Max Takano's Usability Evaluation Notes

1. Visibility of system status (what is going on?)
   - The home page was a bit confusing, I did not realize that clicking the four boxes right below the main page would show a different set of information. I thought instead that they would take me to a new page, so the visibility was poor here.
   - Another confusing part of this website is that there are two A-Z lists. One for the entire university and another for just academic departments. Both have the exact same theme and feel so it is quite confusing to the user that these are supposed to be different.
2. Match between system and real world (get on the user's level)
   - The first words that caught my eye when I opened the site were "Study with us". This doesn't tell me anything about what this button does, or how I should use it. If I were a current student, I would perhaps think it would take me to a current student portal (this link is actually in the footer). It does not. For perspective students, I would expect there would be some sort of application to apply. Instead the button takes you to neither and shows courses instead, very misleading.
   - There is a link request a prospectus. This lingo is in my opinion pretty confusing, perhaps it is a British term, but I had to search through multiple links to find out what this meant. **This would definitely not attract most American international students.**
3. User control and freedom (keep the user in control)
   - If a user is unfortunate enough to use the search feature, there is no exit button to get out of the search other than using their browsers back button or clicking one of the search links. Additionally if a user clicks the logo (which should bring one back to the home page), it takes the user down another level to nowhere requiring two browser back button presses to escape.
   - There were some nice top buttons in some of the subpages that bring you back up to the top so you can escape with the logo button.
4. Consistency and standards (be easy to understand)
   - The Home link is different between the "Study with Us" button and the others, this is especially odd because the University A-Z link remains the same in both. Also confusing is the breadcrumb, which looks almost identical to the large button links. The theme change between the 1 level down links and the main page also threw me off quite a bit.
   - The search feature doesn't do anything to mask the fact that it is a google search. It adopts google's theme for the return results which really throws off the consistency of the search page. More importantly, **clicking the logo on the search page takes you no where! Probably a bug**. This is especially inconsistent because the logo in all other pages brings you back to the home page like you would expect.

- ◦ The map matches the theme of the home page nicely, the site could be really great if everything had the same theme.
- ◦ There is a link research with us, which was consistent with the study with us link. It would be cool if they stuck with this theme a bit more, it might make what the study with us link does more clear.
- ◦ some pages are randomly inconsistent, such as the alumni page.
5. Error prevention (warn the user early)
   - ◦ There are stars on the items that you must fill out in the prospectus form.
   - ◦ There was no warning of the messed up search home button
6. Recognition rather than recall (no memory needed)
   - ◦ There are some things you would need to memorize about this site. First you would want to memorize where the current student and staff pages links are. Next you would want to memorize where the help page is, as it is not readily available but is very useful.
   - ◦ The logo is constant in the top left which is a nice recognizable button to get back to the home page (except for when it doesn't work)
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use (shortcuts and repetition)
   - ◦ This site scores poorly in its usability for multiple user groups. For current students, there is no link directly visible on any of the pages, they have to scroll down to the bottom to find the current student link. Current students frequently wanting to use the student site would definitely need to create a separate book mark for the student site as there are no accelerators or shortcuts to avoid scrolling to the bottom and clicking the current student link.
   - ◦ Staff users suffer from the same problem as current students, they also do not have a convenient link.
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design (don't distract from good info)
   - ◦ The main page does a good job of keeping the information succinct. Specifically the little red boxes give a short phrase to summarize each of the four possible information sections you can view.
   - ◦ The map page is clear and simplistic to understand from the perspective of just reading the menu options.
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors (clean error messages)
   - ◦ There aren't any error messages in the one area I found an error. Instead you are just presented with a blank screen. This is a pretty bad user experience.
   - ◦ When trying to request a prospectus, the forms are validated, and it is clear which areas you didn't fill out as they are red and messages pop up warning you of your mistake.
   - ◦ There is a nice help popup on the map that is clear and easy to access as well.
10. Help and documentation (can I help you?)
    - ◦ Finding the help button is not trivial as it is hard to see on the main page down at the bottom, and even smaller down in any sub page (bottom right).

- The help section actually is pretty nice though, it categorizes everything much better than the site does and makes it clear which links are useful for different intended users. **This page was the most helpful of the site.**