

PROBLEMS FACED BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENT'S AT UF

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	3
3. Usability/UX Analysis	3
4. Focus Statement	4
5. Focus Setting	4
6. Affinity Diagram	7
7. User Needs	7
8. User Personas	8
9. Scenarios	9
10. Storyboards	9
11. Brainstorming of design solutions	11
12. Final design solution	13
13. Rationale for design decisions	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Problems covered:

This project mainly focuses on the problems faced by international students at the University of Florida, while finding housing and accommodation. From the data analysis plan it has been a major concern of international students, thus picked as the problem statement for this project.

Concise analysis:

In my project, each step was examined in context of the prior stage to ensure that there was no disconnect when creating my solution interface. I used online resources as examples to examine how some well-known websites were created to entice users to return. Along with this, I made sure that the user's needs or pain points were met in my solution in a way that also addressed the usability problems. The solution interface also takes into account the UX elements that I felt were lacking in the resources that were mentioned.

Background information:

To comprehend the challenges that have been described in this project, user interviews with three international students were conducted. From these interviews, various themes were derived. To help understand these pain points, I conducted some real-world testing in addition to these user interviews. I gained an understanding of my project's objective and how I wanted my solution interface to be created using them as a starting point.

conclusion:

The design solution interface for the user difficulties found in the project is created as its conclusion. In addition to taking into account usability problems and user experience (UX) considerations in the solution interfaces, they were created while maintaining some of the guidelines covered in class. These answers provide one approach to solving the issues. The interfaces can be created in a variety of methods that solve usability problems in all available solutions.

INTRODUCTION:

This project is based on addressing the problems faced by international students. International students face many problems in their initial travel, and focusing on those problems and finding some efficient solutions is part of this project. The main objective of this project is to pick one among those problems and design a solution interface deemed fit in order to address the problem.

The problem I picked is Housing and Accommodation.

USABILITY/UX ANALYSIS:

These are some of the most Usability/UX issues that were occurring with the user.

Design: As the interface is varied from page to page, i.e., there is no consistency between pages. And confusion caused by the color, placement, or layout of the page.

Too much content: In most cases, it's either too much information or very less information. i.e., most of the information is not gathered properly.

Labeling: Every button or drop-down should be clear for the user, i.e., the user should be informed what happens if the user clicks that button. Confusing button names is one of the main usability issues.

Navigation: Users are confused about the flow of the page. i.e., they don't easily find what they are looking for.

Lack of visual feedback: Providing the feedback in which state they are. i.e., if the user has submitted a form. Then they should be probably getting feedback, on whether the form is submitted correctly or not.

Factors that are considered in my user interface:

Memorability: There are only a few Clicks for users to get what they want. And In my design, this is the main concern, it will be hard for a user to remember the place or location of the house. So, I have included a drop-down to better access the house.

Engagement: Each page has a contact us button, clear navigation, a unified design, little data entry, and few clicks for a seamless user experience. These all improve the user experience.

Errors: Make all the navigations clear, to let the user know where they are at. The actions performed are consistent, throughout the process. The amount of information needed is very minimal.

Learnability: Better navigation, and the carousel of images and dropdown buttons to select the specific type of houses. And Map in one page, so user see a various numbers of houses, from the university..

Efficiency: Design consistency has been preserved across all pages to promote user efficiency and facilitate rapid work completion.

FOCUS STATEMENT:

The goal of this User Interview is to find the problems that are faced by international students at the University of Florida, which includes finding effective ways to solve their problems. Some of the primary problems might be, finding accommodation and adjusting to the university culture and community. And also, Interviewer wants to find out solutions to those problems faced by international students initially. Helping International students solve their problems and making the University of Florida a more welcoming and supportive environment for international students.

FOCUS SETTING:

The focus setting dictates the course that was taken throughout the project in terms of user interview plans, gathering the pain points, applying themes, and considering user needs while following the correct guidelines mentioned in the sections below.

The user interview goals, and user interview guide are shown in the table below.

<p>- Introduction</p>	<p>Hello, I'm Nikhitha Sudati, Today I'm here to interview as a part of an assignment in the User Experience and Design class on Struggles faced by international students upon their initial arrival.</p> <p>This will be recorded and uploaded to YouTube for future requirements. This is going to be 15 – 20 minutes long.</p> <p>The main goal of this interview is to let us know the problems faced by international students at UF and try to decrease those issues and improve the UF experience in the future.</p>
<p>- Key demographic questions</p>	<p>First, I'd like you to tell me a bit about yourself, hoping you are comfortable. If so,</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How old were you when you first arrived at UF? 2. Can you please tell a bit more about yourself? 3. Have you lived abroad previously, and what was your home country 4. Is this your first international travel? 5. How long was your journey from your country to US, and how did you feel about it? 6. How did you arrive from the airport to your accommodation place?
<p>- Warm-up questions (factual answers)</p>	<p>Now, I hope you have become comfortable and I'd like you to tell me a little bit more about your arrival to UF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much time did you have before classes began? 2. How far did you live from campus when you first arrived? 3. Did UF help you find housing? 4. Did UF provide any information regarding all the initial actions that need to be done through any orientation or any other sources. 5. What was the biggest difference you noticed between this country and your own? 6. How did you find more about the initial details? 7. Did you faced any trouble finding information or searching for information regarding the things you wanted to know? 8. Did you find anything different from your previous country and this country?
<p>- Main questions (open-ended discussions)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your main concern before arriving at UF? 2. Did UF help addressing all your problems? 3. What were some unexpected issues you encountered at the beginning of your time at UF? Could they have been prevented by UF? 4. Did you have any trouble adjusting to the academic structure? 5. As you are an international student, is there any procedure you were not aware of and You find after coming it is very important step? 6. Did you face any difficulties adopting to the US currency, while purchasing the initial necessities.

	<p>7. Did you face any cultural and food shocks.</p> <p>8. Did UF help with the transportation from your place to the university</p> <p>9. Did you face any challenges adjusting to the weather.</p> <p>This pretty much sums everything that I wanted to ask you. But, Is there anything else you want to share?</p>
<p>• Design Probes (Reminders & Prompts)</p>	<p>You should remind the user to think aloud if they pause during an answer for longer than 10 seconds.</p> <p>Ask the user if they would like to share their thoughts with you if they are still stumped for more than 30 seconds.</p> <p>Complete the assignment and move on to the next question if the user is still stumped and it appears that no progress will be achieved for more than 90 seconds. "Okay, I appreciate you trying to answer the question. Let's go on to the following query</p>

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN:

The main goal is to identify the most important themes from the interviews of the three international students that have been conducted. These interviews would be treated as qualitative with data coming from the video, audio and transcript notes taken during the interviews.

The plan which I have decided to follow upon for the data analysis is as follows –

Step 1: Gather the raw data.

In this step, I gathered all the answers from the interviews I conducted, by scribing parallelly while interviewing and transcribing the audio recordings from interviews and using the transcriptions for analysis.

Step 2: Reading and understanding the data.

Here, I have gone through all the data, I have collected and understood the problems faced by all the interviewees. From this step, I have extracted the problems faced by students.

Step 3: Color Coding

Every problem has one main concern, I tried to pick that main concern and give the fragment a name that best describes the data. People have similar concerns, so I tried to understand the exact meaning of the concern and segregated the concerns.

Step 4: Evaluate the Themes:

All the categorizations done in the above step helped me get general themes for each specific category. I revised my data so that any missing problem can be categorized into themes.

AFFINITY DIAGRAM:

Affinity Diagrams are used to group a lot of ideas into clusters based on how similar they are to one another.

Based on the data gathered during the interviews, the following affinity diagram was produced:



The link for this affinity diagram: <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVPUCUQEw/>

USER NEEDS:

User needs are also called as point of view statements, it is used to summarize who a particular user is. From the interviews, I was able to get user to express their needs in simpler words, to understand their pain points.

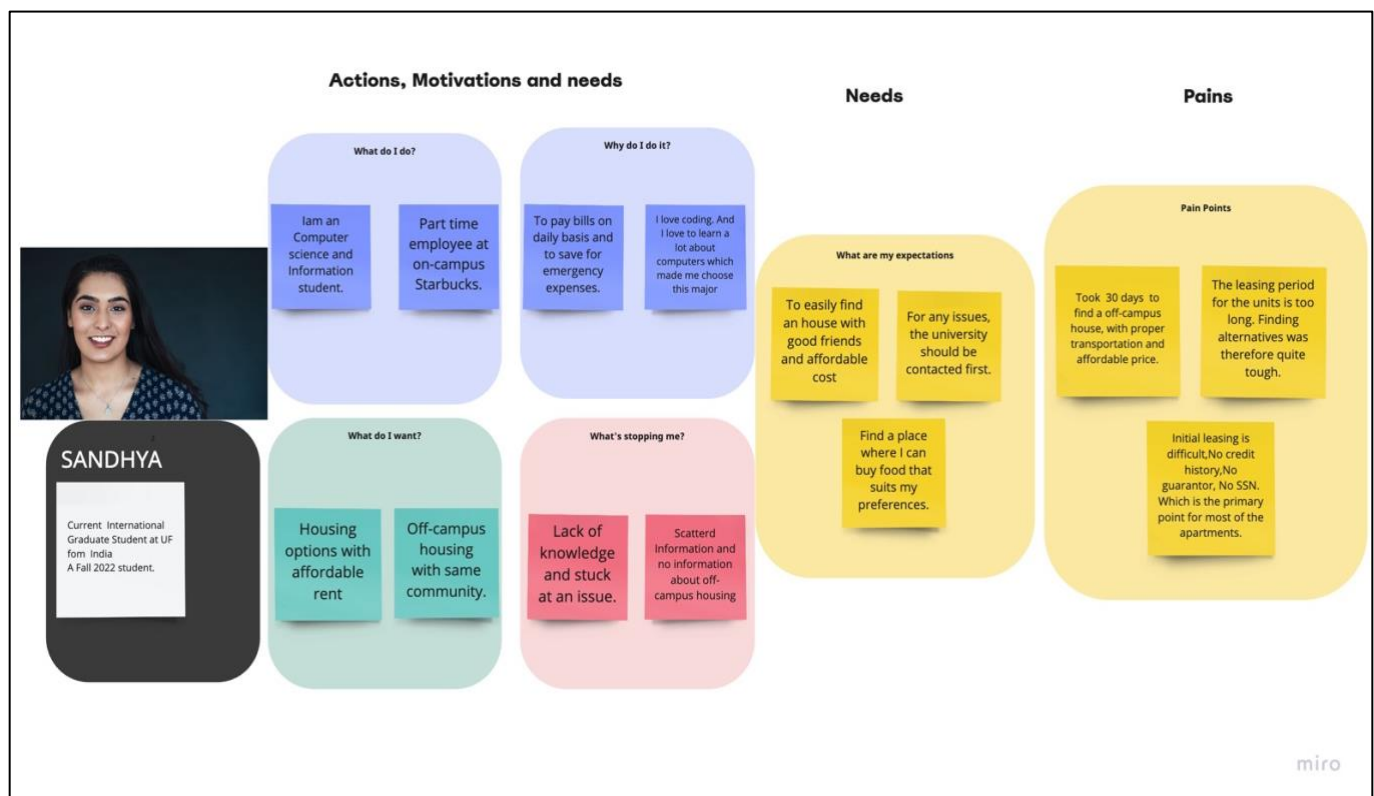
USER NEED 1: Amanda is a South Indian girl who spent her entire life till now with the guidance of someone for everything is an undergraduate student who just came in Fall 2022 for pursuing her higher education and needs to find temporary accommodation easily, including booking a cab from the airport the place.

USER NEED 2: Sandhya finds it difficult to pay for her Master's degree, which she started in the fall of 2022 as an international graduate student. As a result, she needs to locate a place to live that is both inexpensive and comfortable.

USER NEED 3: Ria Simon, an international Ph.D. student, who needs routine examination and tests due to thyroid issues, needs to find housing that is close, and accessible to the hospital or doctor's office.

PERSONAS:

A persona is an archetype instead of an actual living human, but personas should be described as if they were real people. They help understand the users better because of the different details being represented in an easy-to-understand format.



SCENARIOS:

I have created the following scenarios about my users from the personas and user needs I have generated.

SCENARIO 1:

Amanda, our first Primary user, recently moved to the United States to pursue her undergraduate degree. She was reliant on her parents for everything in India. But in this situation, she found it quite challenging to handle things by herself. She first arrived in Orlando, which is two hours away from the destination she wanted to see. Due to her lack of correct information, she spent approximately 11 hours at the airport. She tried to get in touch with some of her classmates for pick-up, but she got no response. She then finds the housing.com app, which is a website for accommodations, which has the option to look for temporary accommodation and book a cab, she then happily booked a room and safely reached the place.

SCENARIO 2:

A graduate student from India who recently immigrated to the United States, Sandhya is also one of our primary users. Given that she comes from a middle-class family, it will be difficult for them to pay for her graduate study. Nevertheless, because of her strong academic record, she was able to secure a loan. Her parents began to be concerned for her well-being and feel sympathy for her plight. However, she felt everything is expensive in this new country. So, she decided to find an on-campus part-time at the university to meet her daily needs. She needs a place to stay which is very affordable. After her first day of class, she asked one of her seniors and he suggested housing.com for any housing-related issues. She went on to the website and found all the required options. She booked a room in a shared apartment and even paid the security deposit.

SCENARIO 3:

Ria Simon is our secondary user. She earned her master's degree in the same profession and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida. She has lived in Gainesville for the past three years. She is quite worried about her health because she has a few problems, one of which is her thyroid, which requires monthly checkups and testing from the doctor. However, she currently lives too far from a hospital or doctor's office. She recently passed out at home, and it took about 20 minutes for an ambulance to come. She had been so concerned about staying there ever since. She then began considering moving that house. She then finds about housing.com and finds an off-campus apartment that is nearer to the hospital, she also got all resources regarding the lease agreement and was successfully able to book.

STORYBOARDS:

Storyboards provide a visual depiction of user requirements and problem scenarios. The storyboards that follow describe my users' scenarios and user requirements. These forms have been utilized to make the stories more aesthetically pleasing and more easily understandable.

ACCOMMODATION

An initiative to help international students



Scene 1

An international student who has no information feels lost at initial arrival.



Scene 2

She tries contacting her friends, but no one will respond. So, she has to wait at the airport for many hours



Scene 3

She then remembers about the UF Accommodation website for international students and checks for nearby Airbnb.



Scene 4

From the results of the site, she books a cab to the nearest, safest, and affordable Airbnb



Scene 5

Safely reaches the temporary accommodation place without much struggle. One happy international student.



HOUSING

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



Scene 1

An excellent academic student, who recently arrived US with extreme hopes and goals.



Scene 4

Got to know about the UF website on Off-campus housing



Scene 2

Finds everything very expensive in the new country.



Scene 5

The student then finds an affordable apartment with everything she needs.



Scene 3

Starts doing On-campus parttime to pay the rent and meet daily needs. Her main worry is to find an affordable house.



Scene 6

She then refers to her friends, so they can share the apartment, which makes it more affordable.



HOUSING

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



Student who currently lives in an apartment which is far away from the hospital and doctors office.



She scheduled a visit with a doctor, but due to the distance, she got caught in traffic.



She then decides to move out of the current apartment and looks for new place.



finds a new home with the help of the website that lists homes by distance.



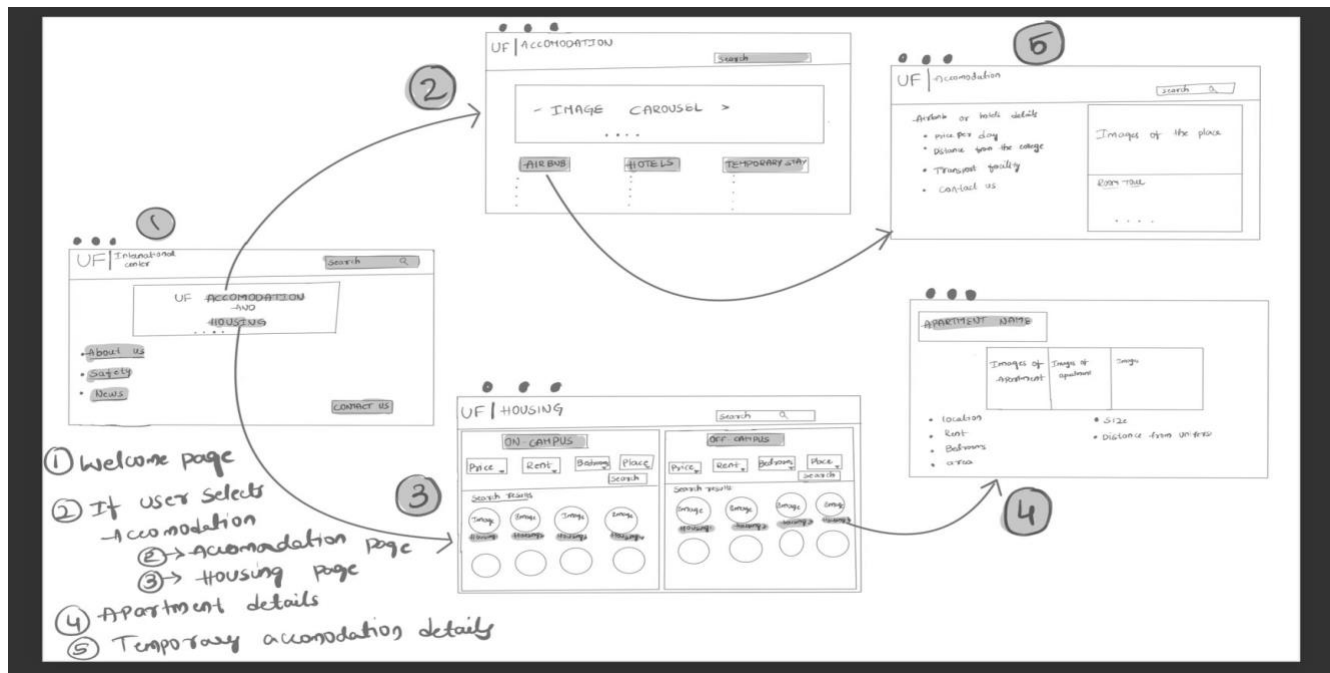
One day she suddenly feels dizzy and needs emergency care.



This time she reached the hospital in 5 minutes, which helped in saving her life.

BRAINSTORMING DESIGN SOLUTION:

WIREFLOWS: I was able to create the basic wireflow while keeping in mind the user requirements, personas, and scenarios that were acquired from the conducted interviews. Wireflows, which combine wireframes with flowcharts, are excellent for displaying screens and processes in dynamic environments. The initial wireflow was created in a very simplistic way to give a general overview of the design option I was considering for the problem statement. It displayed the screens' preliminary designs and the functions they will contain.

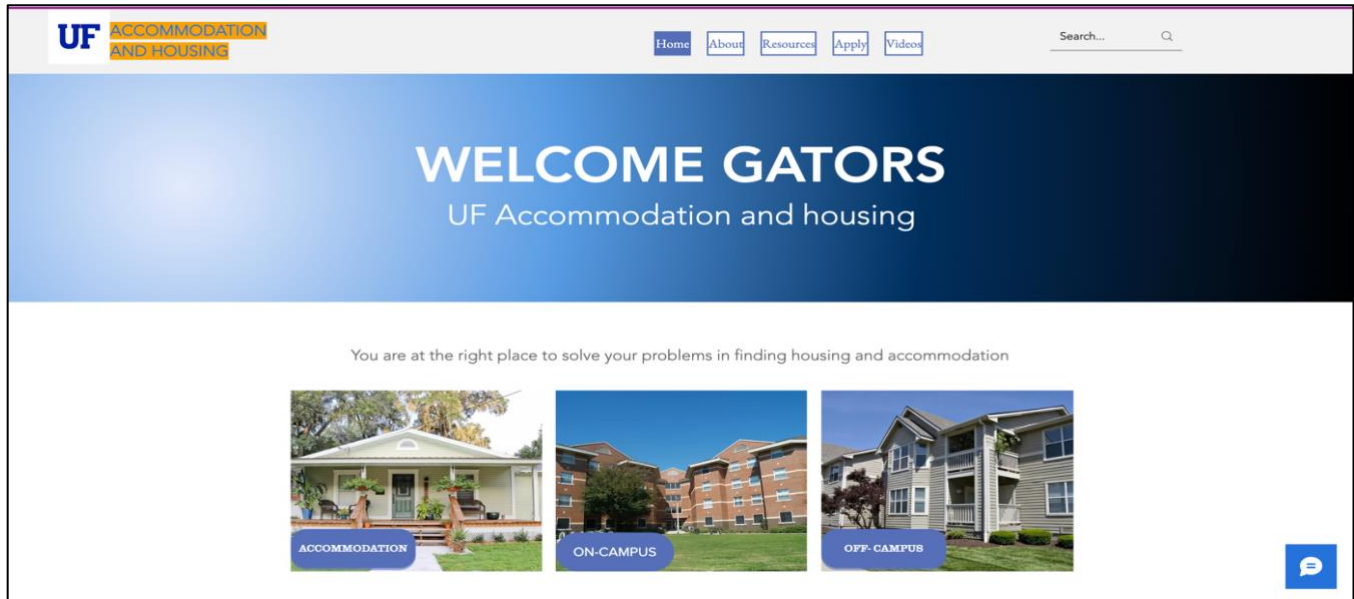


The wire flow that follows is an updated version of the one that came before. The screens' and features' designs have been modified in this wire flow to improve their aesthetics and make them simpler to comprehend.

The screens have undergone some modifications to make them appear more unified and organized.

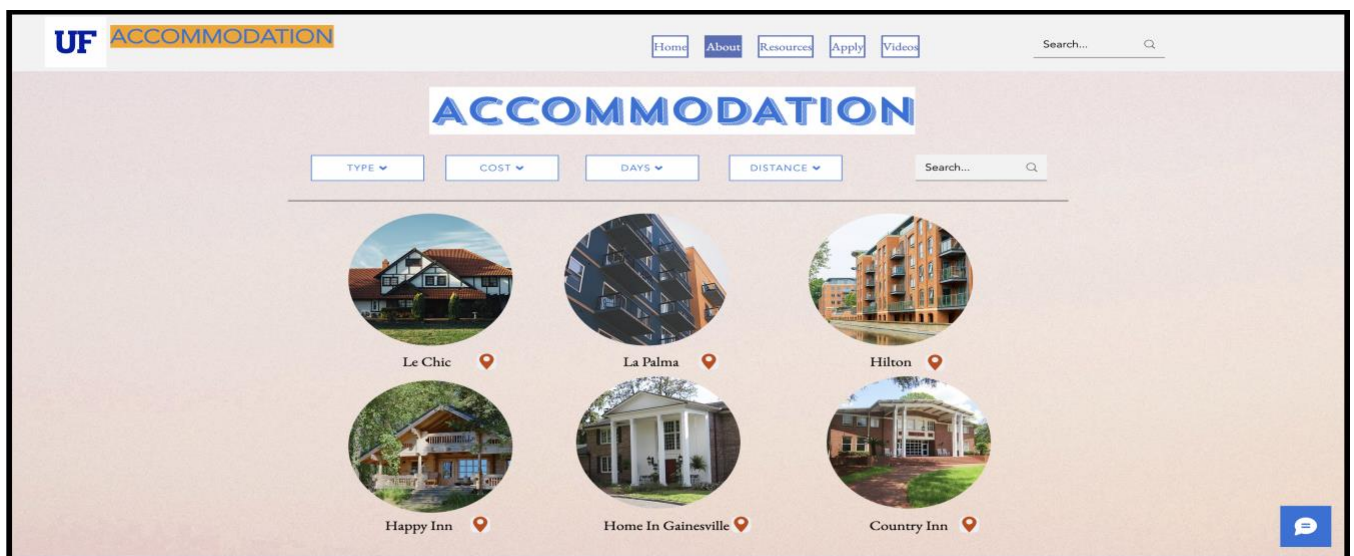
FINAL DESIGN SOLUTION: (MOCKUPS)

HOME PAGE:



This is the home page, which is similar from the previous version, except for the menu bar and image carousel and welcome information. And the user can select, if they are looking for a place to accommodate, or on-campus or off-campus.

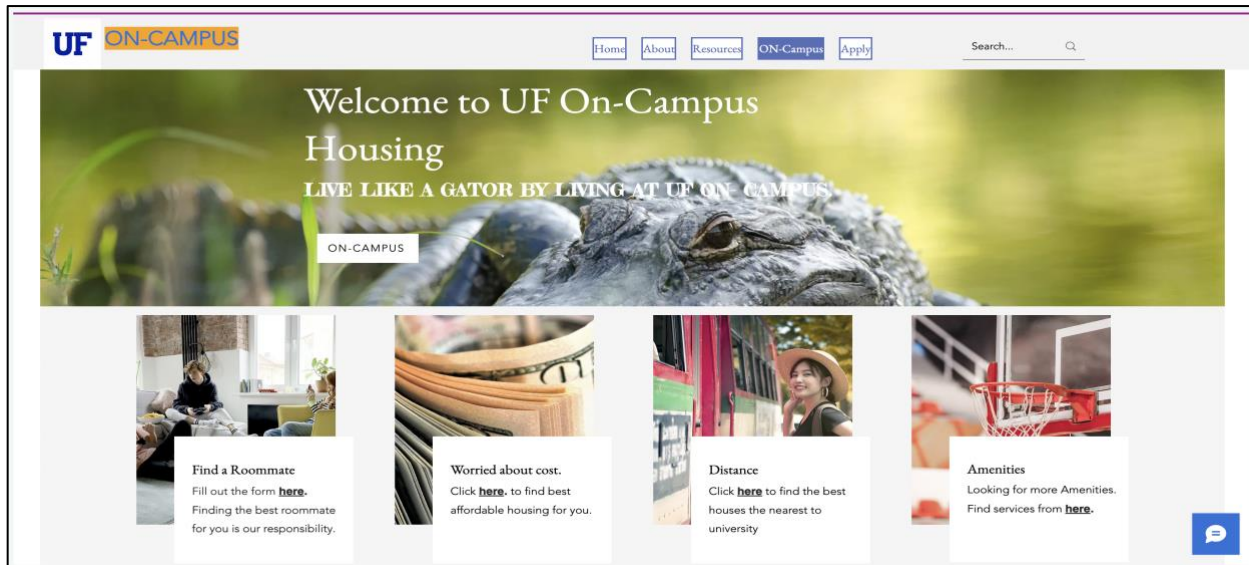
ACCOMMODATION PAGE:



The user will be led to this page when they choose the accommodation button. From the type dropdown on this page, the user can choose whether he is looking for an Airbnb, hotel, or paying guests. Additionally, he can select

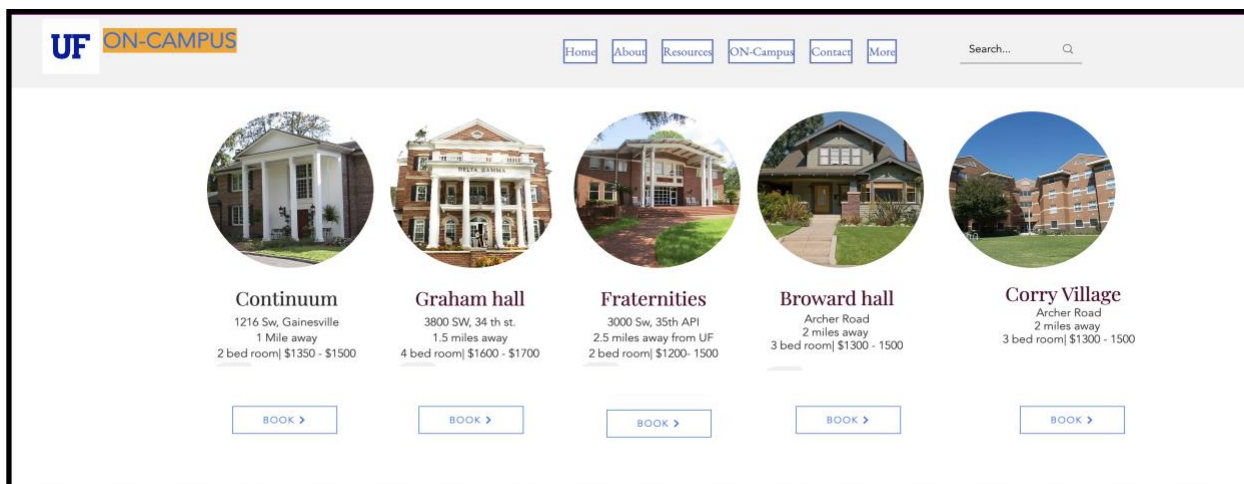
the price, the number of days he plans to stay, and the distance from his location. Once the customer has made all the selections, they can look for apartments that are similar. and may choose anyone.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING PAGE:



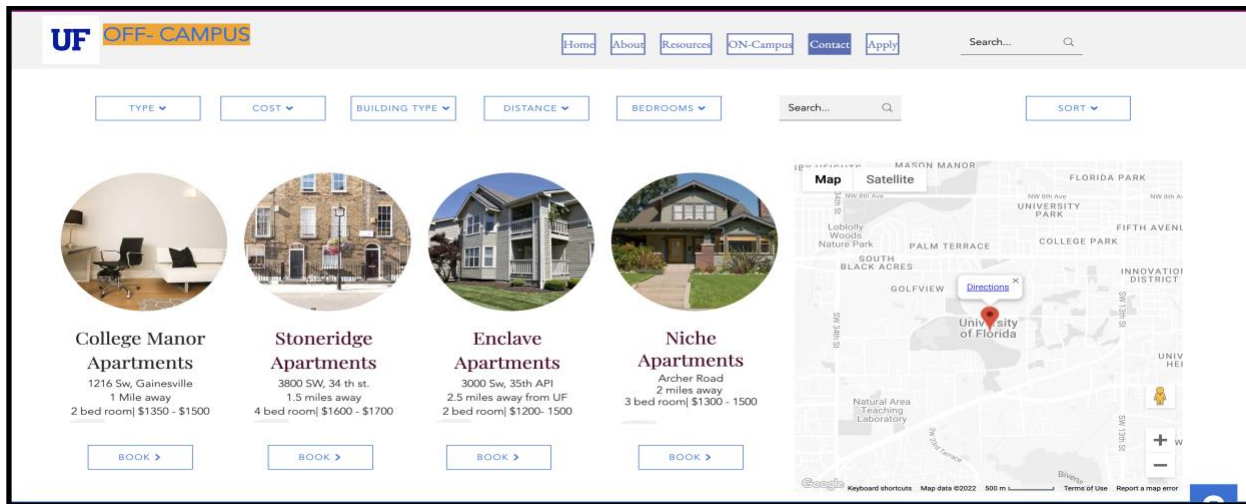
This is an on-campus page, i.e., if the user selects on-campus as his selection. If a user is looking to find a roommate, he is looking for a different set of houses. In the same manner, if a student is looking for on-campus housing, if a user is looking for low-budget houses, he is looking for different options. So, when the user clicks on here, the page will redirect to the list of houses he is looking for.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING / SELECTION:



When a user clicks here, they will land on this page, where he can see the list of houses with cost and location. If he wants to book the house, they can go ahead and click the book button, which will direct to the 6th page.

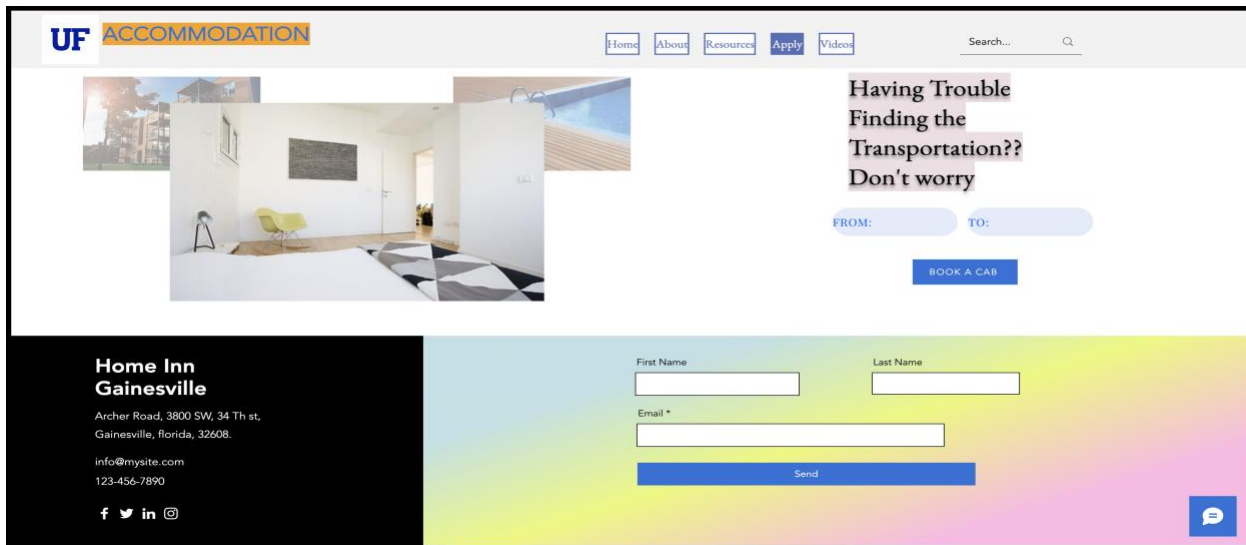
OFF-CAMPUS PAGE:



This is the off-campus page, if the user selects off-campus in the home page, they will land at this page.

The distance from the university is the primary worry of those looking off-campus, which is why there is a map on this off-campus page. So, users choose from the drop-down list the kind of homes they're looking for. There is a list of the homes. Users can examine the distance from the university and other homes by clicking on the location symbol. The residences can be compared.

BOOK AN HOUSE PAGE



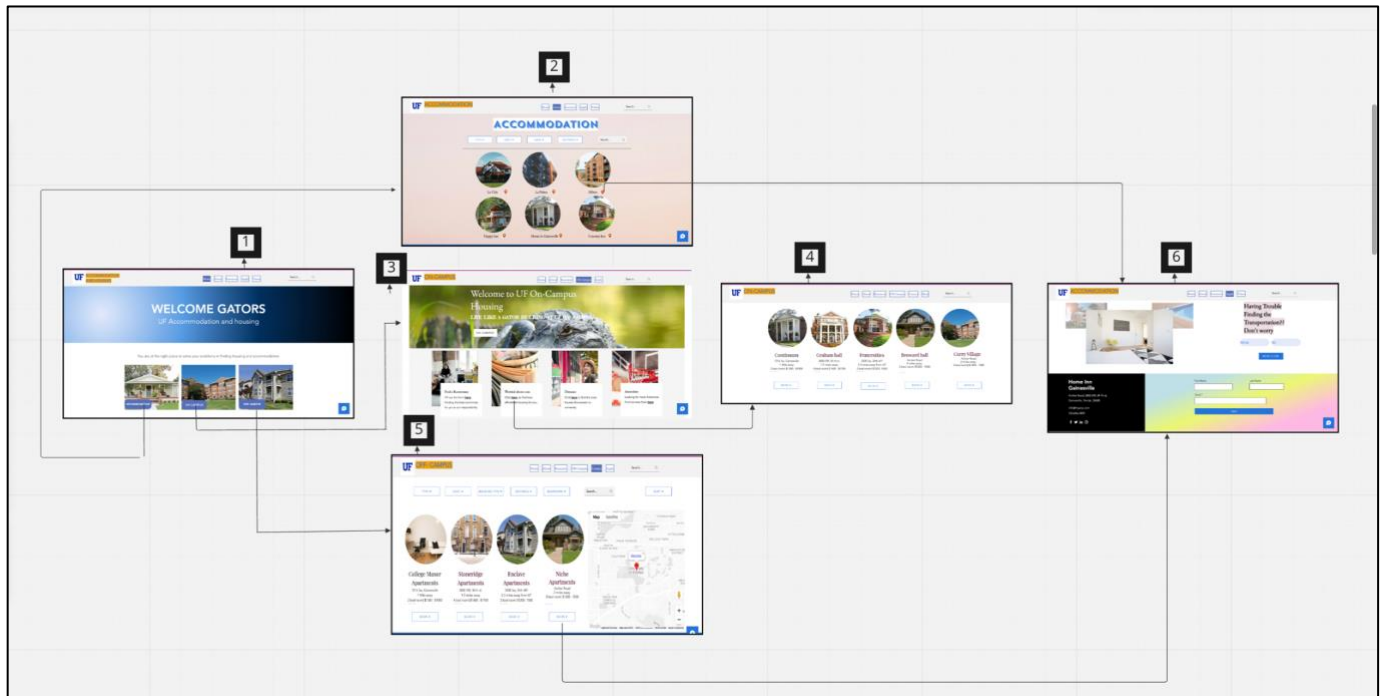
This is the final page, where the user will end up selecting the book button from the accommodation, on-campus or off-campus. Most of the users face problems finding the cab to the correct location, to avoid this the user can book a cab, where the 'to' location is static. And from location depends on the user.

On this page, the image carousel will display the images of the selected house and contact information. And user can enter their details, so the selected house can contact them for future purposes.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF MOCKUP:

Miro board link: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVPNCOCNg=/?share_link_id=737484199690

This is the flow of the frames in the mockup of the final design



THE RATIONALE FOR DESIGN DECISIONS:

RATIONALE:

Based on research conducted through user interviews and the general website difficulties that make it challenging for the user to access the facility, I sorted the concerns and came up with possible solutions before deciding on one. The issues with the potential solutions and the choices taken, which formed the basis for the wire flow diagram and mockup, are as follows:

ISSUE 1:

The user had trouble finding everything in a single location. For example, if the user is looking for both accommodation and housing. The user must visit different sites.

Alternative A: Prioritize and include the main things, they lead to the deeper options. On-campus and off-campus housing were both on the same page in the previous entry. It will confuse the user regarding it

Alternative B: With easy accessibility and understandability with proper images, put everything in a single place.

Decision: I have followed alternative B, By offering comprehensive information along with clear language and graphics, it will be possible to give users all the information they need without sacrificing user clarity.

ISSUE 2:

When a user is looking for houses with many specific needs, it will make the user get irritated because they must go back and check for other options.

Alternative A: Give a cluster of images of the houses with information on the houses, and let use choose among them.

Alternative B: Provide a dropdown for every feature and let the user search for the houses from the search results based on the dropdown selection.

Decision: I followed alternative B, it will provide users to save a lot of time and can easily find the house with the features they are looking for. i.e., give a drop-down for cost, bedrooms, and type of the house they are looking for, which will provide the search results for only those specific features.

ISSUE 3:

Colorful and themed websites that provide little valuable information.

Alternative A: Use colors and themes appropriate to the website.

Alternative B: Use themes and colors that complement the website. The selection of colors should also be carefully thought out.

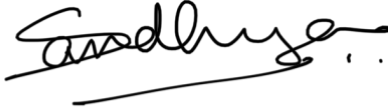
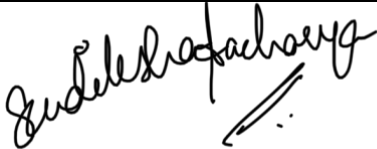
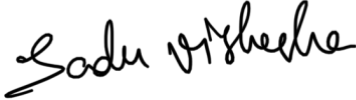
Decision: I followed alternative B,. With simply the theme and color, it will provide the user with a general picture of the website. Making the proper color decisions while considering the user's viewpoint will help to make the website meaningful and aesthetically beautiful.

Participant Acknowledgment Form

Submitted by:

NIKHITHA SUDATI

Participants: By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have participated in a focus group or user test for the above group related to the above course on the date indicated below. In addition, you acknowledge that you are aware that you are bound by UF's honor policy in signing this form to indicate that you have actually participated in a focus group or user test for the class as required.

Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date of Participation
Sandhya Ananthan		9/18/2022
Sudiksha Acharya		9/18/2022
Vishesha Sadu		9/18/2022

Group Members: please initial below to indicate that your group members acknowledge that you are aware that you are bound by UF's honor policy in students signing this form only if they have actually participated in a focus group or user test for the class as required.

(Group members initials)	NS
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