The Solution to Lack of Communication through MaryNet

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IT-210-A

December 1, 2020

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Introduction

As part of any college student's college experience comes registration for classes per each semester. Marymount University has created a system named MaryNet where students can view their requirements, track and plan their progress, create an ideal schedule, and register for classes, which is the websites main purpose. MaryNet provides students with many options and resources however, the system lacks one very important aspect: communication with the student's advisor. In order for a student to register for their classes, their schedule must be approved by their assigned advisor. In order to communicate, you have to go through a different resource, Starfish, to schedule an appointment to speak with your advisor about the classes you have planned out. You must then wait to meet with them and recently in the times of the pandemic, meetings are entirely virtual, meaning there are a limited amount of time slots. Communication through a singular resource would be much more efficient and a lot less complicated and stressful during an already stressful time period in one's collegiate career.

The Solution to Lack of Communication through MaryNet

MaryNet, a web design product of Marymount University, is the system used by the university's students and staff in which one can access for any needs regarding registering for classes. The website allows students to view requirements that must be completed for their declared major, a view of your semester grades and GPA, a four-year calendar where one can track and plan their progress, the ability to create an ideal schedule tailored to time constraints and/or commitments, as well as register for classes for upcoming semesters. Although the web program provides one with extremely useful resources, it lacks one very important thing: direct communication with a student's advisor. In order to complete class registration and in turn enjoy and make use of the given resources, one's academic advisor has to approve the schedule that the student has created. My solution to make up for this lack would be to combine MaryNet with another program used by Marymount's students and staff, the web application Starfish.

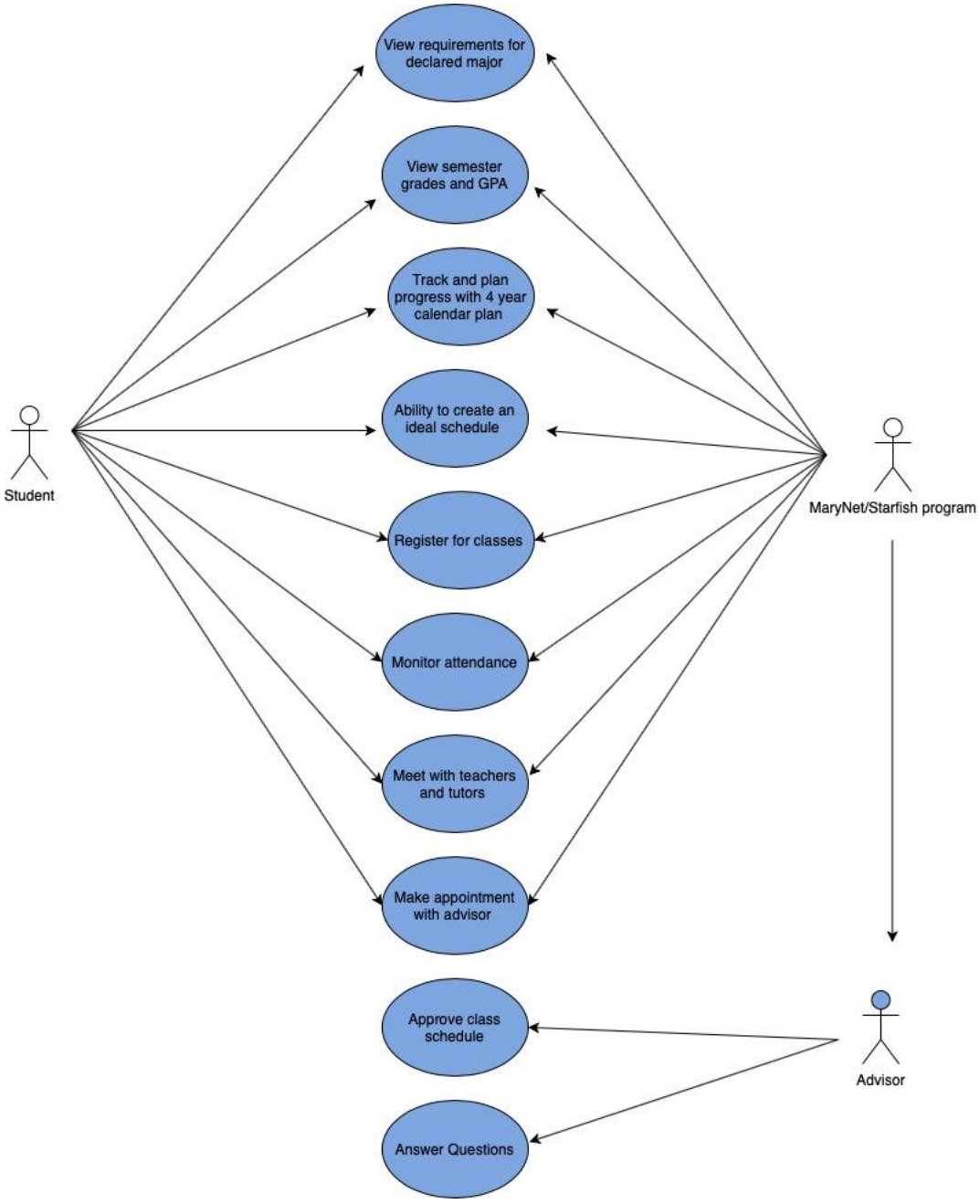
Starfish is another web application not designed by Marymount University but implemented and used as a way for students to directly contact their academic advisor for various needs. Through this application, students can monitor their own attendance, sign up for meetings with teachers and tutors and the solution to the problem being discussed, an opportunity to meet with their advisor one on one by time slot sign up. Before the time of the pandemic, the time slots one signed up for resulted in a face to face individual meeting with their advisor to address whatever concern they had whether that be with adding or dropping classes, changing of a major or just to plan for the future. Now, in the time of the pandemic, the slot one signs up for results in a zoom meeting still addressing whatever concern one is having but it does not come with as much reassurance as previously. An adjustment has been made on both parts but it is very stressful, speaking as the voice of a student, to make that adjustment because there

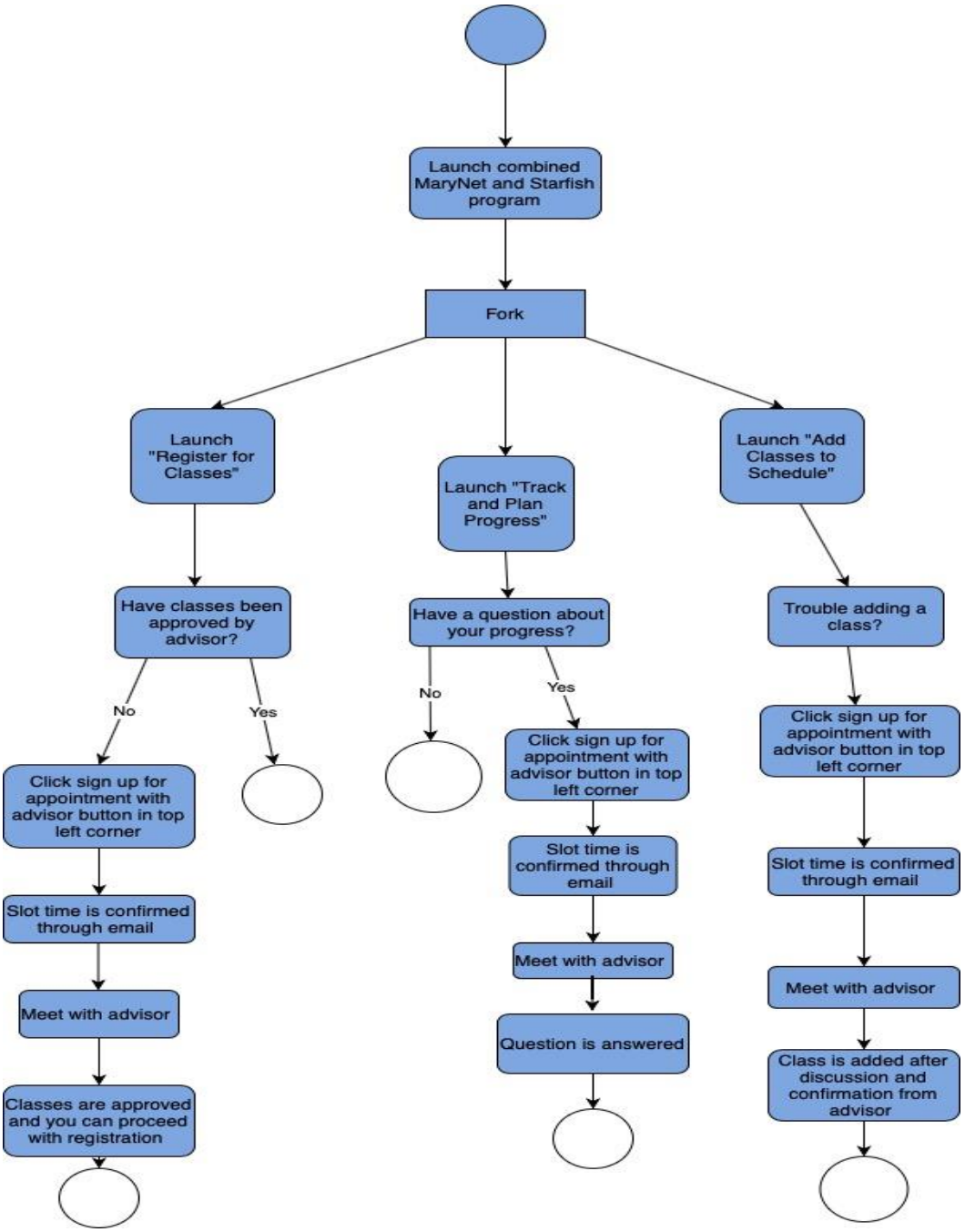
are so many different web links and sites that do different things for different classes. By combining both MaryNet and Starfish, the disconnect between student and advisor is no longer an issue avoided from now on from both ends.

With the proposed solution, the mesh of MaryNet and Starfish into one operating web system, will encompass all of the resources both held as individual programs but in the convenient format of one webpage. The page will look similar to that of the current format of the MaryNet webpage, the only difference is that there will be a “Contact Advisor” button in the top left corner. When the button is clicked, a message is sent instructing the system to open up what would be your advisor’s previous Starfish page. The program will know one’s advisor by the username and password they log in with. Once the page has been opened, the user will view a system that is still familiar to them, the same format as Starfish, except now it is one click of a button away instead of having to go through the Marymount student portal then through Canvas then to Starfish. It will not only be more convenient but it will make the process of registering for classes much less stressful on both student and advisor.

The following are diagram illustrations demonstrating how the proposed solution will be executed, what the solution does (functional requirements) and how the implementation of the solution within the system behaves (nonfunctional requirements). The functional requirements of this system would be: View requirements for declared major, view semester grades and GPA, track and plan progress, create ideal schedule, register for classes, monitor attendance, meet with teachers/tutors, make appointment with advisor, gain approval for class registration, and ask advisor questions. The nonfunctional requirements of this system would be: response time, capacity, reliability, availability, recoverability, maintainability, serviceability, and scalability. In the use case diagram following this paragraph, the user is being compared to the program in

terms of what one or the another can and cannot do. However, both the student and the MaryNet/Starfish program can select and perform the same functions. There are two functions that sit at the bottom of the diagram that neither can perform and that is where the advisor comes into play. The advisor is linked to the MaryNet/Starfish program through an arrow indicating that through the program, the advisor can be reached and accomplish tasks requested by the student.

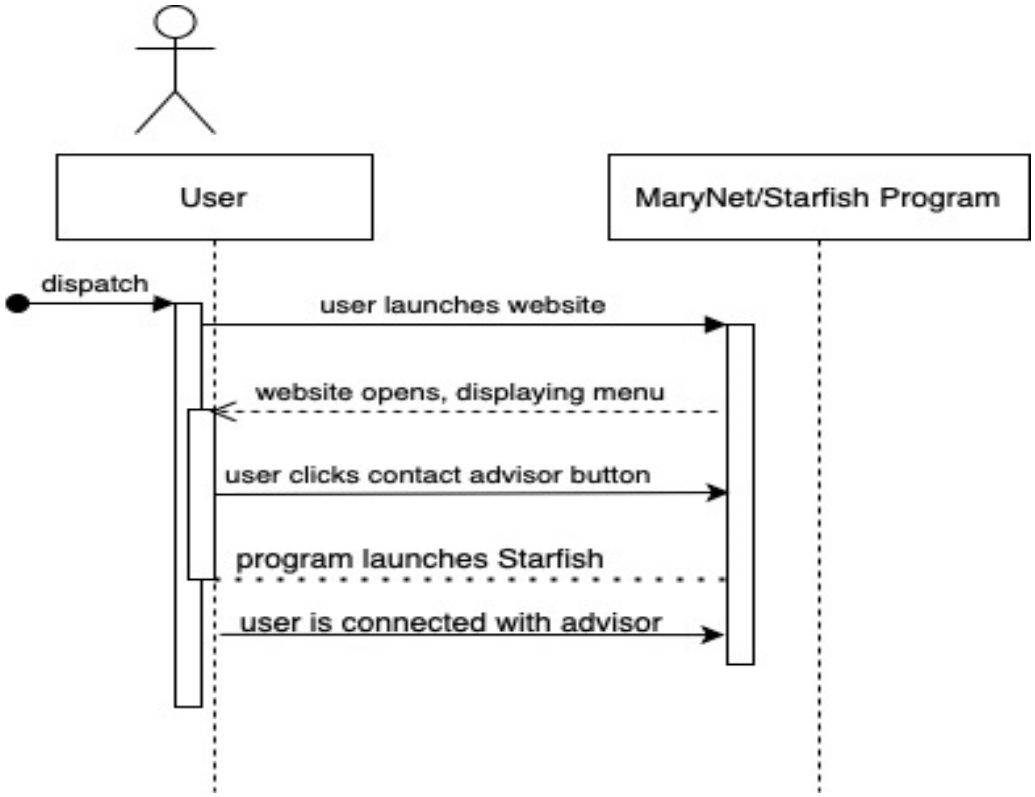




In this activity diagram, the solution that has been proposed is being illustrated. The program is launched as a combination of both MaryNet and Starfish. A fork is presented to the user where they are asked to decide what resource from the program they would like to activate. For example, if the user picks “Register for Classes”, clicking on that titled tab will launch the resource within the program taking the user to a page where they can find classes they have

added to their schedule. The system asks the user if the classes they have selected have been approved by their academic advisor. If the classes have been approved, they can register by clicking the button and the process is finished. If their classes have not been approved by their advisor, they should then click the “Contact Advisor” button in the top left corner. This will bring up a separate webpage almost like a direct link to Starfish but it is built into the MaryNet webpage program so the web identification name will not change. When the page has fully loaded, the user will be prompted to select a time slot when their advisor is available and when the user is also available. The time they have selected will be confirmed through an email. If an email is not sent the request did not go through. Lastly, the user will meet with their advisor and discuss approval of classes and should be cleared to register after the meeting. The process flows the same way if the user picks one of the other two options.

The third and final way this solution is illustrated is through a sequence diagram. In the diagram, the process begins with a dispatch from the user to launch the website. The MaryNet/Starfish program recieves the open request and opens the page, displaying the menu of resources linked under different titles. Upon the website being opened, the user selects the “Contact Advisor” button. The program recieves the request and launches Starfish within the MaryNet webpage. The user then becomes connected with their advisor in whatever way they need; appointment, e-mail, zoom, questions or all of the above.


User
MaryNet/Starfish Program
dispatch
user launches website
website opens, displaying menu
user clicks contact advisor button
program launches Starfish
user is connected with advisor

Conclusion

In conclusion, the problem presented was that there was a lack of a communication resource for a task that needs direct communication between the user and their advisor. The solution proposed to solve this problem was to combine two independent resources, MaryNet and Starfish, which would put a resource in place of the lack as well as add extra useful features. By combining both, communication will be of easier access as well as the relief of the stress of both student and advisor. If given the chance, I believe all students and much if not all of the staff would appreciate this change. Implementing this solution would be extremely beneficial in today's world due to almost everything needing to be done virtually. Having so many resources in one place instead of many separate ones would be a lot more efficient, a lot less time consuming and overall more beneficial for the growth of the student and the management of the staff.