

WebAdvisor User Research Report

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Information Architecture I
MassArt Fall 2016



Overview

WebAdvisor is an online academic advising program used by many colleges and universities across the country. It was created by Datatel Inc. but is now managed by Ellucian. MassArt's WebAdvisor client, called DaVinci, is used by both students and faculty. Students can log into the program to search and register for classes, view their transcript, access their program evaluation, and perform various other tasks. Professors use DaVinci to view their students' progress and lift registration bans on their advisees.

While the college relies on DaVinci to perform all of these functions, its user interface is highly unorganized and not user-friendly. Because of this problem, I am researching ways to improve DaVinci by redesigning it. For the purposes of this class assignment, I am mainly focusing on the task of a user logging into DaVinci and accessing their program evaluation. Through my research, I have found that most users face issues related to the visual design of the site, its unclear menus, and confusing navigation.

Research Findings

GROUP RESEARCH

I began my research by working in a small group with two other students, Alo and Olivia. The assignment required us to choose eight different research methods from IDEO’s research method cards, two from each category. Individually, we chose which IDEO methods we thought applied to our project and would result in the most relevant information. From there, we shared our individual choices and narrowed down the final eight research methods, which consisted of the following:

ASK

Narration

- + As they perform a process or execute a specific task, ask participants to describe aloud what they are thinking.

Extreme User Interviews

- + Identify individuals who are extremely familiar or completely unfamiliar with the product and ask them to evaluate their experience using it.

LEARN

Flow Analysis

- + Represent the flow of information or activity through all phases of a system or process.

Competitive Product Survey

- + Collect, compare, and conduct evaluations of the product’s competition.

LOOK

Fly on the Wall

- + Observe and record behavior within its context, without interfering with people’s activities.

Personal Inventory

- + Document the things that people identify as important to them as a way of cataloging evidence of their lifestyles.

TRY

Paper Prototyping

- + Rapidly sketch, layout, and evaluate interaction design concepts for basic usability.

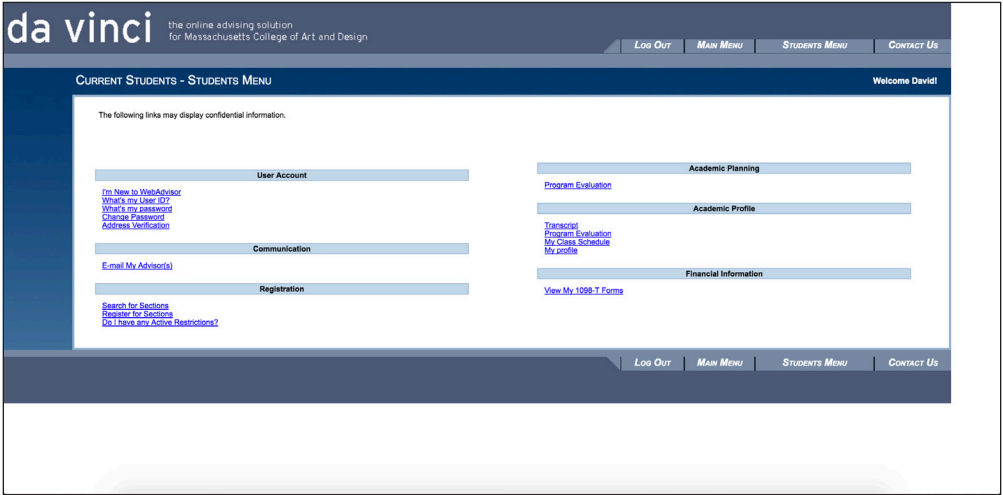
Be Your Customer

- + Ask the client to describe, outline or enact their typical customer’s experience.

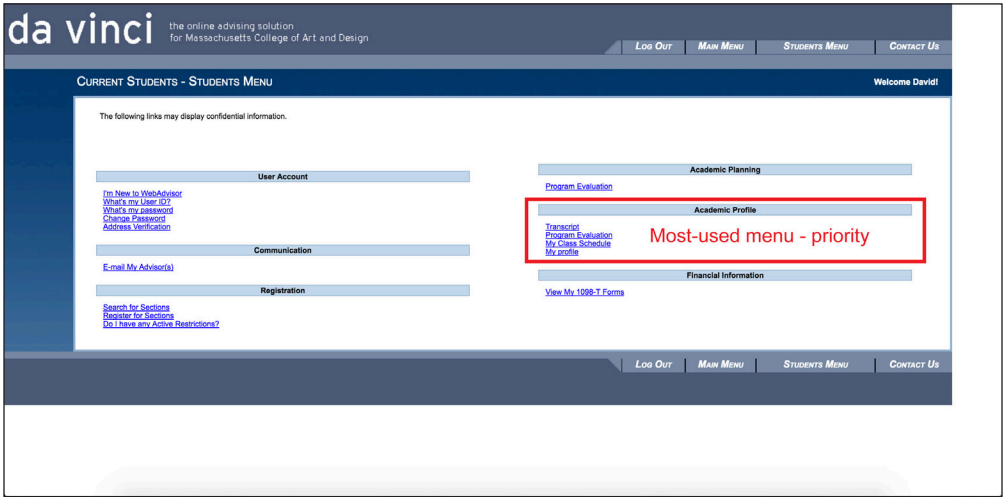
We then assigned the roles of observers and subject, where two group members would observe the third member perform the task of logging into DaVinci and accessing their program evaluation. We would then use our eight research methods to gather information about the subject, their opinions of DaVinci, and how they performed the assigned task. We cycled through each group member so that everyone had the chance to be both the subject and the observer.

Throughout our research and group discussion, we found that the poor design of the site made it hard for users to navigate. Each group member also mentioned how they disliked the appearance of the site, including elements like the color and typography choice, boxed structure, and lack of visual hierarchy. Through observation, narration and flow-charts, we found that students mostly use DaVinci for accessing their program evaluation, class schedule, and registering for classes. In addition, the site felt very disconnected from the college, students, and faculty that it serves.

The current DaVinci homepage.



According to User 1, the most-used features are listed under the Academic Profile, and deserve to be prioritized.



The current Program Evaluation page.

TAKE CDGD-2X8 TYPOGRAPHY II (6 CR) (Complete)							
1.	CDGD-230	Typography II	16/SP	A		6	
B: JUNIOR YEAR (In progress)							
Take 4 major courses:)							
Credits Earned: 6							
TAKE CDGD-340 GRAPHIC DESIGN II: MAKING MEANING (Pending completion of unfinished activity)							
	Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1.	CDGD-340	GD II:Making Meaning		16/FA		3	*JP
TAKE CDGD-342 INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE (Pending completion of unfinished activity)							
1.	CDGD-342	Information Architecture I		16/FA		3	*JP
TAKE CDGD-341 TYPOGRAPHY III (Not started)							
1.	3 credits needed						
TAKE CDGD-322 INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE II (Not started)							
1.	3 credits needed						

User Testing

USER 1

After completing the group research phase, we split up to research individual users. One subject had to be a MassArt student in another major, and the other subject had to be someone who never used DaVinci before. The first user I observed was Jorge, a junior Illustration major. Initially, he did not have any trouble performing the assigned task because he had used the site many times before, but after asking him a few questions about his opinion of DaVinci, he began to list some issues he found. He was mainly concerned with the visual look of the site and its confusing menus.

User comments:

- + Wishes the site looked more exciting, and used less eye-straining colors and boxes
- + Log in page should be clearer
- + Repetition of the menu bar is distracting
- + Program evaluation should be better organized, wants everything separated by year
- + Most-used features menu (academic profile) should be prioritized, possibly put in the center of the main menu page

USER 2

For the first-time user subject, I observed my sister Danit, who is a student at Wentworth. Surprisingly, she did not have any problems navigating DaVinci, until she encountered the “select program” page that appears before the program evaluation screen. At this page, she struggled with finding which option to input before moving onto the next page. Besides her confusion with that page, she mostly complained about the visual look of the site as well, stating how it’s overwhelming to look at because of all the information being displayed at once. She pointed out that the program evaluation page would look better in a simpler grid format.

User comments:

- + Program Evaluation takes too long to load
- + Too much information being presented all at once
- + “It’s ugly”

Strategy for Fixing the System

PLATFORM

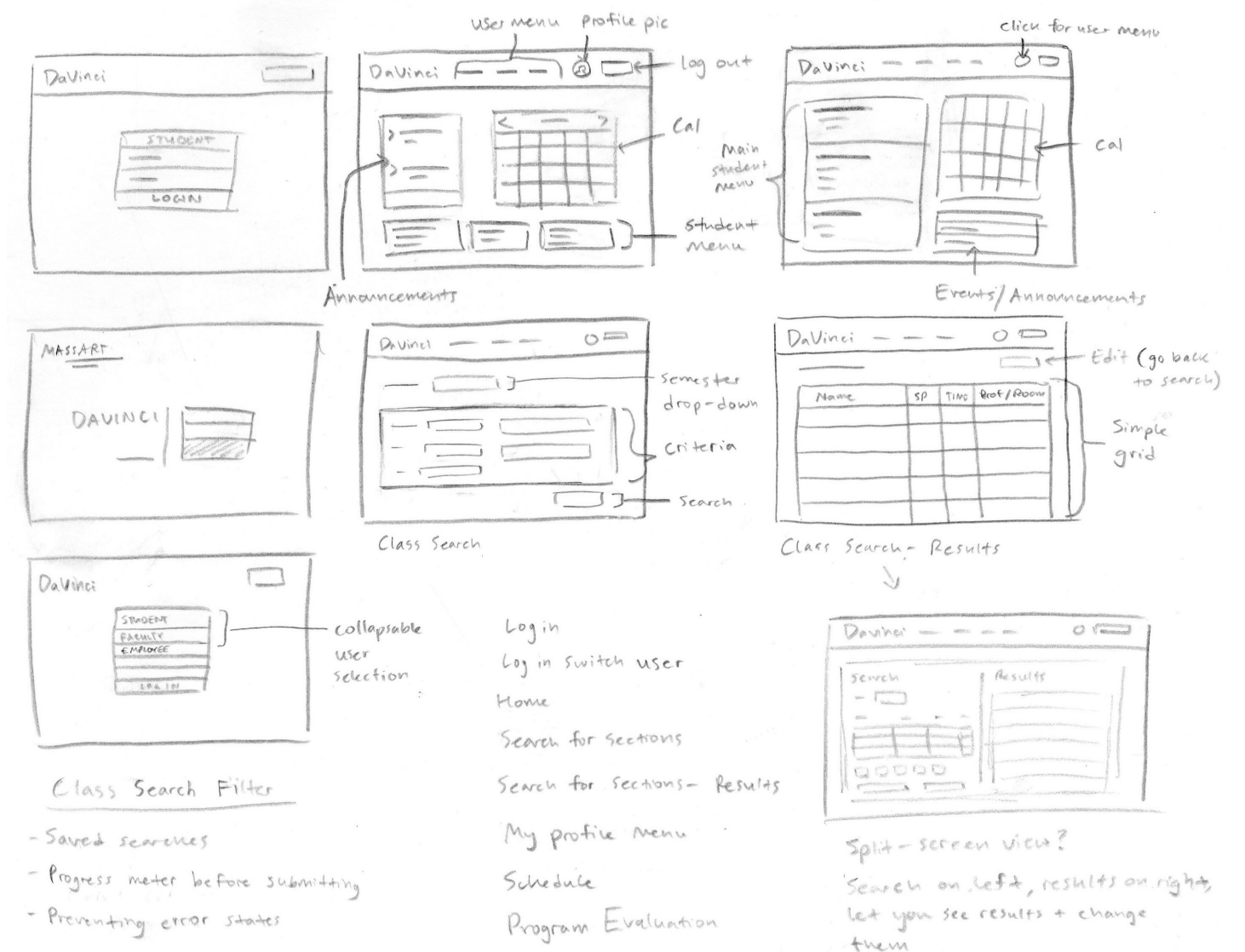
Web

KEY FEATURES

- + Universal log in page – users log in through one page, system identifies who they are and changes color in response.
- + Main user menu – central menu with most used functions such as registration, scheduling, program evaluation, financial, etc.
- + User dashboard – home page with useful widgets like a calendar, schedule, and college events.
- + Redesigned program evaluation – includes progress bars, tabbed summaries, and expandable sections.

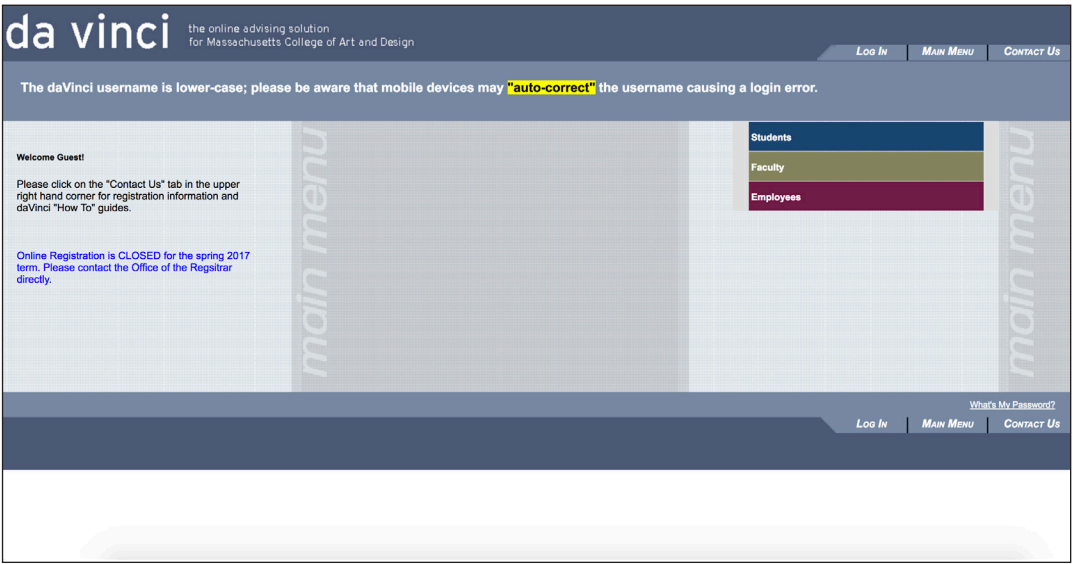
TYPE OF EXPERIENCE

A MassArt student visits the newly redesigned DaVinci site. He enters his username and password on the log-in screen and is brought to his main user menu. The menu has three sections, labeled Registration, Academics, and Financial. Under the “Academics” section is a short list of links to various pages. The student clicks on “Academic Progress Report” and is brought to their program evaluation page. The new program evaluation screen has a simplified design, with tabs that display the current school year instead of one long screen. Classes are organized by category, and color-coded to quickly show their status. After the student is done looking at his report, he clicks on the “log-out” button in the upper right of the screen, and is immediately logged out and brought back to the main login screen.

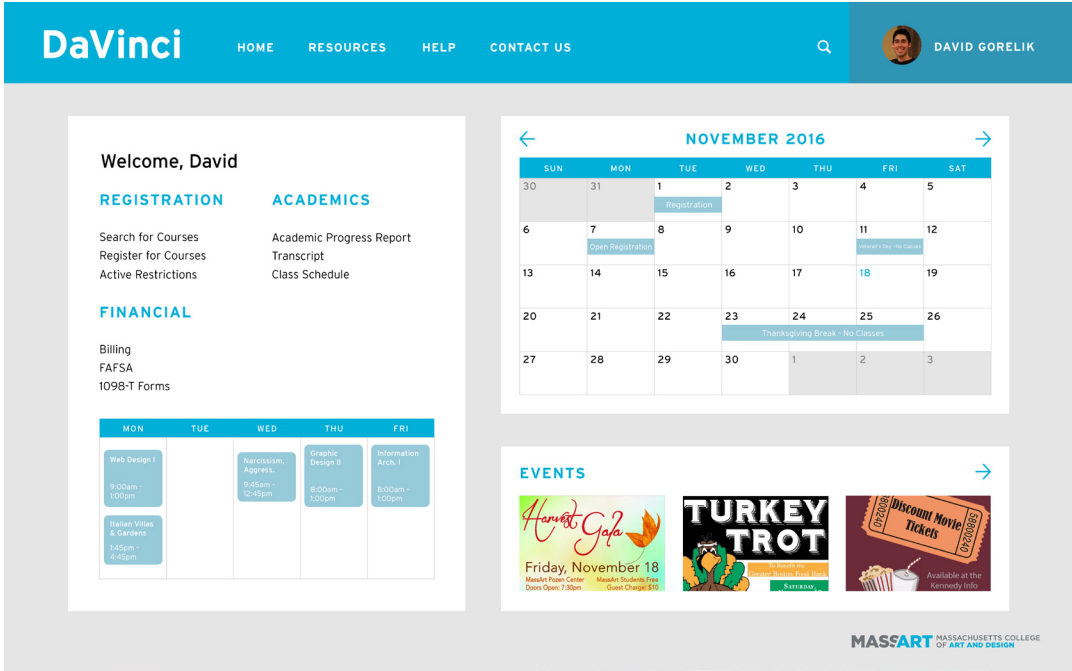
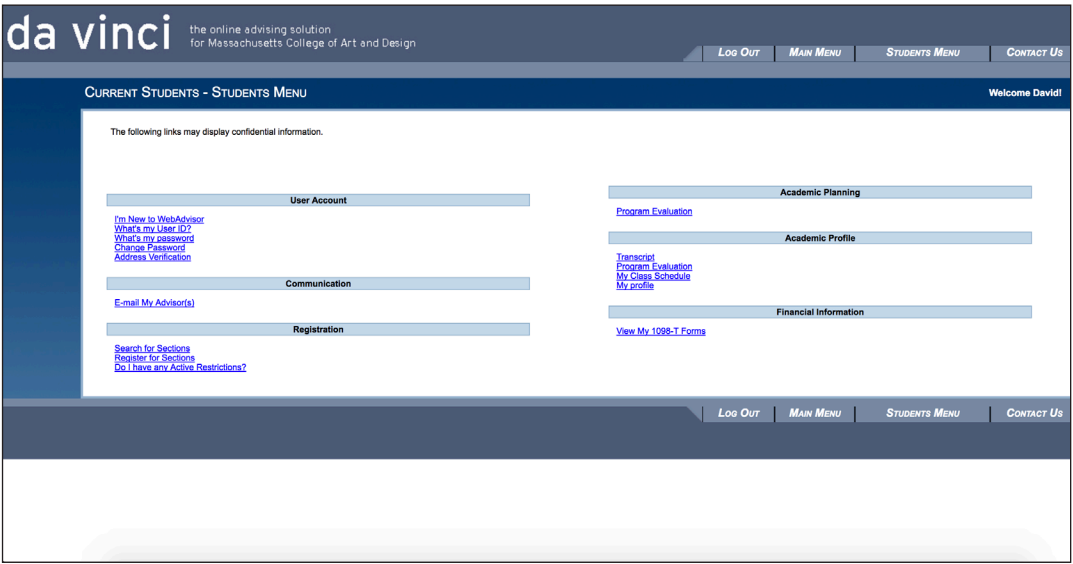


I made many sketches of potential user interface designs. I also thought about ways to improve current features and add useful new ones to enhance the user experience.

BEFORE



AFTER



The original DaVinci homepage is confusing and poorly organized, and does not fill the entire screen. The student menu is feels condensed, unbalanced and not intuitive to use.

The redesigned interface utilizes the entire screen, making it feel spacious and welcoming. The home page is now a new user dashboard with added features such as a class schedule, an academic calendar, and an events banner.

BEFORE

da vinci

the online advising solution
for Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Log OutMain MenuStudents MenuHelpContact Us

Current StudentsWelcome David!

Section Selection Results

Please be advised: BFA students can only register for "DAY" school courses online. BFA students must wait until the Add/Drop period to register for "CE" (Continuing Education) courses. The course type is indicated in the PURPOSE column below.

FIRSTPREVNEXTLASTJUMP

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Term	Status	Section Name and Title	Location	Meeting Information	Faculty	Available/ Capacity/ Waitlist	Credits	Purpose	Academic Level
Spring 2017	Waitlisted	CDGD-322-01 (33581) Information Architecture I	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/10/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 306	M. Rettig	-3 / 15 / 2	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Closed	CDGD-322-02 (33586) Information Architecture I	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 01:30PM - 06:30PM, Tower Building, Room 306	S. Balzman	-2 / 15 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Closed	CDGD-322-03 (33602) Information Architecture I	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 01:30PM - 06:30PM, Tower Building, Room 306	Kubasiewicz	-4 / 15 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-339-01 (34081) Web 2.0 Creating User Exp.	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Studio Tuesday 06:30PM - 09:30PM, Tower Building, Room 306	S. Balzman	16 / 16 / 0	3.00	3 CE	Ug
Spring 2017	Waitlisted	CDGD-341-01 (33581) Typography II	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629	Rosowsky	-1 / 15 / 2	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Waitlisted	CDGD-341-02 (33585) Typography II	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/10/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629	K. Hughes	-4 / 15 / 12	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-341-03 (33588) Typography II	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 613	A. Leone	-2 / 15 / 3	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-371-01 (33930) Intermediate Portfolio	Main Campus	01/24/2017-05/09/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 06:30PM - 10:00PM, Tower Building, Room 621	J. Stone	10 / 14 / 0	4.00	3 CE	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-392-01 (34037) Course Assistantship	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/08/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629	Rosowsky	9 / 10 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-392-02 (34094) Course Assistantship	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/08/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 621	Rosowsky	9 / 10 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-392-04 (34170) Course Assistantship	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/08/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 603	D. Vlahos	9 / 10 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-392-05 (34175) Course Assistantship	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/08/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 605	R. McGill	9 / 10 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug
Spring 2017	Open	CDGD-392-06 (34182) Course Assistantship	Main Campus	01/18/2017-05/08/2017 Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629	K. Hughes	9 / 10 / 0	3.00	1 Day	Ug

AFTER

DaVinci

HOMERESOURCESHELPCONTACT US

Search Results

Term

Status

Course Name

Meeting Information

Professor

Available/Capacity/Waitlist

Credits

Academic Level

SP/17

Waitlisted

CDGD-322-01 Information Architecture II

Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 306

M. Rettig

2 / 15 / 2

3.00

UG

SP/17

Closed

CDGD-322-02 Information Architecture II

Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 01:30PM - 06:30PM, Tower Building, Room 306

S. Balzman

-2 / 15 / 1

3.00

UG

SP/17

Open

CDGD-322-03 Information Architecture II

Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 01:30PM - 06:30PM, Tower Building, Room 308

Kubasiewicz

4 / 15 / 0

3.00

UG

SP/17

Open

CDGD-339-01 Web 2: Creating User Exp.

Studio Tuesday 06:30PM - 09:30PM, Tower Building, Room 306

S. Balzman

16 / 16 / 0

3.00

UG

SP/17

Waitlisted

CDGD-341-01 Typography III

Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629

Rosowsky

-1 / 15 / 2

3.00

UG

SP/17

Closed

CDGD-341-02 Typography III

Hybrid Studio Critique Wednesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 629

K. Hughes

-4 / 15 / 12

3.00

UG

SP/17

Waitlisted

CDGD-341-03 Typography III

Hybrid Studio Critique Tuesday 08:00AM - 01:00PM, Tower Building, Room 613

A. Leone

-2 / 15 / 3

3.00

UG

Program Summary: (In Progress)

	Required	Current Earned	Current Remaining	Anticipated Additional	Anticipated Remaining
Institutional Credits:	60.00	63.00	0.00	30.00	0.00
Institutional GPA:			Met		
Overall Credits:	120.00	69.00	51.00	30.00	21.00
Overall GPA:			Met		

(*) Anticipates completion of in-progress and registered courses

Program Requirements:

1: Foundation Year Requirements (Complete)

Credits Earned: 27

Complete all 3 subrequirements:

A: STUDIO FOUNDATION (Complete)

Take 4 required studios

Credits Earned: 12

SFDN-181 Drawing Studio I (Complete)

Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1. SFDN-181	Studio for Drawing		14/FA	P	3	

SFDN-182 Visual Language (Complete)

1. SFDN-182	Visual Language		14/FA	P	3	
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SFDN-183 Form Study (Complete)

1. SFDN-183	Form Study		15/SP	P	3	
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Above is the current DaVinci search for sections results screen. The chart is too condensed and difficult to read. Below is the Program Evaluation screen, which displays too much information at once and is too long to scroll through.

DaVinci

HOMERESOURCESHELPCONTACT US

Academic Progress Report

FRESHMAN

SOPHOMORE

JUNIOR

SENIOR

David Gorelik

0723486

BFA in Graphic Design

Expected Graduation: May 2018

69 / 120

Total Credits Earned

57%

Degree Program Progress

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Course	Term	Grade	Credits	Status	Notes
CDGD-340 Graphic Design II: Making Meaning	FA/16		3.00	In-progress	
CDGD-342 Information Architecture I	FA/16		3.00	In-progress	
CDGD-341 Typography III	SP/17		3.00	Registered	
CDGD-322 Information Architecture II	SP/17		3.00	Registered	

The new search results screen is spacious and clearly readable. Color-coded class statuses also make registration easier. The Program Evaluation, now called the Academic Progress Report, features tabbed sections, progress rings, and collapsible menus.

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