Yes, a little. I found myself wondering why certain links or sections weren't grouped together. It felt buried."

- d. **Participant 4**– "Yes, the layout does not really guide you toward the calculator. It feels almost hidden in the middle of other links."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "Once you're on the calculator, it's very user-friendly. Getting to that point took more effort than I expected."
- 4. **If you had suggestions for changes, what would they be?**
 - a. **Participant 1**– "Be able to access it on multiple points of UAH's website. Take out the Charger Course Pack and have it as a link with the other sections, since it is optional. Charger Course Pack is optional; other structural fees are not optional. Add links for the course fees, because that is probably what is on the tuition and fees page. But you want the link to the other fees since they have links for some of them, just not all of them."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "One suggestion for the site would be to add the fees for any extracurriculars, food, or housing expenses into the calculator so the student knows fully what they're getting into."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "I think the Tuition Calculator should be easier to find. They could add it to the main page or on a visible sidebar."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "To move the calculator to the homepage or put it under a big, clear button."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "Yes, a little. It's odd that something so important isn't highlighted more clearly."
- 5. **Would you use this website on your own to understand tuition and finances?**
 - a. **Participant 1**– "I would."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "Yes."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "Yes."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "Yes, but I would probably bookmark it next time so I don't have to hunt for it again."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "Yes."
- 6. **How would you use this website?**
 - a. **Participant 1**– "I would go to it for tuition costs since it is a lot easier than going to the tuition rates page and figuring it out there because you can clearly see the different fees associated with each college category."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "I would go and look up how much left I'd owe the school in tuition fees."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "I would go on there to figure out how much my tuition would be before signing up for classes."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "To get a quick estimate of tuition costs before deciding on my housing."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "To break down my tuition costs."
- 7. **Any commentary on how to put information into the website?**
 - a. **Participant 1**– "It was easy to put the information, no moment of hesitation or confusion when putting in information."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "It was easy to input information."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "It was easy to put in the information."

- d. **Participant 4**– "Using it was easy."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "No issues, it calculated quickly."
8. **Was there any difference in layout between the laptop and mobile device versions?**
- a. **Participant 1**– "You have to scroll down to see what it actually costs instead of it being right in front of you, but it is a phone, so it's not a huge deal. It is different, just not annoying."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "The difference in layout isn't bad. The only difference is having to scroll down to see what the tuition is."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "There was a little bit of difference. On my phone, I had to scroll more to see everything, but it still worked fine."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "It was cramped on my phone. I had to scroll more, but everything was still there."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "The same, just smaller."
9. **Which device was easier to navigate?**
- a. **Participant 1**– "Doing it on a computer was easier to navigate. Mostly because I don't like to do things on my phone because it's smaller."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "The computer was easier to navigate, but I don't think the phone was too bad either."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "Navigating on the computer was way easier."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "The computer."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "Computer."
10. **If the mobile version were more difficult, what improvements would you like to see?**
- a. **Participant 1**– "It's not difficult to understand, so there aren't any suggestions for improvement except for adding the other links to the other fees (same suggestions for the laptop)."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "It isn't difficult to understand. The layout is almost identical to the PC website."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "It is still easy to understand, you can just tell the website is meant to be viewed on a laptop/ desktop."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "Maybe make the calculator fit better on the screen; less scrolling would be ideal."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "It's easy to understand, just harder to use."
11. **What challenges arose from using your phone versus your laptop?**
- a. **Participant 1**– "Just smaller to see."
 - b. **Participant 2**– "There were no challenges present."
 - c. **Participant 3**– "No challenges."
 - d. **Participant 4**– "Just the screen size."
 - e. **Participant 5**– "No challenges."
12. **Is there any additional feedback you would like to share?**
- a. **Participant 1**– "The calculator part is fine, but finding it is atrocious. I would like to see more accessibility with UAH's website rather than the actual calculator itself."

- b. **Participant 2**– "It would be better if the calculator were easily accessible. Finding anything for yourself on UAH's website is hard and feels like mazerunning."
- c. **Participant 3**– "Make it easier to find."
- d. **Participant 4**– "It needs to be made more visible. It feels like a scavenger hunt to find it."
- e. **Participant 5**– "Everything works great, just really hard to initially locate."

Observations

- Participants commonly struggled to locate the Tuition Calculator on UAH's website
- After finding and using the UAH Tuition Calculator, participants described it as simple, concise, and functional
- The placement of links and lack of visibility within the site structure caused some confusion

Survey Summary

Participants described the calculator as intuitively easy and visually straightforward. However, they also described the calculator as difficult to locate. Overall, participant satisfaction was high because the calculator worked well.

Storage Note

Observers used a shared Google Doc to record observations and responses. It included participant observations, behavioral notes, and responses to questions. Team Oak's Research and Development department compiled all entries in the shared document by categorizing notes and quotes into themes: navigation difficulty, layout feedback, and device experience. It then stored them in an aggregated, anonymized form for analysis. The data presented thus far is the working aggregated and anonymized data, and no participant is identifiable.