Adam Gincel

BT353 Final Project: *Services 2.0*

**Introduction**

The project I will be leading is a recreation of the Stevens Student Services website, simultaneously improving its user experience while adding in new features. The original site’s features will be ported over and made more accessible, and other existing services not already a part of the Student Services site will be merged into the final design. This new site will make class registration, study plan creation, IT help desk and physical plant requests, and career planning all more widely available and easy to use.

**Overview and Context**

The current Student Services portal was created on January 21st, 2004. Stevens has grown since then – in 2004 Stevens accepted 1,734 undergraduate students [[1]](http://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/statistics/04EnrollmentbySex.htm), compared to the 2,892 enrolled as of 2014 [[2]](http://www.stevens.edu/sit/admissions/student/fastfacts.cfm). While these are both relatively small numbers, that is an increase of 167% in a decade, and these students use the Internet more heavily than ever before.

The current site is slow to navigate; some of its most used features are buried under several layers of menus and obscure pages. In addition, some of the most useful features to a current undergraduate student, like the IT help desk, an interactive calendar that lets you visually map out your courses, and physical plant, are all completely separate services. There is no reason these services, all necessary for students during their time at Stevens, to be completely separate. The existing site also is taken down for maintenance or data management every single day between 2:45 AM and 7:00 AM. While this would be acceptable for a normal service used exclusively during the day, Stevens students have been known to pull all-nighters, or otherwise stay up until the hours during which the Student Services website, which contains valuable information, is inaccessible. These are all very real problems which are, for the most part, very easy to fix.

The Student Services site needs a complete overhaul. The revamped site will need to provide every service currently provided by the existing site, as well as incorporate various features spread throughout <http://www.stevens.edu>, and even a few student projects which were developed to make some more arduous tasks easier for undergraduates. Stevens has quite the abundance of capable programmers and designers, who will be more than capable of rewriting the existing system into a much prettier, much more usable Student Services site.

**Objectives**

This project, tentatively named Services 2.0, will be able to provide every service currently provided by the existing Student Services system, henceforth called Services 1.0, as well as include several new features, some of which may simply be ports of existing separate services. The new site will make the most popular features of Services 1.0 much easier to reach, either by providing shortcuts or more streamlined menus based on what Students are known to use most frequently. In addition, Services 2.0 will look like a modern website, with a web-compatible and mobile-compatible interface, usable across all popular browsers. Services 2.0 will replace the existing Student Services site on the Student homepage, or perhaps replace the Student homepage altogether.

**Schedule** Assuming this project starts in spring 2016, a trial version of the site should be deployed in time to schedule classes for the Summer Intercessions. There are fewer students registering for classes during this time, so it will be useful as a stress test for the new course registration system.

All of the old features should be implemented by the end of the Fall 2016 semester, in time to deploy before class registration for the Spring 2017 semester.

Throughout the Spring 2017 semester the new features ported from existing systems or from student projects will be incorporated, with Services 2.0 finally deploying in full by May 2017.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

The following bullet points are quantifiable goals that are all directly related to the success of the project:

* Porting all existing Student Services features to Services 2.0
* Porting Visual Course Scheduler [[3]](http://web.stevens.edu/scheduler/) to Services 2.0, and allowing for these visual schedules to be immediately requested.
* Porting Schedule Creator created by students, which can generate potential schedules when given a list of required classes, to Services 2.0.
* Port IT Help Desk and Physical Plant services to Services 2.0
* Make Website easy to navigate, cross-browser compatible, and mobile-compatible.

**Required Project Resources**

This project will require:

A project team consisting of:

* A project leader
* Two web developers, one responsible for the desktop website, the other responsible for the mobile site.
* A site administrator, who would help manage databases and would perform maintenance to keep the server running behind the scenes.
* Two programmers, one focused on porting existing features to Services 2.0, the other for porting the newer services.

An array of servers, used to host and store the site.

Access to the source code of Services 1.0, the IT Help Desk service, Physical Plant’s online service, and other resources being implemented.

Depending on whether or not the workers are contracted externally or taken from within Stevens, approximately $500,000 may be needed to cover salaries on top of server costs.

**Actions/Recommendations**

Services 2.0 will be an elegant, user-friendly reimagining of the existing Student Services website. The site will:

* Provide quick, easy access to needed information and services, including transcripts, course registration and information, Financial Aid, Student Email, and help requests via the IT help desk or Physical Plant.
* Be accessible from a computer, tablet, or phone from most popular browsers.
* Completely replace the existing Student Services portal and make arduous processes like course registration less stressful for students.

**Expected Outcomes**

By the end of the Spring 2017, Services 2.0 will have completely replaced the existing Student Services portal. Students will have become familiar with the service over its gradual deployment, and the service will simplify tasks which were previously complicated – what once required storing call numbers of classes, navigating through multiple menus to reach the Drop/Add page, then entering those numbers one at a time to select classes to take, will now simply require pulling the classes up in a visual calendar view, saving them, then applying for the saved classes once classes open for registration.

Ideally, Services 2.0 would be such an efficient, usable platform for students that other schools would take interest, and the software could be leased out to other schools looking to provide a modern website to enable their students to manage their own affairs. This project will result in an impressively sleek, usable site suitable for students of the Internet age.

**Summary**

Services 2.0 is a proposed replacement for Stevens’s existing Student Services website. The current site was written in 2004 and has not aged well; it goes down for maintenance every single night, requires the navigation of several menus to reach common features, and unnecessarily complicates what should be simple tasks.

By creating a site from the ground up that supports all modern browsers, as well as mobile browsers, and that migrates all existing features as well as some new ones which may exist in services not directly a part of the current Student Services site, Services 2.0 will be able to provide a modern, streamlined way to access the services students need to manage their academic careers, as well as their lives on campus. Services 2.0 will truly be a Student Services site fit for the Information Age.