Campus Community Connection Website Redesign

Prepared for

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Faculty Research Specialist,

Community & Outreach Program Manager,

and

Integrated Capstone for Information Science Instructor,

College of Information Studies,

INST 490 Integrated Capstone Spring 2020,

local government jurisdictions near the University of Maryland, College Park,

and

University of Maryland affiliates

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Undergraduate Information Science Students

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ABSTRACT

Campus Community Connection (CCC) is a University of Maryland (UMD) organization that aims to provide opportunities to community-based projects that addresses substantial sustainability and resiliency for the University of Maryland in College Park, and its surrounding communities. The cities involved in these projects are Greenbelt, New Carrollton, Berwyn Heights, Riverdale Park, Hyattsville, University Park, College Park, and Beltsville, Adelphi/Cool Spring, and College Heights Estates. It is also a channel for University of Maryland affiliates to fulfill academic objectives, and gain professional experience by working on real-world projects provided by the Campus Community Connection's organization. The organization's objective is to enhance it's website's design to promote collaboration from local College Park communities and University of Maryland affiliates.

Our goal was to promote positive user experience on the website by developing solutions built to solve the organization's design challenges, improve their exposure by providing feasible marketing strategies that increases CCC's exposure to potential stakeholders such as UMD students, faculty, and staff, and other stakeholders interested in the CCC's initiatives, and develop ways to collect and measure user experience and exposure. Other potential stakeholders could be residents living within the locale communities surrounding the university and potential sponsors to the projects. In order to accomplish our goals, we worked directly with the CCC's liaison and our professor, Andrew Fellows, to develop a new website prototype and a recommendation report.

METHODS

Our project objectives were broken down into 4 achievable milestones we call Phases. For the first phase, we defined the problem by interviewing our person of contact, Andrew Fellows. For our first step, we focused on background research on web hosting and web traffic and monitoring tools, marketing strategies within the campus, and developing user centered design approaches. Research on better software alternatives for the website was necessary to measure the performance of the new website's design should it be implemented. Research on marketing strategies targeted the lack of engagement problem the organization was facing according to Andrew Fellows'. We used a user centered design approach to solve our client's design challenges starting with the development of a survey (See Appendix A).
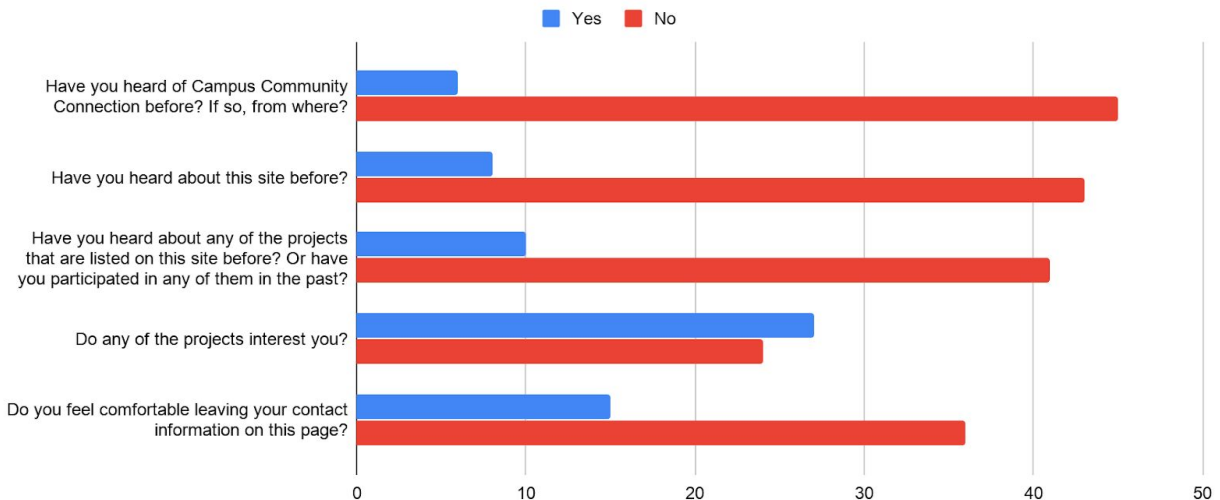

Figure 1: Survey results showing significant negative feedback on multiple design aspects of the current website.

Insights about our target users which includes but are not limited to University of Maryland students, and faculty were crucial to our project, so we developed a survey that tackled questions related to the website's design, purpose, and it measured user interest on projects and how much users knew about the organization. The survey was deployed twice on the UMD's official subreddit page, the team member's current classes, and once at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) Gaming Discord server, UMD GGWB Dance Club Discord and Facebook group, INST 377, course GroupMe chats outside of the team's courses, and the Evid Lab's Slack chat. We received a total of 52 responses, 94.2% of which are from students, 3.8% from a faculty/staff member, and a 1.9% from an alumnus. Figure 1 reveals respondent's interest in the projects offered by the CCC yet there aren't enough people that know or have

heard of CCC and it's website. Additionally, there are users who do not feel comfortable leaving their contact information on this page which reveals a lack of website credibility and association with the University of Maryland. This could be attributed to the lack of information found in the page.

For the second phase, we evaluated the information we collected from our background research and developed marketing strategies, and deployed our survey again. Additionally, high fidelity wireframes were created due to the responses from the first round of our survey deployment (see Appendix C). For the third phase, we created user evaluation plans for user testing, and evaluated and implemented all the user and client feedback we received from user surveys on our prototype. We also communicated with the Accessibility team about accessibility features for people with disabilities. For our last phase, we finalized our client presentation, prototype, and this recommendation report.

We faced a few challenges for our data collection methods. First, our sample may not be an accurate representation of our target population due to selection bias. We deployed the survey to a majority of junior to senior upper level Information Science courses and other courses outside of the College of Information Science. Second, we failed to collect enough user demographic data such as gender and major to preserve and respect the anonymity of our respondents. This would have helped generate an in-depth analysis on the specifics of our target users. Third, we did not get a chance to simultaneously deploy our survey to the same platforms on the second deployment due to the preparation it required to reach out to a secondary communication channel. Lastly, the sudden transition to online courses affected our data collection method for user evaluations. We were unable to reach out to a random sample of students who were willing to participate in our evaluation. Despite the circumstances, the team made enormous efforts in producing quality work that tackled the design, exposure, and technical challenges of redesigning the Campus Community Connection website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Technical

Our technical recommendations are based on our software research that involved comparing Wordpress to Drupal in terms of cost, ease of use, security, and flexibility as well as looking into compatible traffic tracking systems. Although we recommend WordPress over Drupal, we are also providing information on how to migrate your content from WordPress to Drupal as well as a compatible traffic tracking system for Drupal. It is also important to keep in mind that migration to Drupal will require an employee with a technical background.

Open-source Management Systems:

- **WordPress**: One of the most popular free and open-source content management systems due to its easy and beginner user-friendly platform. WordPress is suitable for both beginners and professionals.
  - Ease of Use: A user who does not have any technical background can manageably create and run a website in as little time as possible.
  - Security: WordPress provides many ways how to recover a hacked WordPress website in addition to their plugins that support security.
  - Flexibility: WordPress offers themes and plugs that allow beginners to create and manage their own websites.
- **Drupal**: A free and open-source management system that is recommended for users with a technical background.
  - Ease of Use: Drupal requires some basic knowledge of web coding to be able to fully create and manage a website.
  - Security: Drupal is a popular platform for government institutions and other large companies because it is the least vulnerable platform to hacking.
  - Flexibility: Drupal has extensions and modules (WordPress' themes and plugins). An experienced user is required to use them in order to get better results.
  - Migration: It is not fairly simple and not very beginner user friendly. An experienced user is required to move your content from the existing platform to Drupal.

Traffic Tracking Systems:

- **WP Statistics**: (WordPress) https://wp-statistics.com/

- ○ Ease of Use: A WordPress plugin that primarily focuses on analyzing visitors. You can see how many visitors, where they're coming from, and which of your pages get more visits.
  - ○ Flexibility: It allows you to turn data into graphs, charts, and etc. Data filtering and data exporting in CSV, TSV, and XML formats are available as well.
- **Visitor Analytics**: (Drupal & WordPress) https://www.visitor-analytics.io/en/
  - ○ Ease of Use: A traffic tracking tool that offers user-friendly graphs and menu options. It is built for small businesses that want to track website traffic on their own and without any technical background.
  - ○ Flexibility: It allows you to see the user's path on your website and it also offers automatic integrations without the need for technical knowledge.

Drupal Migration:

- **WordPress Migrate**: A Drupal module that supports moving your WordPress content/website into Drupal. It imports posts, pages, comments, attachments, tags and categories. https://www.drupal.org/project/wordpress_migrate

Exposure Strategies

While the website sufficiently iterates the necessary information to its users, the website itself lacks exposure to iterate the information to the university community. The goal is to create feasible strategies to develop a network of information that not only informs the University of Maryland community of the Campus Community Connection's goals but also create a social network that allows students to communicate with others through mutual activities. We recommend treating the organization like a university student organization, or club, to attract members and attention to the website. The following is a list of strategies that are optimized for maximum success using minimum cost, labor, and resources:

Club Fair and Other University Events: Set up a table at the club fair on the mall / stamp each semester to gain attraction to the website and current members, possibly gain more members

Class Presentations: Go to classes closely related to sustainability issues and / or community involvement and present the club and / or give a speech about the website

Be Featured: Partner with an already established organization with the same mission and values to be promoted through said organization

Online Media: Get publicity through The Diamondback and other UMD related online networks to gain exposure

Connect with Other Clubs: Connect with other like-minded clubs to do events together, gain attraction through the connection of clubs and their followers, promote through the connected clubs to gain exposure

Get a Publicist: Have a dedicated member to regularly continue the growth of the websites exposure by creating demand oriented goals / milestones for marketing the website

Design

We developed a prototype of the new Campus Community Connection's website while keeping the goals of the organization and our user feedback in mind. We focused on creating a contemporary minimalist design reflecting the organization and its affiliation with the University of Maryland. The design of the wireframes were inspired by the user feedback received from the surveys and necessary components given to us during the interview with Andrew Fellows (see Appendix B for wireframe). He mentioned during the interview that he preferred functionality with a simplistic design. So we made the wireframes simple with the structural foundation for our final prototype. He also provided us with detailed feedback on the first draft of the prototype and a Campus Community Connection logo to use for the website.

For the prototype, we made the About Us section its own page, instead of being on the home page. We added text on the home page that introduces the Campus Community Connection, as well as two red buttons to capture their attention and draw them to engage with the site. The Contact page was given a welcoming experience as well as more information about what contacting this page will do for them. As well as contact information for Andrew, in case visitors would rather communicate with an organization representative. The Projects page was given a search bar in case new and returning visitors are searching for a specific project, as well as a general "search by community" section. We decided to break up the information by community, and then by "Area", to reduce user cognitive load when looking at too much information. Each project is given a contact information feature, as well as a space for a picture (if applicable), so that visitors have other pieces of information to view instead of just a page full of paragraphs. Additionally, the left navigation sidebar is sticky, and will stay in place while the user is scrolling for ease of use and navigation. Images and a link to our final prototype can be found in Appendix C.

CONCLUSION

The Campus Community Connection's initiative to reach out to people looking to improve the locale communities surrounding the University of Maryland and provide opportunities for University of Maryland students, faculty, and staff to participate in real-world projects is a fantastic way to promote community involvement and liven the locale communities. Part of the redesign team's task was to provide feasible approaches to the design, marketing, and

technical challenges the Campus Community Connection faced. We approached the problems using a user-centered and data-driven way which represented what we learned through our studies as College of Information Science undergraduate students. Even though we did not get the chance to measure the effectiveness of our methods and solutions, we hope our work contributed to the overall success of the organization's business objectives. Further improvements to our work could be developing an in-depth survey, a better user-centered study design that did not limit data collection methods, and people driven to achieve the organization's business objectives. For any additional information, our contact information is available below.

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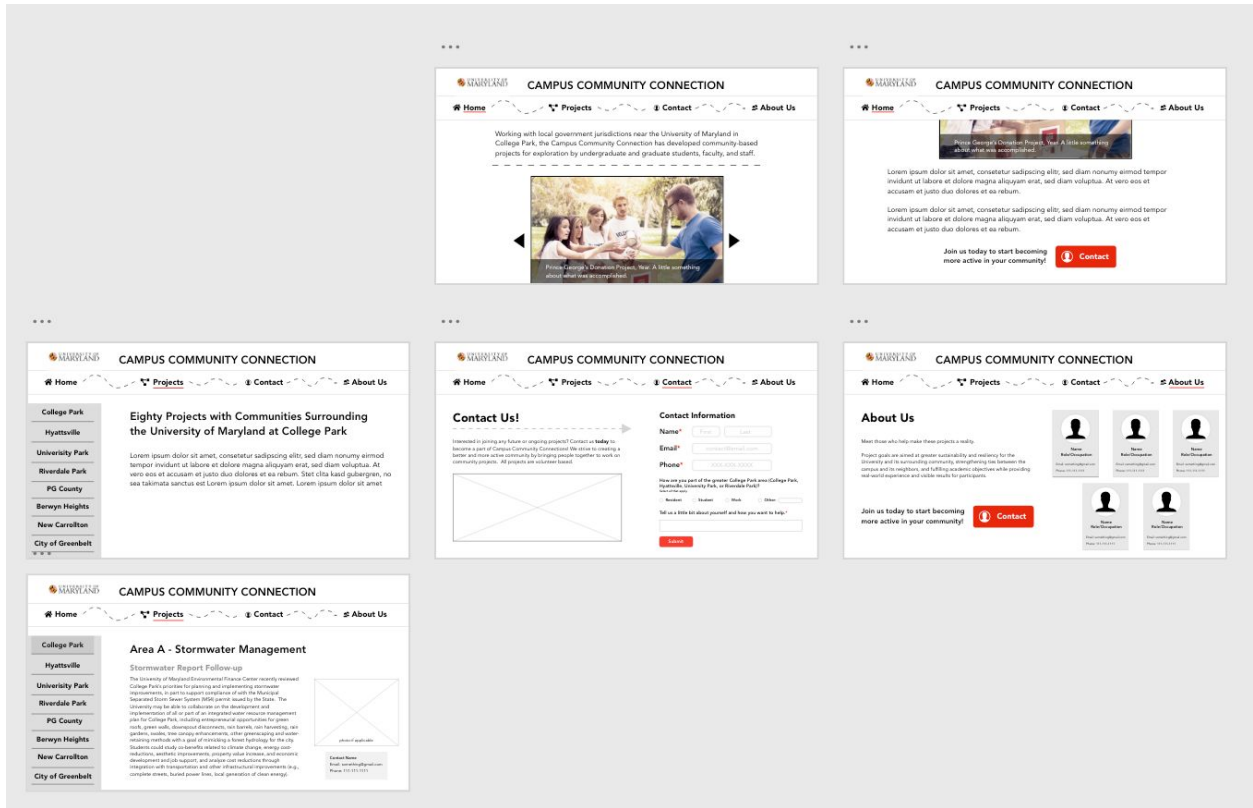
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APPENDIX A: Survey Questionnaire

1. Are you a… ?
    a. Student
    b. Faculty/staff member
    c. Other:
2. Have you heard of Campus Community Connection before? If so, from where?
3. Have you heard about this site before?
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. Does the site look like a legitimate webpage associated with UMD? Why or why not?
5. What do you think the purpose of the webpage is?
6. Does anything about this website confuse you? If so, what?
7. On a scale from 1-10, how does the webpage's format look?
    a. Likert scale of 1 being the least and 10 being the best
8. What stood out the most about the website?
9. Does the Home/AboutUs page give enough information about the goal of the website?
    a. Yes
    b. No
10. Which of the following are ways you learn information about for community engagement on campus?
    a. From flyers that are handed out or posted
    b. Reading in the diamondback
    c. Online from another source
11. Where do you usually look for community involvement project that you may be interested in?
12. Have you heard about any of the projects that are listed on this site before? Or have you participated in any of them in the past? (Under projects tab)
    a. Yes
    b. No
13. Do any of the projects interest you?
    a. Yes
    b. No
14. Do you feel comfortable leaving your contact information on this page?
    a. Yes
    b. No
15. If you could make changes to the webpage, what would they be?
16. How likely are you to recommend this organization to a friend/peer?
    a. Likert scale of 1 being the least likely and 5 being the most likely
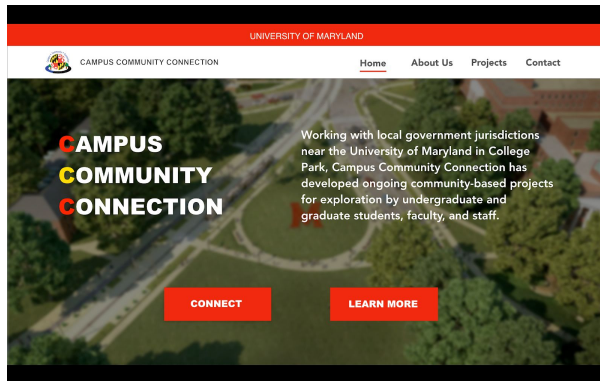
APPENDIX B: High Fidelity Wireframes

APPENDIX C: Prototype
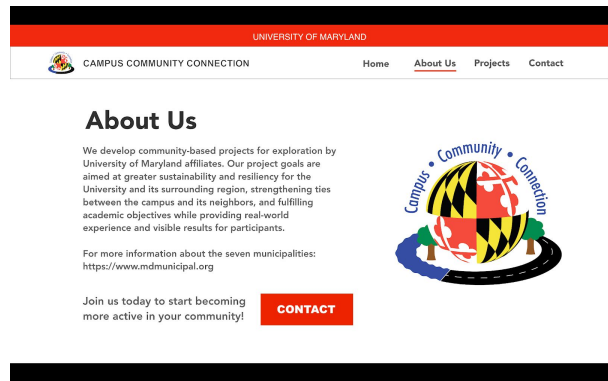
Link to our prototype

https://xd.adobe.com/view/8f538f74-8137-44d1-7339-a781f82ee8c1-f962/?fullscreen&hints=off
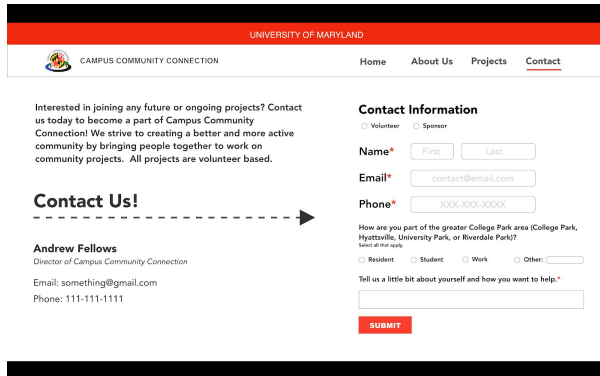
Images of our final prototype
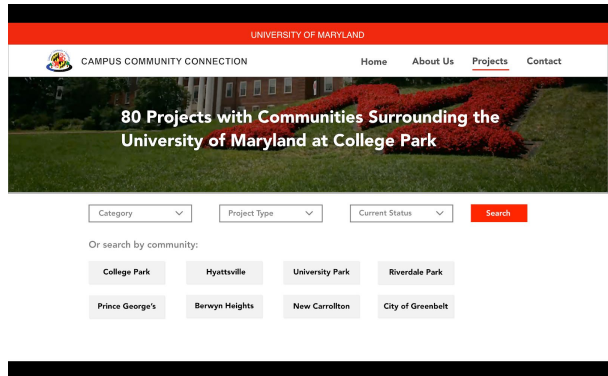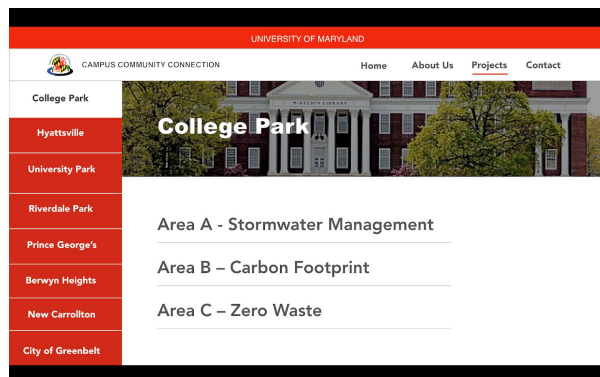
Home Page

About Us Page

Contact Page

Projects Page

Projects - College Park

Projects - College Park: Area A