

1. Overview of System Functionality

Our project is a website where computer science students from the University of Mary Washington can share and explore internship experiences. Our client, Dr. Polack, is a faculty member in the department who noticed that there was no record for internships students have had aside from those who registered for school credit.

To fix that issue, we will be creating a site that allows users to view an index of previous internships alongside a map marking their location. Students with a UMW email can register and submit their own experiences by placing a pin down, then filling out a short form. Our client, serving as the site admin, will be presented a queue of submitted reviews that she can assess and edit before accepting. Once accepted, the internship experience will be added to the main list that users see.

Our client's expectation for the site is that it has a low number of individual pages. Because of that, we want to combine functionality where we can while still maintaining an uncluttered and easily navigable design.

2. Imaginary Users

As stated above, there are two primary users: the admin and the students. We can split the latter into two separate categories: students reading internship reviews and students submitting internship reviews. Below I will describe an imaginary user for each of these three groups.

Admin: Dr. Calop is a faculty member of the computer science department. Because of this, she is highly-familiar with software systems and websites. This means she has a set of expected standards based on the previous products that she has used. As admin, she will be interacting with the behind the scenes features of the site. Her primary role is to see reviews that are not yet on the main page and make adjustments to them. At times, she would still like to see the main page without having to logout and be in student view.

Student Reading Review: Austin Kent is a sophomore student looking for a potential summer internship. He's not sure exactly what he wants to do, but he definitely wants to work as close to home as possible, as his old sedan isn't very gas efficient. On the website, he wants to see reviews sorted to match his location criteria. He's not a fan of signing up for things he doesn't have to, so knowing what he gets for registering helps him decide that he doesn't need an account to just look.

Student Submitting Reviews: Carol Muratore is a senior student who completed an internship last summer and wants to share her thoughts. She commonly uses phone and web applications, so she knows what to expect from a survey. She's a bit forgetful, so she often has to reset her password for sites that she has registered for. Her primary interest is in registering for the site and filling out a review. If the site isn't clear that she has to use her UMW email, she is more likely to use another email address.

3. Project Description

My project is a website where computer science students can share and read reviews of internship experiences other UMW students had. The feature I focused on is the searching and display section of the reviews. This is the primary splash page where you will see a review list, a map with pins, and a search functionality. The main user interaction I focused on is how the list will be sorted by searches, so a variety of filtering is involved.

Initial Thoughts from Focus Group

Chris: "I think the page should be a Google Maps style where you can search for specific places and businesses. If a student has submitted a review, it will show up as a pin drop on the map. You can also submit a review for any place that you look for."

Yasmeen: "The program will allow the user to search for and see reviews. I wanna filter reviews, maybe by location. Once you type a location, the screen will display reviews along with pins on the locations of the internships."

Jorge: "Hopefully, you can scroll through reviews and filter through reviews as well. If it's a Google style map, then it should be easy to interact

with pins on the map. I expect that clicking on one of the reviews will cause it to expand and give me additional information"

Brandon: "I would expect a list in the left hand side of the screen, probably filling about 30% of the width. I would assume that you will have controls above the list where you can filter by a variety of different options. Having an optional field for a recruiters information would be handy."

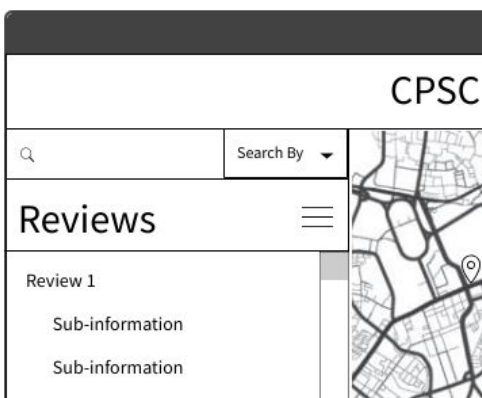
User Model

Based on what my focus group said, there was a base expectation that the site would look similar to Google Maps. They understood the idea that the pins would connect to the location of the company. I think the biggest missing piece that they didn't discuss in detail was the searching / filtering component, which I should have gone into more detail about.

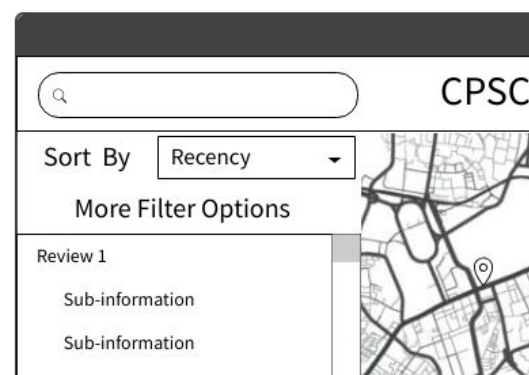
4. Wireframes

I let the users look at two different wireframes, focusing on the left side bar. I thought using the full splash page would help my focus group get a good idea of what I was working with. I have a full view of the wireframe I used at the bottom, but for the sake of space I cropped the relevant section for now.

As you can see below, the only differences were the search bar, its location, and the top section of the review list.



Wireframe 1



Wireframe 2

In the first wireframe, I figured having a specific option for how one could search would help. I then explored whether a simpler or more descriptive sorting method would be preferred. The first wireframe's hamburger menu would have hover text stating 'More Filter Options', similar to the second.

Focus Group Thoughts

Chris: "I liked design one more, but I didn't see much difference between the two diagrams. Having all the functions be compact makes the page look less cluttered overall. I think the drop pins on the map should be a bit bigger to make them easier to see and also include a way to submit a review for a place."

Yasmeen: "The second one looks better since it allows more specificity of what the user is looking for. It seems more obvious what clicking 'More Filter Options' will do then the bars [hamburger] icon. The pins should be bigger and a different color to differentiate from the map."

Jorge: "Just make it more clear what the search bar is doing above reviews, the icon beside reviews, and the icon in the top right corner. Everything else is easy to interact with."

Brandon: "I like the search location of one, because it doesn't look like a global search. You know it's meant for reviews. The hamburger menu is vague, even with hover-text. Maybe a filter icon? The reviews seem too indistinct. They should be split up somehow."

Conclusion

For users, they definitely seemed to understand the more descriptive select options better. There was also a preference towards keeping everything in one area. Unfortunately, I had some issue with users wanting to comment on the map portion, even though I wasn't focusing on editing that. It seemed like their expectations met with what we had designed, but I think that is due to us following a Google Maps style interface.

I plan on using the search bar of wireframe 1 and the sort by feature of wireframe 2. Honestly, I'm more undecided about how to include the filtering options. I think I'll just say 'Filter' then either include or exclude an icon to match. I've done some looking around and it seems as though not using an icon is fairly common. I'll probably try this again at some point later on, to see what the people I showed think of the design changes.

Full Wireframes

