

User Research Report:

The Overview

Davinci, known more often as Webadvisor, is an online advising system used by students and faculty alike. Many, many schools across the country use this service for grades, student information, class registration, and more. For students, the most important features are Registration, Academic Profile, and Financial Information. But on a day to day basis, the Program Evaluation under the Academic Profile is what's used the most. We, as designers, know that Davinci is problematic. Specifically in the Program Evaluation page. This page is what shows you the classes that you've completed so far, and the classes that you need to take to complete your program of study. And this page is a hierarchical mess. Important information doesn't stand out properly against the rest of the mass of information on the page, and it makes the page overall difficult to navigate. The colors make the page unappealing in general, and the information is not organized in a way that anybody would have a good time looking through. The page is basically made for print. There are no interactive elements and it's absolutely not user friendly. And we did some user testing to find out what non-designers thought about this website.

Program Summary: (In Progress)

	Required	Current Earned	Current Remaining	Anticipated Additional	Anticipated Remaining
Institutional Credits:	60.00	57.00	3.00	15.00	0.00
Institutional GPA:			Met		
Overall Credits:	120.00	57.00	63.00	15.00	48.00
Overall GPA:			Met		

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

Program Requirements:

1: Foundation Year Requirements (In progress)

Credits Earned: 24

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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SFDN-191 Time (formerly Visual Language II) (Complete)

1. SFDN-191	Time: Developing Identity		15/SP	P	3	
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B: SF-185 (Complete)

Take SFDN-185 DRAWING PROJECTS or another elective (Note: if you have not yet filled this 3-CREDIT requirement, both choices appear below.)

Research Findings:

Group Research

In our group we did our own research separately, as well as testing each other with the same restraints. We each tested three people, each other, a massart student, and a non massart student. That makes 6 people in total. Through all our testing we pooled our thoughts together into six major “problems” with the website. It takes a lot of time to find information, as it often gets lost. It’s overwhelming, and lacking in basic navigational elements. The site is hierarchically confusing, and is unable to be navigated without previous knowledge or help. It comes with feelings of stress and anxiety. But, it’s important and at its core has valuable info. This was a lot of valuable information to learn, as it gives us an insight on what we should be focusing on when creating the new site.

We got all of our information by using 8 IDEO methods per person. These methods served as direction for testing all of the test subjects. The 8 methods I used are listed below:

Fly on the Wall:	Observe and record behavior within its context, without interfering with peoples activities.
Guided Tour:	Accompany participants on a guided tour of the project-relevant spaces and activities they experience.
Activity Analysis:	List or represent in detail all tasks, actions, objects, performers, and interactions involved in the process.
Error Analysis:	List all the things that go wrong when using the website. What are some of the causes?
Narration:	As they perform a process or execute a specific task, ask participants to describe aloud what they are thinking.
Survey:	Ask a series of targeted questions in order to ascertain particular characteristics and perceptions of users.
Be Your Customer:	Ask the client to describe their typical similar customer experience.
Paper Prototyping:	Rapidly sketch, layout, and evaluate interaction design concepts for basic usability.

Research Findings:

Group User Test

The other member of my user testing group was Jordan. Jordan is a 20 year old Graphic design student at Massart, and has a love for music. While testing Jordan was defiantly the quickest and easiest, because of his knowledge about the website beforehand, I still believe I got a lot of good information out of it.



While testing Jordan, we came to a few main problems, and things to change about davinci. One thing that came up was that there are too many steps to get to the Program Evaluation. It could be simplified quite a bit. Information is organized in a bizarre way, it's hard to digest some data when they throw it all in your face at once. The page could use a ton more hierarchy, as well as navigational elements. There are many more things that I could go over, but I'll let the test results speak for itself.

Fly on the Wall: For this test, Jordan was asked to log into davinci.massart.edu and find the program evaluation on his own. He completed this task with ease, as expected. Since he is a current student and is also doing this project. He pointed

out when we got to the page where you need to check off your major that "that's so dumb." We

Choose One Active Programs

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	BFA-DE-GD Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design
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What if I changed my program of study?

What work do you want to include? ☒ Registered/Preregistered ☐

had further discussion on our opinion of this selection page, and thought it would make more sense to have it be secondary information- and not its own screen.

Guided Tour: This time I guided Jordan to find how many studio electives are required for graduation. He didn't really need my guidance, and we easily found the right information.

"It's stressful, it's sad. It's nerve-racking."

Activity Analysis: With this method, I asked Jordan to find the amount of credits needed for graduation, while listing his actions as they went along. "Umm..." He scrolled up all the way to the top of the page, which was the right direction to go in. He paused for a second while he was reading the Program Summary. He scrolled down a bit and sat for a while, processing the information. He assumed that the was 120 credits, which was correct. Though in a perfect world that information would be a bit easier to gain access to.

Error Analysis: I asked Jordan to list the requirements for junior year, and afterwards, I asked what kind of problems they had been having. He found the information but had issues with figuring out what the requirement was by semester. It's also impossible to figure out what your

major wants you to do for other required classes during a certain year. We can see that we need to take four major classes during junior year, but we can't tell what else we need to take and when.

Narration: I asked for Jordan to narrate his actions while they look to find out how many science classes he are allowed to take. What follows is what I've written from his experience. "I'm gonna scroll up here if I remember correctly" "It looks like you can only take one... and I already did" I told him that he was wrong "Ummmm" "OOOH, Take 9 credits of social science, literature and writing, or math and science"

“This is some of the worst design I’ve witnessed in the 21st century”

This information is spread apart, which makes it very difficult to find the real number of how many science classes you can take.

E: Math or Science (Complete)						
Take 1 LAMS (math or science) elective.						
Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1. LAMS-208	Bacteria Assassins		16/SP		3	
F: LA-SS/LW/MS CHOICES (Not started)						
Take 9 credits of social science, literature and writing, or math/science						
Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1.		9 credits needed				
G: HART or LA-SS/LW/MS (Pending completion of unfinished activity)						
3 credits of HART or LA-SS/LW/MS electives						
Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1. HART-240	Art&Arch/Ancient Mesoamerica		16/FA		3	*1P

Survey:

Julia: What are your opinions of the overall design?

Jordan: Well, It is incredibly poorly designed. The strangest things jump off the page. There is no consideration for hierarchy. Too many extra margins that aren't needed. I don't know a single high school age student who couldn't do better then this.

Julia: Do you think that the webpage is easy to navigate?

Jordan: The navigational elements are in the most confusing places. Many of the elements are not necessary. What does ok do? What is this bullshit. It seems like Every single minor element is its own page.

Julia: Is the information clear and easy to access?

Jordan: Not even a little bit. It's neither clear nor easy to access.

Julia: Do you think the page could benefit from added navigational elements?

Jordan: Yeah. I think if it was better organized- in order to make more hierarchy- you'd definitely need more navigation.

Be Your Customer: I asked Jordan what his typical experience with a similar informative website like this is. Jordan says, "Yes I have experience. It's stressful, it's sad. It is nerve-racking." Clearly Jordan doesn't have many good experiences with these sites.

Paper Prototyping: I asked Jordan to either explain to me his thoughts on a new design, which we discussed for a while. Including solving the problem of “too many ways to login” by making only one login option, and adding the student/teacher/faculty option on the login page. Changing the main navigation menu to be more clear was also a main focus in this part of the test.

Through this process we found out a few things. Mainly that there are many problems with hierarchy and the way that they lay out information. The experience of using the site has been described as stressful, and we don’t particularly like the site at all. We definitely discovered a lot from this step in the research, thats for sure.

Just to check off a few major points from the stages of testing. The page to check off your major is unnecessary and can be moved, along with the surplus of login options. The overall layout needs to be changed for easier access of information, and things need to be more clear and orderly. The site overall needs more clear navigation, and origination to make the experience better.

Research Findings: User 1, Massart Student

The Non-Graphic design student I interviewed was Vyctoria Oliveira. She is a senior year transfer student in the ceramics major. She is 22 years old, and works as a waitress. While she knows how to navigate davinci, as a Massart student, she definitely has issues with the way that it works in general, and gave quite a bit of information for me to work with.



As a transfer student, Vyctoria had some very specific problems with davinci for specific transfer reasons. Though she also had many issues with the site visually, and thought it needed a bunch of added navigational elements in order to really work. The user testing below will go more in depth about her particular issues with the site.

Fly on the Wall: For this test, Vyctoria was asked to log into davinci.massart.edu and find the program evaluation on her own. She easily accomplished this, choosing to first go to the students menu before login. She clicked the Transcript first, because she never looks at the program evaluation for anything. She talks about how the Transcript is a much more clear way to read the grades, and continues to the Program Evaluation.

Guided Tour: This time I guided Vyctoria to find how many studio electives are required for graduation. This one was easy. Since her program evaluation is different then ours, she could easily locate that she needs to take two “anything” electives and advanced ceramics.

Activity Analysis: With this method, I asked Vyctoria to find the amount of credits needed for graduation, while listing her actions as she went along. She was easily able to find this information, though she first scrolled to the bottom of the page before I caught her and she moved up to the top, and told me how many credits she needed.

“What does that even mean”

Error Analysis: I asked Vyctoria to list the requirements for junior year, and afterwards, I asked what kind of problems she had been having. She told me that the categories were stupid, certain labels that they used don’t make any sense and are just confusing and annoying. She also had

G: HART or LA-SS/LW/MS (Pending completion of unfinished activity)
3 credits of HART or LA-SS/LW/MS electives

some specific problems with the transfer program. She was apparently missing a few credits, or they weren’t listed as transfer credits. One of her transfer credits was listed twice as two different things, and a few of her transferred credits said they were taken in high school.

Narration: I asked for Vyctoria to narrate her actions while they look to find out how many science classes she is allowed to take. “Ok, so I have to look under the notes and if its *TE, it’s a transfer. I know I’ve transferred some. Six?” I corrected her showing her the extra options that we have looked at previously (see page 4) and though her program is different its still incredibly

confusing.

Survey:

Julia: What are your opinions of the overall design?

Vyctoria: It's super lacking. Bad colors, long layout, very overwhelming in general. Something that would help would be a different way to look at the page, like a quick look with blocks. This page seems to have been made for print, not web. And interactive element would help.

“There is no system” Julia: Do you think that the webpage is easy to navigate?

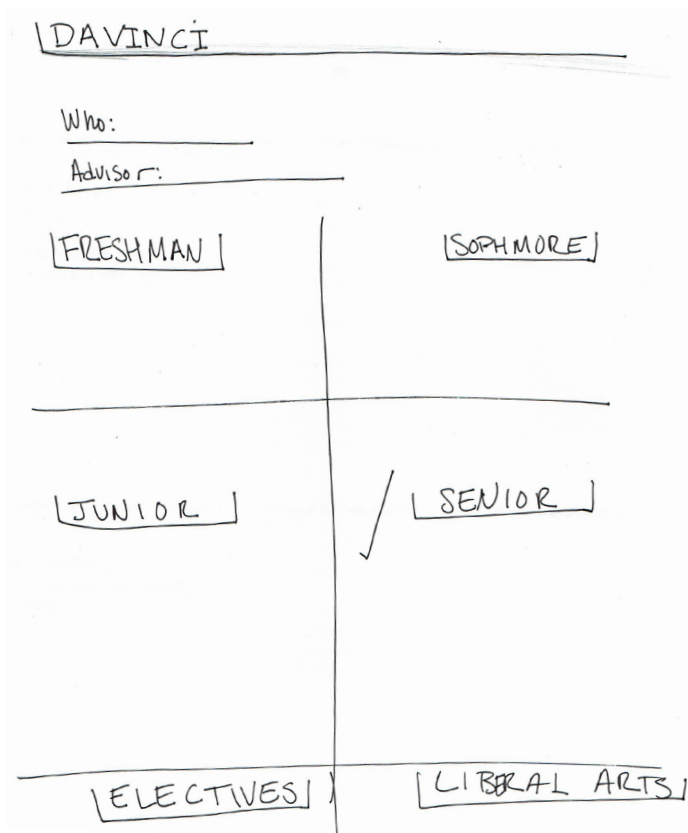
Vyctoria: No! The navigational elements are not helpful. And the problem with cookies doesn't help with that at all.

Julia: Is the information clear and easy to access?

Vyctoria: Yes and no. The page is informative, even though its hard to find it says everything that it needs to say. Sometimes the information is inaccurate though, which kind of defeats the purpose.

Julia: Do you think the page could benefit from added navigational elements?

Vyctoria: Yes, and updating the current navigation in general.



Be Your Customer: I asked Vyctoria what her typical experience with a similar informative website like this is. She didn't have too much to say, but she pointed out that it was always a pretty terrible experience, and that there is never as system. While she prefers davinci to her previous schools version of academic software, she still has a strong negative opinion on davinci.

Paper Prototyping: I asked Vyctoria to sketch something out that she had in mind to fix the website, and she did so here. She focused in on the “block” system that she had previously mentioned, which is definitely an interesting way to go about it that I can think about during the wireframe sketching.

Though Vyctoria doesn't have many big issues with navigating the site overall, as a Massart senior, she still has some issues with the Program Evaluation and the way it works. It seems to be made for print, its a mess hierarchically, and sometimes i's not even factually correct. There are many issues that need to be sorted out, and her sketch says a lot about the way that she sees it in her head as opposed to what is on the website itself and the way she explained it.

Research Findings:

User 2, Newbie

For my “new” user, and the longest test by far, I tested my mom, Karen. Karen doesn’t use computers for more then what she has to, so she’s not the best with them. She’s 54 years old and since she didn’t go to college, she hasn’t had experience with the college grading system besides what my brother and I have shown her. I got a lot of good feedback from my mom, as she likes to talk. A lot.



As a new user to davinici, she found it quite difficult to navigate without assistance. This could become an issue for new students, as they would be unable to understand how the site works and what things mean. She complained quite a bit about the way things were labeled, and grouped as well. She had several issues with terminology and labels, as well. Overall she thought that the site was “okay” but was difficult for first time users and really made the process of finding information slower then it needed to be.

Fly on the Wall: For this test, Karen was asked to log into davinici.massart.edu and find the program evaluation on her own. She easily logged herself in with my login info, when she arrived to the main menu she was confused, though. “Program evaluation?” She looked around the page questioning. Once she saw the Program Evaluation link she clicked it and sat on the major selection page while trying to figure out what she should click on the page. She ended up scrolling over the ‘What if I changed program” section but decided out of that, most likely after she read it. She silently checked off GD and clicked submit. “I’m assuming it’s doing something” was said while she patiently waited for the page to load. She asked me for her phone. I said no.

Guided Tour: This time I guided Karen to find how many studio electives are required for graphic design. Though she thought she didn’t need my guidance, because she immediately blurted out “four” When she saw “take four required studios” under the studio foundation box. She thought she was correct. (She was wrong.) She read more freshman academics before I told

5: Studio Elective Requirements/Graphic Design (In progress)

Credits Earned: 3

Complete all 3 subrequirements:

A: Electives (Complete)

In addition to required electives, there are professional electives you should take to gain competency in your major. Please see yo ur department.

B: JUNIOR YEAR (In progress)

TAKE 3 STUDIO ELECTIVES

Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1. 3DFB-224	Papermaking		16/FA		3	*JP
2.		6 credits needed				

C: SENIOR YEAR (Not started)

TAKE 3 STUDIO ELECTIVES

Course	Title	Needed	Term	Grade	Credits	Notes
1.		9 credits needed				

her to scroll all the way down. When I showed her the Studio Elective Requirements/ Graphic Design menu she immediately said “six credits” without taking into account the part below for senior year. I told her that they are both studio elective requirements and that there are three credits per class. She then got the correct answer, being 18.

Activity Analysis: With this method, I asked Karen to find the amount of credits needed for graduation, while listing her actions as she went along. When I was reading this step

“I don’t know which way Is up anymore”

to Karen, she had already scrolled all the way up to the top of the page. She hesitated for a minute before saying “Institutional credits, overall credits, required... 120?... Cause that’s the biggest number?” She laughed after saying this. She was

obviously unsure about her answer. I told her she was correct but she was still confused. She couldn’t work out the math in her head, so she pulled out a calculator and tried to work out the math. She was very confused, but correct in the first place.

Error Analysis: I asked Karen to list the requirements for junior year, and afterwards, I asked what kind of problems she had been having. The first problem she had was the time it took to find the information, because it’s hard to navigate. She also had issues finding Junior year right off the bat. “I only see freshman down there (referring to the studio foundation, should be more clear) sophomore year...” She implied that the titles of the years should be more prominent, or clear. She had so many problems that she kept for getting the question. There was some confusion about “Junior Year” under studio elective requirements. She didn’t get why there was multiple areas for junior year. She said that the placement of the information was a bit weird in general. Overall, she just thought it wasn’t easy to find the information that you need.

Narration: I asked for Karen to narrate her actions while she looks to find out how many science classes I am allowed to take. “Ok so looking on this page? What was the question?

“It could over inform you”

One? It says needed. Social Sciences? Is that a science?” I tell her that a Social Science is not considered a Science. “These are the ones, liberal arts.” She counted the requirements,

“It says here one- math or science... I can’t see it. ‘Needed’...” I then showed her ‘F’ and ‘G’ “Take 9 credits of social sciences, reading, or math/science. Wow.” I also showed her the option to take one ‘HART or LA-SS/LW/MS’ “Then you can take five. With help. I wouldn’t have been able to figure that out without help.

Survey:

Julia: What are your opinions of the overall design?

Karen: Um, it’s old school. Could be easier.

Julia: Do you think that the webpage is easy to navigate?

Karen: Um, it was ok. I got to what I needed to get to ok. I like that it shows the complete/incomplete. It could have more orderly columns.

Julia: Is the information clear and easy to access?

Karen: No. Lots of inconsistencies. It should say liberal arts (LA) what is LW? (Basically, she wanted the abbreviations to be up with the title, so we know what they are before we get them shoved down our throats. Also implying that hierarchy should be better)

Julia: Do you think the page could benefit from added navigational elements?

Karen: “Yes, fuck yes.”

Be Your Customer: I asked Karen what her typical experience with a similar informative website like this is. She immediately replied with “They have a live chat. Live chat would help.” We then chatted a little bit about something that would be more suitable for this kind of website. She told me that an FAQ is usually extremely helpful for her when she’s trying to navigate a new space like this. She also mentioned hover state pop ups, to make things less confusing. Perhaps scrolling over one of the titles gives you more information on what it is.

Paper Prototyping: I asked Karen to explain to me her thoughts for me to sketch out some thumbnails. While we didn’t get any good visuals out of it, I definitely got some good ideas. First off, she wanted the Completion marker to be aligned to the right, as opposed to being after the other statement. This way it doesn’t get all unorganized and confusing, sometimes taking up two lines. Adding to that, she proposed changing the “Pending completion of unfinished activity” label to be changed to just “pending” This would make it better for a quick look and generally much nicer. A lot of the wording will need to be changed, and perhaps instead of having colored labels on the completion markers, making the box behind it all change in color.

Karen’s experience with davinci was determinately not the best. She had a hard time with overall navigation, and the design of the site. Though she did say that she was eventually able to find all of the information she needed to, there were road-bumps along the way. She had a problem with labels and the way things were grouped, terminology, and hierarchy. She defiantly had opinions on what should be changed, and though the names of the labels are generally out of the designers control, there are definitely better ways to show users what things mean, and give the site an overall system. It can become better.

Fixing the Problem:

My Strategy

In order to combat these problems, I'm working out a strategy. I'll be making a website redesign of the davinci program evaluation. I want the experience to be simple, easy to navigate, but also very informative. The site needs to retain everything that it had originally, but be displayed in a way that's accessible and not stressful. I'll be focusing on a few things to add from the feedback I got from my test subjects to create a solution for all of the main problems we came across. Those problems will be explained in more depth below.

Problem: There is no overall hierarchy on any of the related pages, mainly the Program Evaluation page itself and the selection screen with all of the links.

Feature/Solution:

- + Make a better system for hierarchy
- + More variation and consistency in type.

Problem: There is no [good] system. No good system for labeling, categories, or information. Titles and headers are not clear.

Feature/Solution:

- + Collapsing sections so you can view/hide information you don't need to see at any given time
- + Refine labeling system, change wording, color coding. Add symbols for completion? Tabs?
- + Adding major selection into the Program evaluation page itself.

Problem: The site is overwhelming and lacking in basic navigational elements.

Feature/Solution:

- + Possibility to view by section (Studio Foundation, Junior, Senior, Etc.)
- + Option to view requirements by semester
- + Add a filter option of some sort, possibly

Problem: It's confusing.

Feature/Solution:

- + Frequently asked questions tab in menu bar
- + Making everything more neat and clear
- + Re-organization of the links on the students page.

The ideal user experience of this site will be a simple and easy login, one click to arrive at the login screen, and all the information that needs to be filled out there. Once they login, the links will be easy to comprehend and understand, it should be an easy experience to arrive at the program evaluation. Once in the program evaluation they should be able to view only what they need. Need to know requirements for first semester of senior year? There should be an easy way to do that. Quick, efficient, simple, and clear. That is the ideal experience for Davinci.