Brian Connerton
Dennis Law
Chris Selagea
Ethan Stewart

Group 8 Milestone 1 Research Report

The problem that we are exploring for this project is the general lack of awareness about the various resources students have available for finding internships. There is a great deal of internships available and being able to gain some real world experience during college is becoming an increasingly valuable asset to graduating students. We are looking to find a way to help students become more involved and proactive in their search for an internship while in college.

Upon investigation, we quickly found that this problem area already has several solution strategies already in place provided by both UGA and third party companies. UGA's principle solution to this problem is DawgLink. DawgLink is a web based service provided by the UGA Career Center that is designed to help students find an internship/job, build a resume, establish contacts, etc. The Career Center also sends out a weekly e-flyer done through a service called Smore. The flyers are highly customizable and the service is very friendly to people who are unfamiliar with both computers and graphic design. The Career Center also offers walk in hours to talk with counselors from a given department, as well as appointments for more personal meetings. In addition to all of the services provided by UGA, there are a plethora of outside companies offering services that are effectively identical to DawgLink. Users can use the sites to search for internships being posted by companies all over the country. A quick Google search will yield numerous results, coming up with sites like Internships.com, MonsterCollege.com, InternMatch.com, InternshipProgram.com, and many others. So it is evident that our solution to this problem will have to focus less on matching specific people to specific internships, and more on how we can connect people to the resources and convince them to take initiative and put themselves out there.

The target users for our system are college students, likely upper classmen, although our interviews with students found little deviation between grade level and interest in an internship. These users would ideally already be interested in getting an internship. They would also need to have some internal motivation and be willing to take the initiative to actually put the effort into getting the internship, as well as be qualified to hold a position in their field. The point is, at this stage, we are not looking to inspire people to look for internships so much as inform them of the tools they have in a way that they will actually pay attention to. During our interviews, nearly every respondent said that they did not know where to begin looking for an internship. We also found out that the majority of people ignore the e-mails they receive from the career center. It should also be noted here that the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) rates online networking as the least effective recruitment tactic.

The stakeholders for this system will be students and the career center. It could be said that employers are another stakeholder, however since our focus in not on directly connecting student to businesses, they are considered more of a secondary stakeholder. Student stakeholders

will be looking to find more information about internships, while Career Center employees will be trying to promote internships and get people to take a more active role in the process.

The general task environment for the system will be on a computer, most likely a web presence. The system needs to be easily accessible and ubiquitous enough for people to use it regularly. Ideally, so long as the user has an internet connection, they should be able to get to the system. As for the tasks that need to be addressed, we can break the problem down into a few key features. Initially the system would need some background information on the user, such as major, year, etc. This would only need to be provided once to build a user profile. After that, the user would perform tasks within the system exploring the information we would provide to them. This could be things like informing them of informational events, new postings on DawgLink, or even just giving them contact information of people to talk to such as their career counselor. At this point it would be up to the user to follow up on this information.

While the existing solutions to this problem do not exactly overlap with what our system is trying to do, it is important to look at them and see what they do and don't do right. First we have DawgLink, the UGA run job connection site. DawgLink is a great site for students to get their name out there, however there are a couple noticeable flaws. The first is on the homepage of the site. When a user enters DawgLink, it is not immediately apparent where they should go to begin their search. At first glance, users may not even know that its a feature. To find the search they must scan a list of identical looking options on the righthand side of the screen. At this point the user fills in their personal information so the site can match them to available positions. Users can then search for listings by region, not state, and job type. Once a job is selected, the user can find further information about the job and contact information. A useful feature in this screen is a list of jobs similar to the one currently selected. The service that UGA uses to notify students of campus events and listings is a website called Smore, which lets users build e-flyers from an easily understandable template. After looking through the site and examining its features for ourselves, we couldn't really find anything wrong with it. The issue with these flyers is that people simply are not paying attention to them, and that could be due to their distribution methods. The Career Center sends out their Smore flyers via e-mail, but when you go to open the e-mail, the flyer does not render. You are instead greeted with several gray boxes and redirect link to open it in a browser. Links like that tend to make people uneasy and students that we interviewed said that they simply ignore those e-mails.

The outside service students can use operate similarly to DawgLink, however they are more generalized and tend to have increased functionality. A good example is Internships.com. The site allows you to search for jobs via keywords, fields, and name. Once a search has been entered there are numerous filters and options to refine the search, and each listing gives a healthy amount of information on the requirements and expectations for the given position. Again, we see that the issue is not the sites resources themselves, but getting students to actually use what they have available.

Our data gathering methods for this information includes firsthand investigation of existing solutions, interviews with students, interviews with career counselors, and research into scholarly data. On that note, after looking through databases for information about promoting internships, we had trouble finding information on the topic. Most of the research that has been

done goes into effectiveness of internships themselves, and we suspect that our topic falls more into a sociological/psychological field, which is something to keep in mind going forward. That's not to say we have no data though. In 2013, NACE conducted a survey of member organization on the topic of internships. From this survey we found that companies have very high opinions of internship programs and roughly a third of respondents expected new hires to be coming from internal internships. The most interesting fact from this survey though, was that on campus recruiting was deemed to be the most effective method for finding new hires. So this would be the career fairs and company informational sessions that the Career Center Smore flyers are designed to promote, the very same flyers that student simply ignore.

In conclusion, we are not looking to reinvent the wheel with our system. We can not design better e-flyers than Smore, we don't have the contacts and clout of DawgLink, and we can't provide the varied functionality of the third party sites. What we can do is design a system to let students know that all of this is out there, waiting to be take advantage of. Our interviews with students told us that many of them simply didn't know this was all out there. Bearing this in mind, the system we design should be simple, uncluttered, and preferably integrated into daily life to keep these things at the forefront of their mind. Good metrics for the success of the system could be monitoring the increase in student visits to these resources over time, looking for increased numbers of internships received, and even just asking students, do you know what's out there. If we can get a majority of students to answer that question with a yes, then our job is done.