Hardest Decisions in UAA Redesign

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Our design process includes difficulties sourced mainly from differences in our competitive analysis. Because we analyzed Zimbabwean university sites as opposed to American ones, there were some disparities in both language and content.

- A prime example of language was the use of "Principal Officers" as a label for chancellors and other university administration. In the U.S., we rarely use this term; we couldn't rely solely on our tallies to choose labels. Instead, we brainstormed more natural terms and did some research into similar label names in American sites. Finally, we decided to use "Administration" as our label. We felt that the term covers both executives in university hierarchies as well as committees and boards. We also found the term used in many American university sites.
- In terms of content, the Zimbabwean sites varied greatly in their second-level information. Although the majority had most user types, distinct second level labels were sparse and didn't have anything in common. To address this issue, we took inspiration from (in our opinion) well-designed American university websites as well as referenced current content under those user types in the UAA site. We looked at several universities listed in [this ranking of best designs](#).

Another design problem we addressed was how to reduce page distances for use cases. We referenced several solutions from the sites linked above, and found that many included "Quick Links" or shortcuts to frequently accessed pages. To implement this in our own design without disrupting banner navigation, we included a column in the footer. The links there correspond with results from our interviews, which we wrote as use cases in the previous assignments. Additionally, we included quick links corresponding with each user type as well. These labels are taken from our use cases as well as from existing labels in the UAA site. We added images linked to the highest tallied secondary content in all pages. The images highlight frequently accessed information.

Although our competitive analysis showed "Students" as an overall user type, including current and prospective, we decided to separate the two. We decided to include "Current Students" as a user type and put prospective students as a hidden user type within "Admissions." We did this because from our interviews, we found that current students and prospective students have entirely different needs. This decision not only reduces page distances because users can directly access their student sub-type from the home page, but also separates out different use cases. For example, a prospective student likely doesn't need to access their student email since they don't have one yet. In addition, we included "International students" under Admissions because international students have different user needs when applying (such as different standardized tests, tuition, questions, etc.) but have the same needs as national students after attending the university.

Our navigational system includes two stacked banners that separates user type from main navigation. Although there may be a tradeoff with visibility of system status, we felt that this separation allows easy access to any category without having to return to the home page. In order to eliminate the issue of visibility, we shifted the bottom main navigation to be justified right so that it doesn't look like secondary navigation for user types. In addition, we made the font larger than the user types and gave the banner a different style. This makes it stand out as it's own navigation and not sub-navigation. We also put the secondary navigation in hover menus to reduce page distances to frequently accessed information (synthesized from our competitive analyses).