DESIGN ANALYSIS

The design analysis is made for the website Ball State University. The following pages will undergo design analysis: (1) Home Page, (2) Academics Page, (3) Admissions Page, (4) Campus Life Page, (5) About Page, (6) News Center Page, (7) Alumni Association Page, and (8) Contact Us Page.

Evaluation

1. Home Page

The home page has a good and consistent balance of contents, presents a clear hierarchy, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure. The controls are discoverable, direct, simple, and provides context to the users. Affordance is also present in some controls. It also shows good and necessary transitions and feedback, and engaging animations that draw attention whenever you scroll through the page.

However, the items are not organized based on their importance making scanning and reading difficult and confusing. In addition, the overall layout is not aesthetically pleasing because the background images and video adds some visual noise that distracts the users' attention and there is no adequate spacing for some sections. This also makes the layout look cluttered, not simple, not easy to scan, and overwhelming. Moreover, some texts on the website may be readable but it is not attractive and legible. For example, texts on the header section and Live at Ball State section don't have a good contrast with the background making the texts not legible.

• *Navigation Bar*

The navigation bar doesn't directly display other on-demand pages such as Academics and Admission, instead, these can be found in the menu button. This design may be great and expected for mobile devices. However, those pages won't be easily discovered by the users and not efficient.

• *Connect With Us Section*

The layout for the "Connect With Us!" section doesn't use space efficiently and wisely because whenever you load more images, the space keeps on adding thus, making the home page longer and difficult for scrolling.

• *Footer Section*

The footer section doesn't use the layout space efficiently as the logo consumes a large area and has unused space. In addition, the layout of the glyphs for Connect with Ball State is a little awkward.

2. Academics Page

The academic page provides good organization and all necessary information relating to the topic. Like the previous page, it also has a good balance of contents, presents a clear hierarchy, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback, and engaging animations that draw attention whenever you scroll through the page.

However, the overall layout is not aesthetically pleasing because the background images add some visual noise that distracts the users' attention and making some texts illegible. In addition, there is no adequate spacing for some sections, that it makes the layout look compressed, tight, and not easy to scan. Moreover, some texts on the website may be readable but it is not attractive to look at. Some texts' sizes and texts differentiation are not consistent throughout the page, making it awkward to look at.

• *Navigation Bar and Title Section*

The controls in the title section namely "Apply" and "Contact Us", are redundant because these are also present in the navigation bar.

• *Glyphs*

Although the glyphs behind the texts are simple, but they are not noticeable as it nearly blends with the background, and it doesn't communicate well.
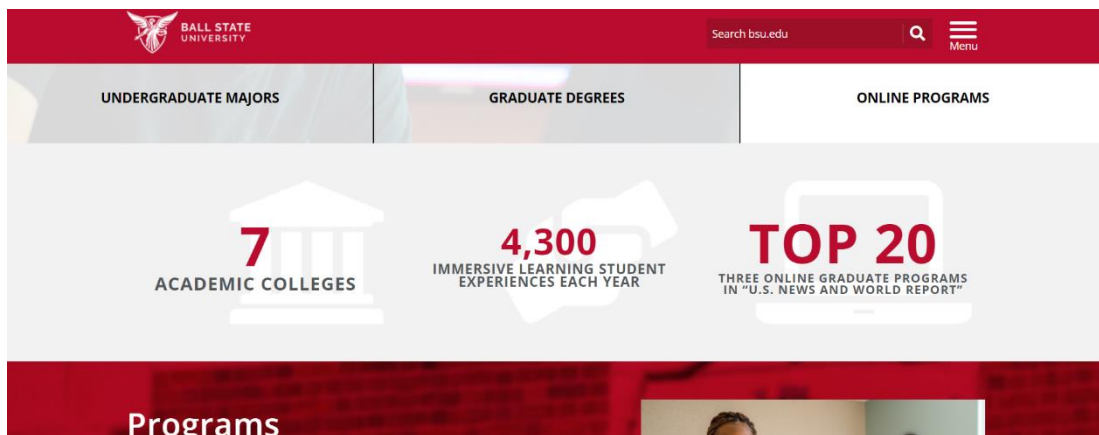

Figure 1. A section in Academics Page

• *I Knew I was a Cardinal when… Section*

The capitalization of the text in the title is inappropriate and doesn't look natural. In addition, there are wrong differentiation and hierarchy of texts on each card, like the quoted text or title text are hard to distinguish with the subtext.

• *Academic Calendar Section*

The section title's size is not consistent and the same with the other section titles. Moreover, the box and the date are not large enough.

• *Honors College Section*

This section contains inconsistent use of layout alignment for the body text.

• *Dual Credits Section*

The button "Find Opportunity" doesn't communicate well. Since the color of the button is the same with the color of the footer section, it doesn't demand attention and encouragement from the user which doesn't align with its message or purpose. Different color within the theme may be used to demand attention.

3. Admissions Page

The admissions page provides organization, and all necessary and concise information relating to the topic. Like the previous page, it also has a good balance of contents, simple, easy to scan, aesthetically pleasing, presents a hierarchy, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure on some sections. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback. The images are used properly and moderately. However, there is no adequate spacing for the sections, making the layout look compressed and tight.

• *Already Admitted? Section*

The provided steps don't clearly indicate direction and organization. The layout format and alignment are also not consistent.

• *Explore Our Campus Section*

In figure 2, the text is illegible in this section. Also, the "Virtual Tour" link is not clearly visible, lacks design, and the placement is awkward.
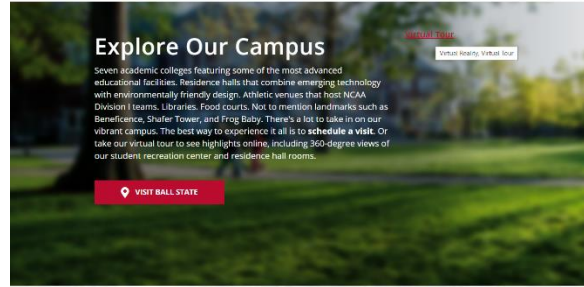
Figure 2. Explore Our Campus section in Admissions Page

• *Apply to Ball State Section*

The cards don't integrate the progressive disclosure and a link like "Read More…", that may suggest to the user to find more information about the topics.

• *Paying for College Section*

The "Financial Aid & Scholarships" and "Tuition & Fees" are hard to differentiate with its subtext, and it doesn't show a clear hierarchy. Also, the layout of the images is inconsistent compared to the previous image layouts.

4. Campus Life Page

The campus life page also has a good balance of contents, easy to scan, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure on some sections. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback.

However, the layout overuses the background images that results to a not aesthetically pleasing layout, illegible texts, and a cluttered look. In addition, there is no adequate spacing for some sections, that it makes the layout look compressed and tight. In addition, although the information is concise, it is not organized based on their importance.

• *Campus Life Title*

The design is inconsistent compared to other pages.

• *Arts and Culture Section*

The hierarchy and order of the items are incorrect. There is also no differentiation between the context box and the links.

• *Glyphs*

The glyphs are not noticeable as it nearly blends with the background, and it doesn't communicate well.

• *Diversity and Inclusion Section*

The layout of links is similar to the Arts and Culture section, but both have different color design for the links. The designs in both sections are inconsistent to one another.

• *Our Community Section*

The layout size of both boxes is inconsistent making it awkward to look at.

• *More Resource Section*

The cards don't integrate the progressive disclosure and a link like "Read More…", that may suggest to the user to find more information about the topics.

5. About Page

The campus life page also has a good balance of contents, easy to scan, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback.

Although the layout may be simple, it also overuses the background images that results to a not aesthetically pleasing layout, illegible texts, and a cluttered look. In addition, there is no adequate spacing for some sections, that it makes the layout look compressed and tight. Also, the information is not organized based on their importance. The layout design of the links is not consistent as it has various colors like black, gray, red, and white.

• *We Fly 2020 Section*

The "We Fly 2020" is not large enough to demand attention from the users.

• *Glyphs*

The glyphs behind the texts clearly noticeable as it contrasts with the background. However, it distracts the attention with the texts.

• *Our beautiful campus is our canvas. Section*

The "Virtual Tour" is once again, not visible enough and the placement is awkward.

• *We're about more than educating students. We're about serving our neighbors, near and far. Section*

The title of the section is a bit wordy. Also, the card for the award is not suitable with the look of the section.

6. News Center Page

The news center page provides organized and all necessary information relating to the topic. Like the previous pages, it also has a good balance of contents, simple, easy to scan, aesthetically pleasing, presents a hierarchy, evident groupings of related items, and uses progressive disclosure on some sections. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback, and engaging animations that draw attention whenever you scroll through the page. The images are used properly and moderately. However, there is no adequate spacing for some sections, making the layout look compressed and tight.

• *Email Newsletters Section*

The interface communicates poorly because it used a gradient background. The background can be changed to a solid color that complements with the overall theme of the website.

• *Follow Us on Social Section*

The section is redundant because right below it, the "Connect with Ball State" in the footer section can also be found. Both contains the same contents. Thus, this section can be removed.

7. Alumni Association Page

Like the evaluation of previous pages, the "Alumni Association" page also has a good balance of contents, easy to scan, provides necessary and concise information that relates to the topic of the page, and presents a clear hierarchy and emphasis on items. Affordance is also present in some controls. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback, and engaging animations that draw attention whenever you scroll through the page.

However, some sections are not aesthetically pleasing because the background images add some visual noise that distracts the users' attention and making some texts illegible. Also, there is no adequate spacing for some sections, that it makes the layout look compressed and tight. In addition, some texts' sizes, colors, hierarchy, capitalization, and differentiation are not properly implemented, making the texts awkward, undistinguishable, and illegible. Figure 3 and 4 shows illegible texts. Figure 4 shows that the text below the Homecoming 2021 is unnatural due to improper use of capitalization, and illegible. Figure 5 shows an unnatural use of capitalization in section title and in each card, no differentiation between title and subtext.
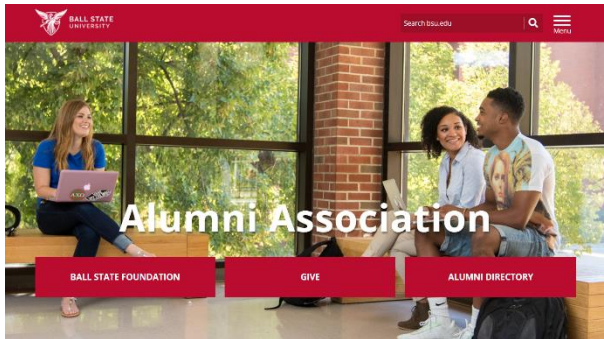
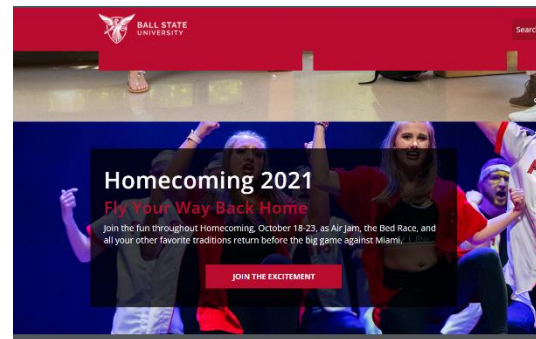Figure 3. Header section in Alumni Association Page

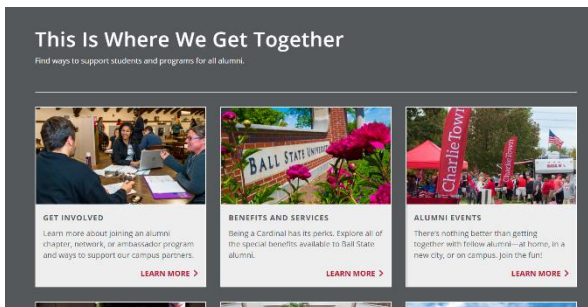Figure 4. Homecoming 2021 section in Alumni Association Page

Figure 5. This is Where We Get Together section in Alumni Association Page

• *Get Connected and Connect with Us Sections*

The two sections offer the same purpose which is to provide users other means of connection through other online platforms. Thus, making these two separate sections was unnecessary and is an inefficient use of layout.

• *Ball State Magazine Section*

This section communicates poorly because it contains the magazine and the upcoming events in the calendar, which are clearly both unrelated topics.

• *We're Here to Help Section*

Aside from the problems in typography, this section also has an awkward and inconsistent layout alignment. Also, the email address is not directly visible which is inefficient.

8. Contact Us Page

The layout of Contact Us page is simple, organized, and aesthetically pleasing. It provides concise, easy to find, and distinguishable information that users may find useful. And there is a good balance of contents, clear hierarchy, appropriate emphasis, evident groupings, and uses progressive disclosure. The controls also show good and necessary transitions and feedback. It also suggests choices that users may go to.

However, the "Contact Us" title interface is not consistent and the same with the previous design. Also, the appearance of dialogue boxes whenever you click "View Email" are redundant as the email can just be clearly visible without it.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations and changes that can be made to improve the website, number 1 to 14 are for the overall sections and pages, while number 15 to 20 are for specific sections:

1. Organize the sections or information based on their importance.
    The order of the sections in home page, academics page, admission page, campus life page, about page, and alumni page were changed and organized according to the importance and reading order.

2. An overlay transparent solid color can be added on the background images, change to more subtle and simple images, or change the background into solid colors, depending on the design. This change can solve the visual noise and improve the legibility of the texts. *(In the wireframe, light picture symbol indicates unedited images, while dark picture symbol has an overlay of darker color.)*

3. Always remember to not use color gradient backgrounds.

4. Adequate spacing throughout the website was also added to make the layout spacious and less cluttered.

5. Making the typographical interface such as size, color, hierarchy, capitalization, and differentiation consistent and appropriate – depending on the layout, throughout the whole website.

6. Making the interface of the links consistent throughout the whole website.

7. Making the header layout consistent among pages on the website and use consistent layout alignment throughout the whole website.

8. Making the title for each section consistent, follow the proper capitalization, and direct and concise.

9. Remove dialogue boxes on "View Email" links and display the corresponding emails.

10. Edited the design layout of glyphs, making it visible and communicates well.

11. Edited and made the layout of pictures with texts, context box and the links layout consistent.

12. Integrated a progressive disclosure on cards that may suggest further information of the topic.

13. Remove redundant and repeating sections or items.

14. Established a clear division, grouping, or separation of related items form unrelated ones. This will make the groups distinguishable for the users.

15. Navigation Bar
    - Directly display the on-demand pages and remove the menu button (for desktop only), to make the pages discoverable.

16. Title or header Section
    - Remove redundant links that are also visible in the navigation bar to avoid inefficient use of layout.

17. Connect With Us Section in Home Page
    - A slideshow of few highlight images would lessen the space consumption and a separate page for the gallery.

18. Already Admitted? Section
    - Made the steps clear, organized, and directional.

19. "Virtual Tour" Link
    - Designed the link to make it more visible and differentiable.

20. Footer Section
    - The logo was made smaller and put it beside the other links.
    - The size of glyphs in the Connect with Ball State was adjusted.

The following are the wireframes for each webpage in this order:

1. Home Page

2. Academics Page

3. Admissions Page

4. Campus Life Page

5. About Page

6. News Center Page

7. Alumni Association Page

8. Contact Us Page

Conclusion

The interface of the Ball State University was kind of overwhelming, unorganized, and visually noisy. To improve the website, I:

(1) organized the sections, groups, and information to make it simple and easy to scan;
(2) used solid colors that coincides with the theme and consider its visual effect;
(3) used adequate spacing and consistent header layout throughout the designing process;
(4) always be consistent and use proper techniques on the texts, texts, links, pictures, and other elements to make it more pleasant and organized; and lastly,
(5) make things clear, direct, and always put the users on mind when designing.

The website, especially for a university that offers services, should be designed well for the it to be able to communicate well and deliver its intended speech or idea to the users. Overall, these are the design analysis made for the website.

References

Ball State University. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.bsu.edu/.

Cala-or, C. F. C. (n.d.). CMSC 134: Human Interaction, Unit 4 & 5.

Iconify and Trushkin, V. (2021). Iconify. Retrieved from https://www.figma.com/community/plugin/735098390272716381/Iconify.