

WebAdvisor User Research Report

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 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. 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.

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 Jorgé, a junior Illustration major. Initially, he did not have any trouble performing the assigned task because he had used the site many times, 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. She pointed out that the program evaluation page would look better in a simpler grid format.

User comments:

- Takes too long to load
- Too much information being presented all at once
- “It’s ugly”

Strategy for Fixing the System:

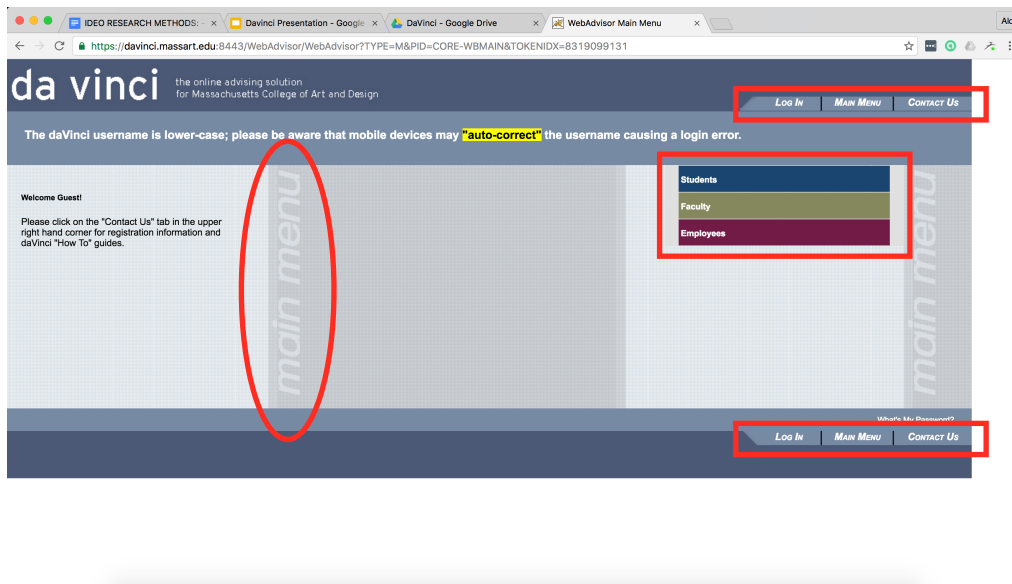
Platform: Web

Key features:

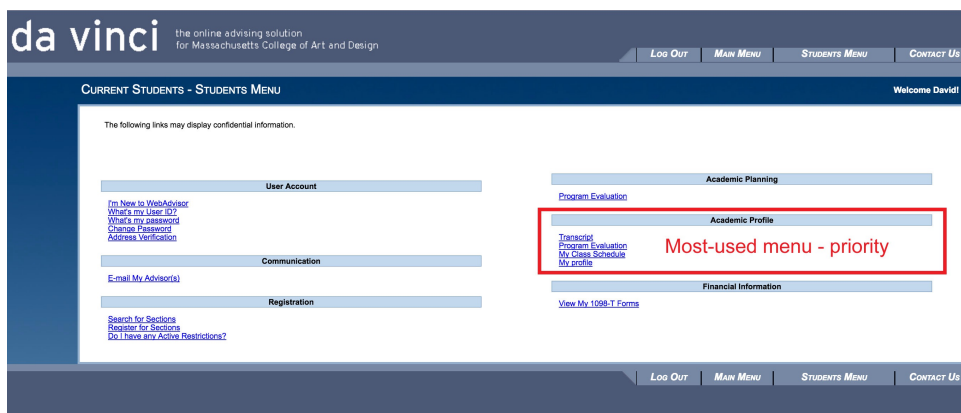
- Universal log in page - all users log in through one page, system identifies who they are (student, faculty, employee)
- Main user menu - central page with all functions: registration, scheduling, program evaluation, user help menu, etc.
- User dashboard: Navigation bar with links to user profile, program evaluation and schedule.
- Redesigned program evaluation: includes progress bars, tabbed summaries, and simplified design

Type of experience:

A MassArt student visits the newly redesigned DaVinci site. He enters his username and password on the main log-in screen and is brought to his main user menu. The screen has three sections, labeled Registration, Academic Progress, and Financial Information. Under the “Academic Progress” title is a short list of links to various pages. The student clicks on “Degree Progress” 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, universal 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.



Login Screen. Option of three different user menus is confusing and unnecessary. Repeated menu on top and bottom is also confusing, along with vertical text and useless color blocks.



Main menu screen. Student interviews found that the "Academic Profile" menu had the most-used features, so it should be prioritized

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						

Program Evaluation screen. Too much information is shown, needs more structure and organization. Would look better in a redesigned grid with more careful use of colors and type size.

Examples of other academic advising programs

MyMIT Log into your MyMIT account for online application, application tracking, financial aid tracking, interviewer contact info, Shadow a Student Registration and more!

ADMISSIONS HOME | ADMISSIONS BLOGS

Login

Username

Password

[Log In](#)

New user? [register now >](#)

[forgot username](#) | [forgot password](#)

MyMIT's login page is well designed. Simple page with a universal log in for all users, no confusing options or repetitive menus.

HOME | APPLICANT | ORIENTATION | **ACADEMICS** | CAMPUS LIFE | FINANCES | ALUMNI AND FRIENDS | HELP | MY PAGES

You are here: **Academics > Student Schedule**

Student Schedule

Course Schedule for Samantha C. Mercado

Term Data is only available for current or pre-registered courses.

Choose a Term and Program

Term: Program: [View Your Schedule](#)

Course	Title	Credits	Grading Type	Faculty	Meets	Dates	Room
BIO 212-A1	ECOLOGY (W)	4.00	LT	McMahon, Taegan	WF 08:30-09:50AM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / CB / 200
BIO 212L-H1	ECOLOGY - LAB	0.00	NG	McMahon, Taegan	R 02:00-04:50PM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / CB / 186
BIO 315-F1	VIROLOGY	4.00	LT	Freundt, Eric C	TR 12:00-01:20PM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / RIVC / 113
BIO 315L-B1	VIROLOGY - LAB	0.00	NG	Freundt, Eric C	R 08:00-10:50AM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / CB / 164
PSY 200-C	GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY	4.00	LT	Blessing, Stephen	MWF 10:00-11:10AM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / RIVC / 111
SOC 100-G	INTRO TO SOCIOLOGY	4.00	LT	Chananie, Ruth A	MWF 01:00-02:10PM	08/29/2016 - 12/15/2016	MAIN / NW / 133

Grid layout is effective here. It's easier to see all of the classes and their information. Color, scale and typography is better than current DaVinci layout.