

# **Final Digital Prototype Write-Up International Center App**



**Name:** Trisha Nagre

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**Instructor:** Tonya McCarley

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**Link to the Digital Prototype:**

**<https://xd.adobe.com/view/0a6d2a94-c7cf-4a5c-427b-18050c115e78-7c5c/?fullscreen>**

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## 1. Problem

While being an international student myself, I noticed several communication issues many international students face daily when arriving to a new place. With new adjustments and the demands from new environments placed on them, many students are forced to learn and grasp new ways of life. Language proficiency in a new environment is critical in developing relationships and regulating cognitive processes because effective communication measures a person's ability to conform socially, academically and professionally. International students are required to process a lot of information upon arrival to a new place and in coping with these new environments they are subjected to articulate and interpret to adapt to their new surroundings through their own subjective and preexisting experiences (Gatwiri, 2015). Because of their own interpretations they are faced with the challenges of developing their own personal meanings to make sense of the articulation process. To address these issues and inconveniences, I developed an international meetup app for the roughly 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the student body population at The University of Michigan (Buhr, 2018). To reduce the gap among international students and the locals, I have developed an app that doesn't just allow users to socialize virtually, rather taking a concept from eBay-a platform where people can find others who want to buy and sell stuff, I felt there should be a platform where people can find others who can support them in the same causes. Additionally, while conducting user data from stakeholders, it was evident that many students did not participate in events held by the international center because users found it difficult to organize and recall meetups they had confirmed. This is because majority of communication is released via emails from the international center and as a result many emails are misplaced, and users fail to save and add events to calendars decreasing the likelihood of ever receiving notifications to remind users of upcoming events.

## 2. Solution overview

It has been found that 41% of international students experience substantial levels of stress resulting from communication (Wu, Garza, Gauzman, 2015) In creating an effective method to resolve this problem, I realized while conducting interviews with stakeholders that there is a real need of having a digitized app on a phone where students can access meet-ups, learn and participate in social events. Added to which, this app also encompasses more than just a meetup, it lets users post events and interact with others within the community to buy and sell items. All in all, this is an app that promotes interaction between international students at the University of Michigan community and the local population, while also allowing international students to get to know each other through other app activities. This will enrich the experience for international students at U-M because the app will make it easier for students to engage, participate and create events and activities while encouraging more participation. This app will also help resolve the issue of accountability because it will allow users to save and RSVP to events. This will help users keep track of events they plan to attend which users can then verify through the app's calendar. The idea here is to increase participation as it will help users organize and track events.

### 3. Describe the final design

#### *Functionality:*

This app's main features include a central home page that contains the main resources to enable users to effectively engage and learn about activities. Users can take advantage of searching for current events (for current month), future events, posting an event, buying and selling furniture, connect with other users through inviting them to attend events they have RSVP'd to. Users can also use an in-built international language tool that helps in translating popular languages spoken at U-M. After attending events, users can rate and write reviews on what their thoughts were providing future event attendees information about their experiences.

#### *Description of main parts of the design flow:*

##### **Task 1: Getting user to sign-up for the app**

This first step requires the user to input his/her credentials. In our digital prototype we are using a persona of an individual named "Mel Patel". She enters her personal information and proceeds to create a profile. The next screen shows her profile page.

##### **Task 2: After signing up for the app, user will want to search/compare a list of current events**

In searching for events, I wanted to keep it simple and straightforward. I let my roommate- an international student experiment with the app originally. In the first paper prototype, I did not incorporate any search function. Feedback from user was given that in order to assess which event to attend there should be some comparison function that is available for users. Furthermore, I have a separate screen that users will see when they pick each event where they can get more information and compare.

##### **Task 3: They want to sign-up for an event, they will need to book a reserve a time slot for the event.**

Once users decide on which event to choose, they will go back to the list of events screens and choose an event that they would like to book. Users will choose the event and then be directed to the page where they will be prompted with different times the event is being held. Once they select the time slot, there will be a confirmation prompt.

##### **Task 4: User would like to invite a friend to this event**

In this task the user can select a friend to invite to the event/gathering. The user can select from an existing contact or put in a new contact for them to get in touch with. This is already in-built into the system. To make it easier for the user, this task happens right after the user selects the event that they would like to join. The app will prompt them to confirm if they want to invite that friend and send a confirmation to the friend.

### **Task 5: User wants to see list of events for the entire semester and RSVP**

The user goes back to the home screen selects future events. Users will be shown a list of featured events for the month. Once the user selects the event, they would click on the RSVP button, the next step would prompt them to add it to the calendar. They can then go to the home screen calendar to access the events they have RSVP'd to.

### **Task 6: User would like to post a social event to the app**

The design for this closely mimics the posting of say a Facebook ad or a social event on a meetup group. Users simply add the details of the event and click on submit to post.

### **Task 7: User would like to share the event to all app users and email to a mail list**

Once the user has posted the event, they can use any form of social media or text service through the app to send notifications and post to notify people.

### **Task 8: User would like to translate a language because they are conversing with someone who speaks a different language than them**

The user would click on the voice translation choice from the home screen. They would select the language they are speaking in and then select the language they want it to be translated to. For the purposes of the digital demo, please select English to Spanish. More languages will be added in the future.

### **Task 9: User would like to buy and sell furniture**

Through the buy and sell feature on the app, students can take advantage of buying and selling furniture. This idea came up as I was doing an observation task analysis and overheard a conversation from two international students. In observing, I realized many of them arrive to the U.S with only a suitcase of clothes and soon after the move they need to buy every piece of furniture from a table to a bed and sofa. This function on the app lets international students buy and sell their own furniture.

### **Task 10: User wants to rate and write a review about the event they attended**

After the user has attended an event, they have the option to rate the event through the app.

### ***What was left unimplemented?***

From a design perspective, I would like to set up a “clear” bar in the voice translation portion of the app so that users do not have to manually delete the text and they can simply use clear as an option to reset their language requirements. Furthermore, for the back feature I would like to use a symbol instead of the word “back” so that it mimics a traditional app design. The use of a hamburger icon could also be beneficial as a drop-down menu to see the main app functions on each page instead of having users to consistently go back to the home page to view them. As this app continues to develop, there will be an innate need to post pictures-especially as events and tagging friends will become a phenomenon. Keeping in mind privacy setting features on the app,

norms should be established such as requesting permission to post, or alternatively establishing grounds to freely post photos of anyone at any time are things not addressed at this point in the prototype but will come into effect once live. Reflecting to the sketches in Appendix 3,4, and 5, disclosures would help enabling privacy settings.

***Sketching techniques and approaches, tool(s) used to develop the design, Pros and cons of these approaches and tools***

In developing the digital prototype screen design for the mobile app, I chose to use Adobe XD. I was able to use portrait versions of artboards and utilize custom colors and images. In using Adobe XD, I was able to play with tools to make artboards more user friendly by implementing properties that make artboards vertically scrollable. I was also able to create a master screen so when I needed to prototype the property across all screens say for example the back button, I would simply select “return to previous artboard” or if I were to select the pointer at the home screen, I could prototype the home button to revert back to the home screen for all app pages where the home button could be found. These were helpful tools in creating rapid prototyping design and development. Some of the features that could be improved on Adobe XD are repeating objects and the save function. I also found it particularly difficult to learn as there was no real guide when I initially installed the software. I think that Adobe XD could benefit from having more in-depth tutorials for major prototyping design functions to make the software more user friendly.

## **4. Design Process**

***Describe how your design changed from initial sketches, brainstorming, storyboard, low-fidelity prototype, to final design. Show what the major changes were and why they were made.***

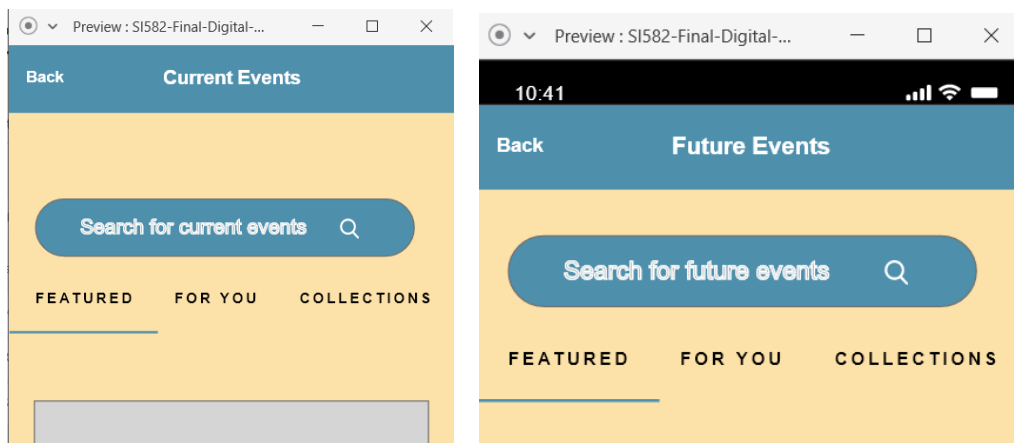
Below are some of the major changes that were embedded in the final prototype and the reason behind the changes:

From Appendix 1 in the initial sketch one can see how raw the ideas were. While ideas in the final design did incorporate a voice app, it did not include articulation and pronunciation with new *Americanized* terminology as one of the ideas in the first sketches in appendix one indicated. I realized that many international students struggle with English let alone pronouncing so therefore I attempted to create a translation tool instead. I used the google search engine tool idea to implement a search function for current and future events. You can see how the MEAL event from the initial sketch stayed through and was implemented in my final digital prototype and so were the workshop and conferences.

From Appendix 6 I kept the Mel Patel persona as that remained the same throughout my prototype. However, unlike what was outlined for the international center staff persona in Appendix 6, I changed the story map function to reflect that students themselves can post events to the app; This was done with keeping in mind some of our readings that outlined design with a purpose. When users want to access certain platforms, it would be easier to have them directly use the app for their own general needs. For example, international students who want to create their own events can do so right on the app rather than having the staff create it for them. In turn, it will

develop more loyalty towards the app and users will be held more accountable towards events created and there will be increased traffic flow towards the app.

From Appendix 8 the home page screen of the sketch and the actual digital app differ in what was included. For example, you will notice that the search function is no longer present, this is because I did not want users to get confused and wanted the search availability to be organized in the following two categories: Current Events and Future Events. Therefore, there are two separate buttons within the app that will take users to the pages where they can search for events depending on their search preference. Based off the QOC analysis I wanted users to be able to sign in and sign up by having users input their information into the fields. This was incorporated in the final design and not in Sketch 1 and Sketch 3 (Appendix 3 and 5 respectively). Therefore, the digital sign in page as per Appendix 7 is very useful and easy to use as it mimics similarities to other sign in platforms on various social media.



### ***Relate your design process and choices to the readings***

As a designer it was important for me to keep the user in mind. As our Waffer week 9 readings indicated, one can prototype even using a simple tool such as PowerPoint. However, seeing as how I will be embarking on a journey as a UX designer I wanted to use a software such as Adobe XD as I had never used it before. While there was a steep learning curve in utilizing the system, I wanted to use a system that would give users a sample of how my app would function in real time and I knew using a UX software such as Adobe XD would enable that. Based on our week 8 reading materials, I also utilized the approach in the readings by MacClean, et al. (1991) In this reading they discussed tools used to support design choices. Therefore, I found the QOC analysis to be a particularly useful tool, as I was struggling to find ways to provide concrete reasoning for my design choices. So, for example, I used the concept of a scroll bar in my own design just as the reading gave an example of Xerox's website using a scroll bar to display a natural appearance of a cursor movement. I started looking into the QOC reasoning system while trying to add functions such as the scroll bar on the events page, or the back and home button on most pages to support design choices that engage with simplicity and articulate user-friendly design. In this scenario questions I asked were how wide the scroll bar should be, or the ease of mouse maneuvering if it were on a desktop, thereby diving deeper into the designer's palate to create products that would augment functions to work in the users favor.

Finally, when I wanted to put it all together and investigate story mapping, I focused on a persona (Mel Patel-an international student) that considers the main stakeholder. In our week 7 readings, Patton discusses how story mapping is effective and straightforward because it relates to the lives of the people in the design. Reading this article shed much light on how important it is for UX designers to know who their users are, their goals and how they work. I used story mapping (Appendix 6) to derive a user goal. In this scenario, the user is set to go to an event. I changed some of the ways the user can log in and deleted the idea of having an in-built ride services app (at this point in the initial stages of the app, this would not be financially feasible) but kept most of the story mapping idea the same.

***Reflect on your role as designer. What is your design philosophy and how did you apply it to this project? What values or societal norms did you intend to embed in your system? What values or societal norms did you intend to challenge or promote?***

In trying to embed societal norms that allow for us to keep a friendly app going, I wanted to keep the focus of the app's goals which is to make friends within the given community. In doing so I embedded systems that allowed for users to invite friends to an event for example. It allows for users to find a greater audience and achieve higher levels of engagement. The ability for people to interact and debate or express their opinions and views freely online was an aspect I used to challenge the status quo. For instance, the part of the app which allows users to freely rate and review the app was an important concept for me to help users conceptualize the experiences they endured (whether good or bad) and in turn gives hosts or event organizers the chance to accept or deny what is received.

## 5. Impact

***Societal impact that my design has on the selected context***

In creating a design that allows users to interact with others within their own community, forge friendships, network and emulate the fundamental human experiences-this app was designed to fulfill a mission to serve the greater good at its core. I saw a fundamental problem with the current system. The international center lacks the platform necessary to send out engagement notifications to allow users to come together and efficiently engage and participate in events. As mentioned before, many notifications were sent and lost in an email. For example, the international center has a monthly invite for students who celebrate their birthday in each month. However, these are monthly emails sent out that state a location and time but there is no RSVP functionality or ability to interact with other international students to invite them to this event. This app changes that, the social impact of coming together and embracing a new change that benefits the international student population at the University of Michigan is what sets this app apart from the current system in place. Within a very narrow set of tools, users can engage with other students, buy and sell items, attend and create events. In doing so users will be able to organize their activities right on their mobile devices so that they are aware of events coming up and in turn it will hold them more accountable to show up as reminders would be sent right to their phones. This app further seeks to move beyond usability as its goal is to build a relationship between the system

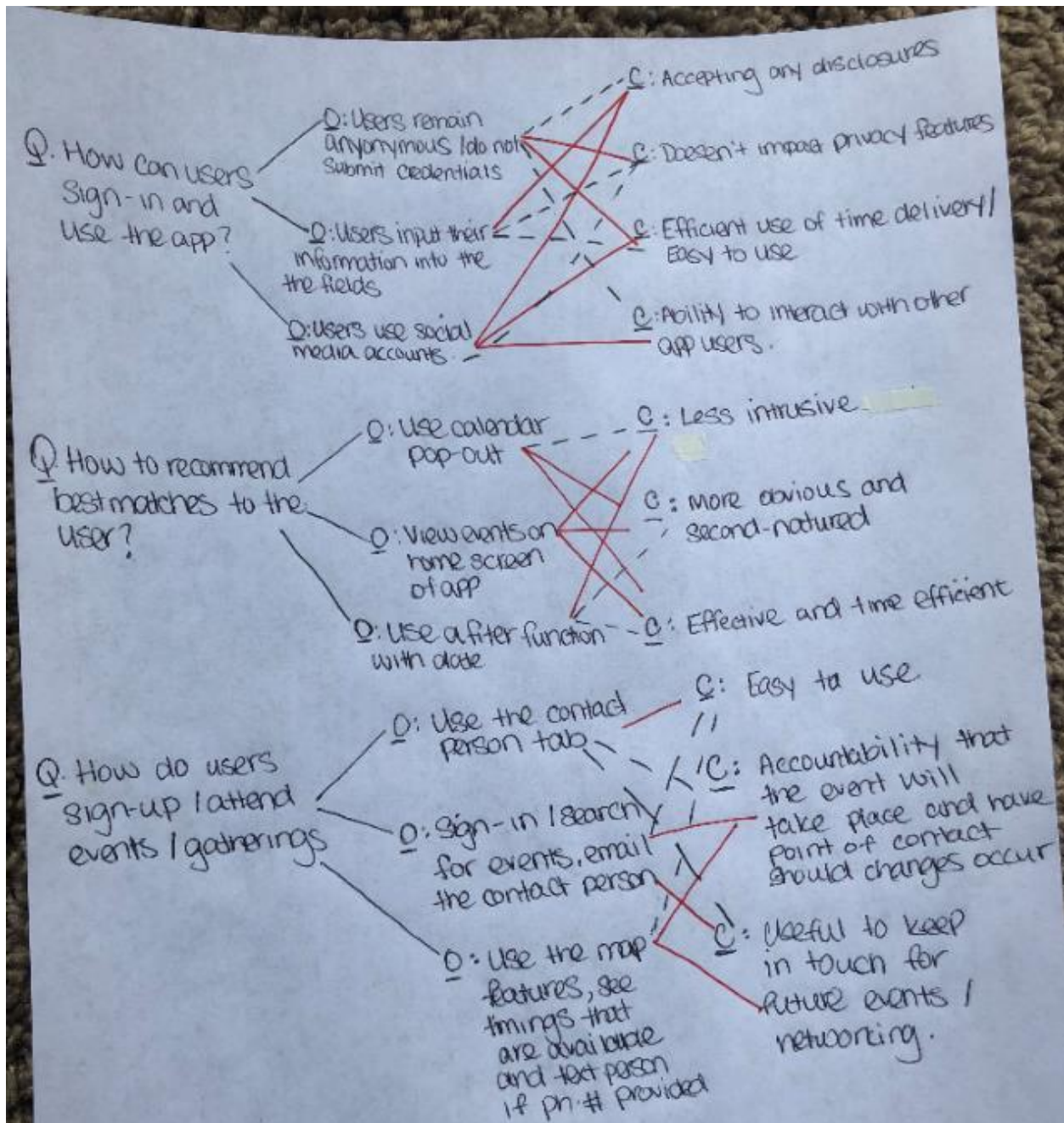


(international center app) and those it serves (international students). This app also forms a pursuit to allow people to avoid isolation by reforming social norms of acceptance, collaboration and engagement. However, like any institution seeking change, it will take great responsibility from future app developers to keep improving on the current system and for the app to be successfully implemented and spread across the international student community at The University of Michigan.

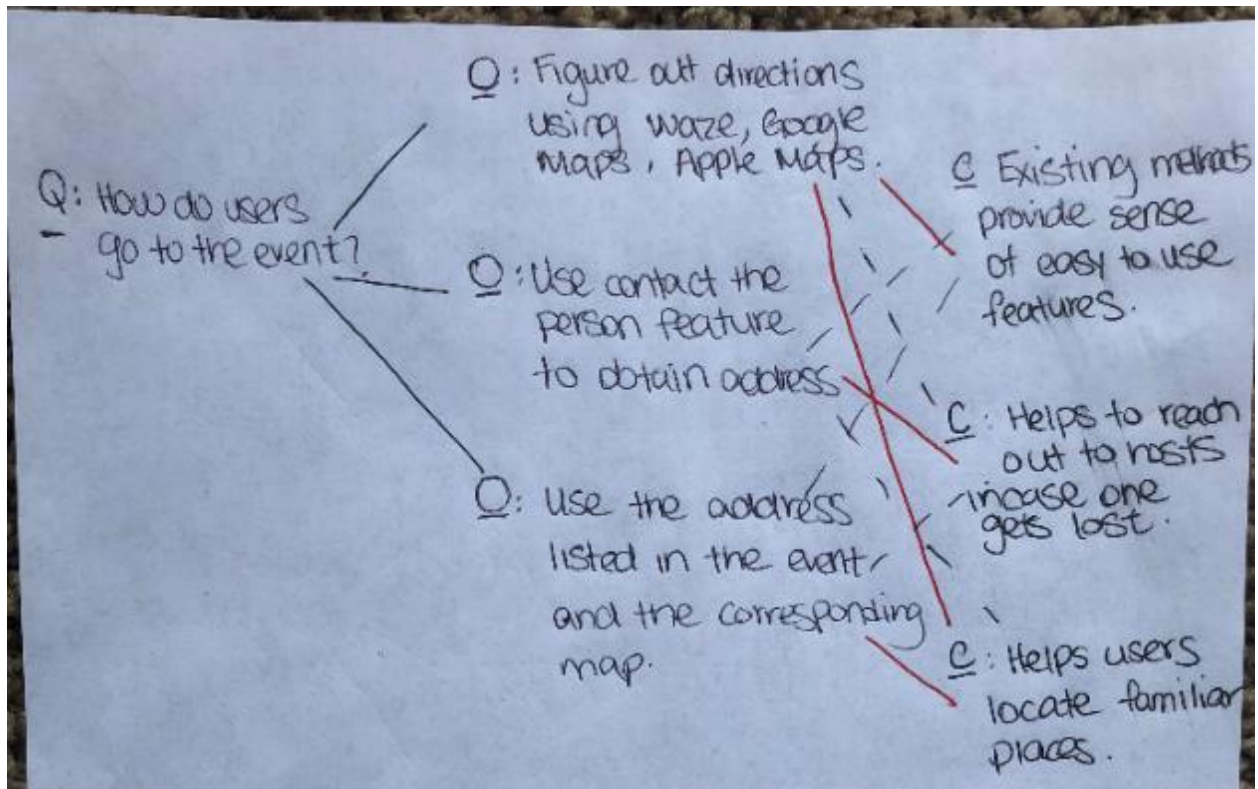
## Appendix



Appendix 1 (Initial Sketch)



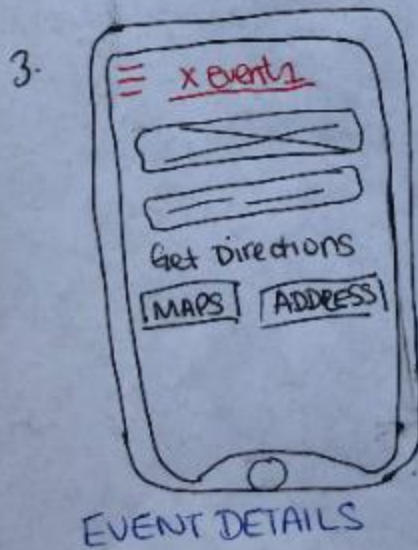
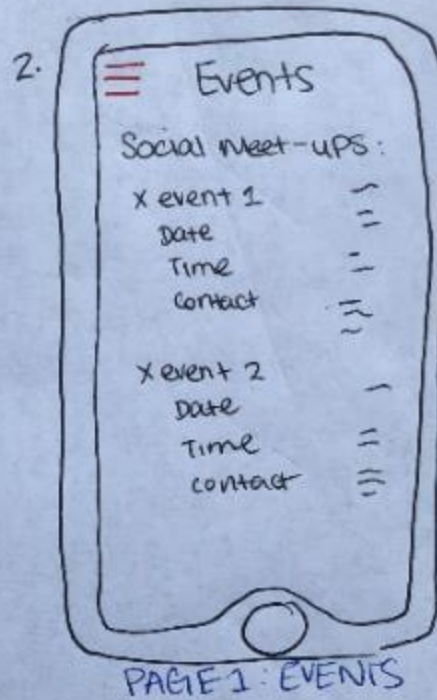
Appendix 2: QOC Brainstorming



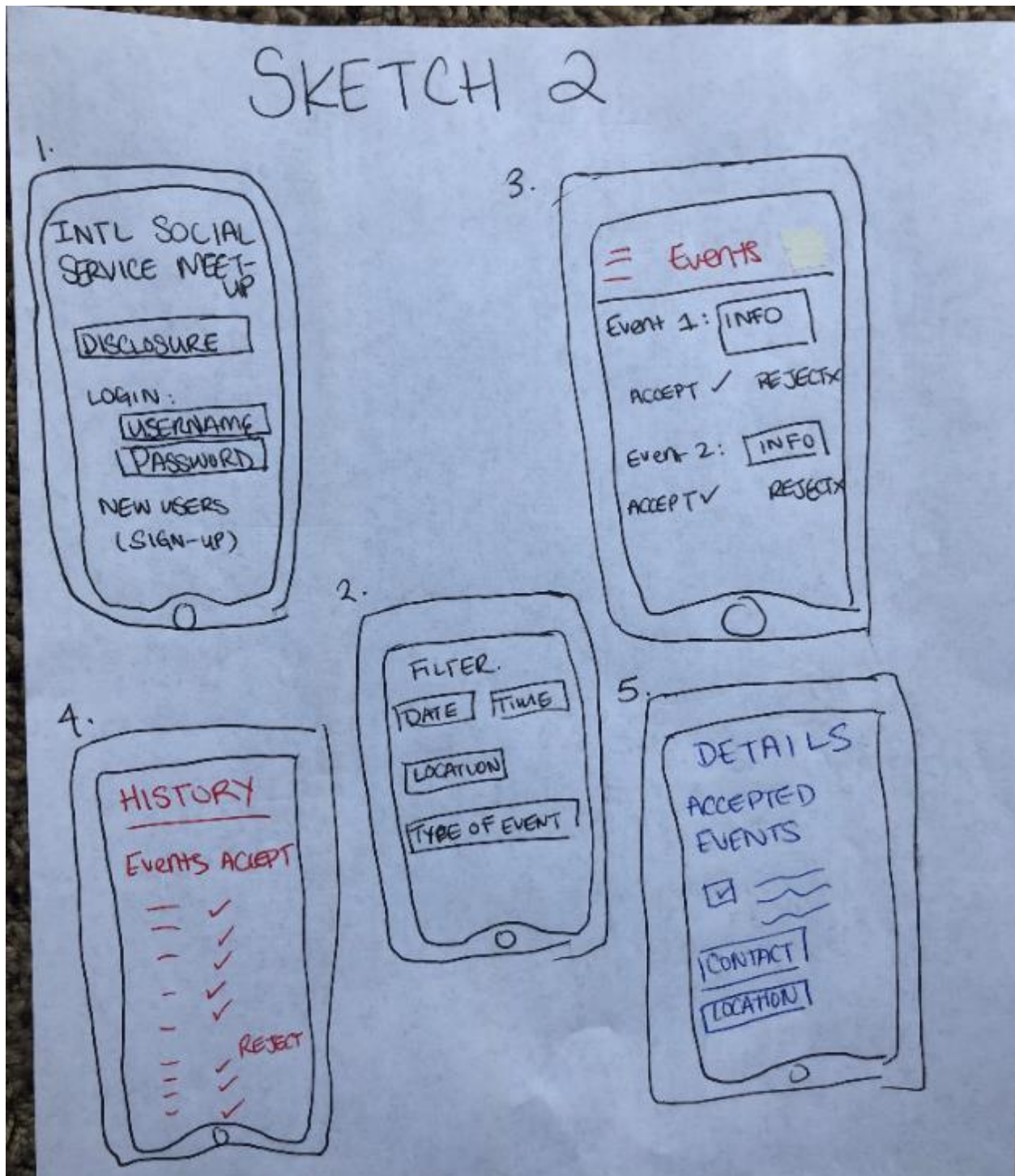
Appendix 2 continued: QOC Brainstorming



## SKETCH 1



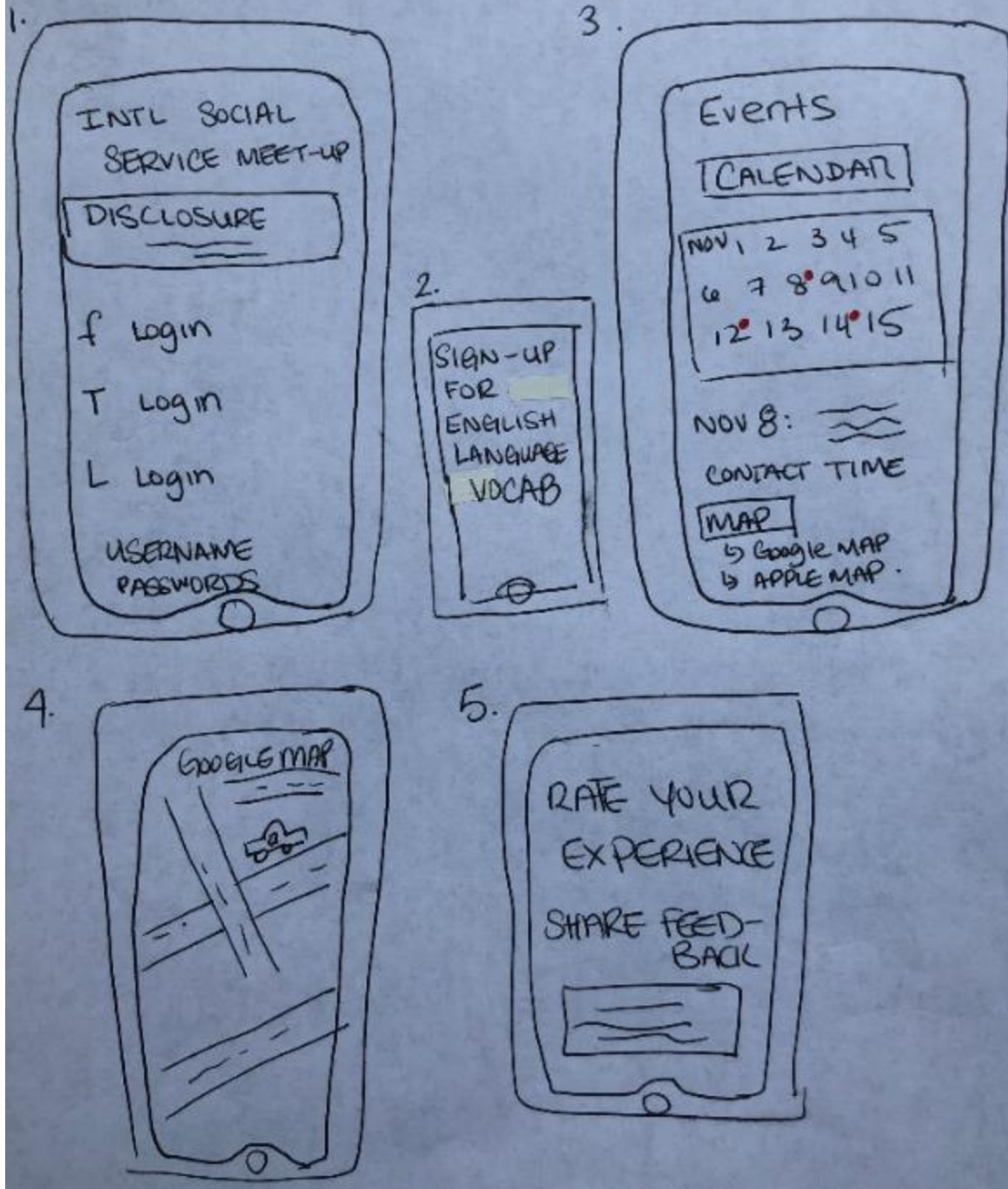
Appendix 3: Sketch One



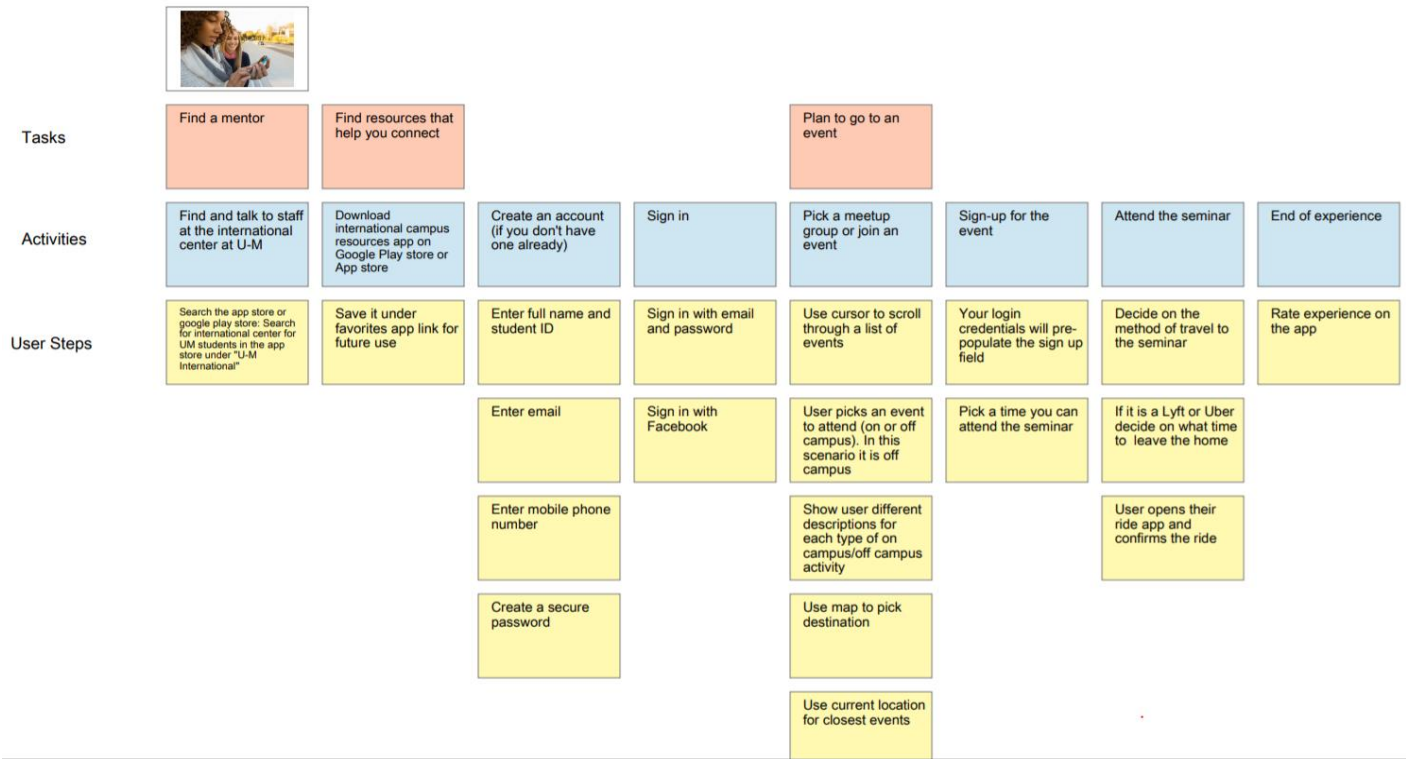
Appendix 4: Sketch Two



# SKETCH 3

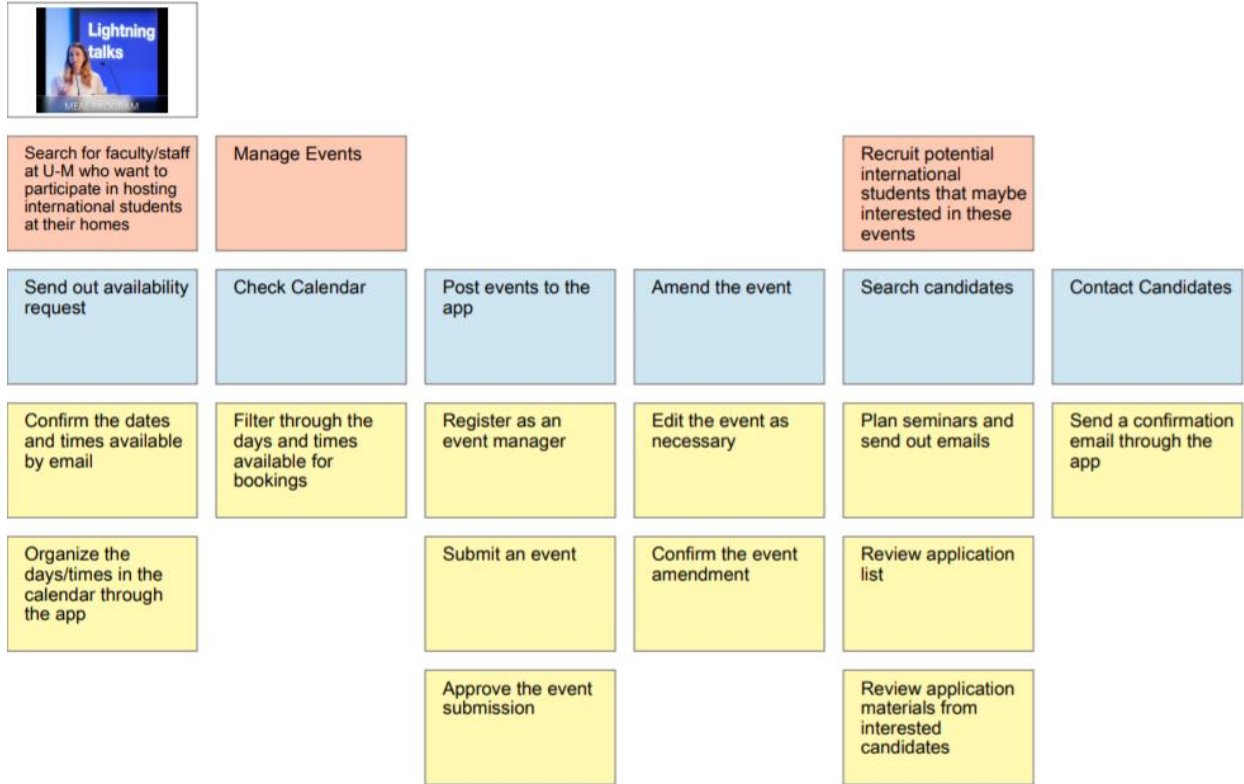


Appendix 5: Sketch Three



Appendix 6: Story Map





Appendix 6: Story Map Continued

Preview : SI582-Final-Digital-...

# INTERNATIONAL MEETUP

Stay Connected With Your Friends and Other Fascinating People  
Get In The Moment Updates On The Things That Are Of Interest To You.

**SIGN IN** **SIGNUP**

Email\*

**mel.patel@icloud.com**


Password\*

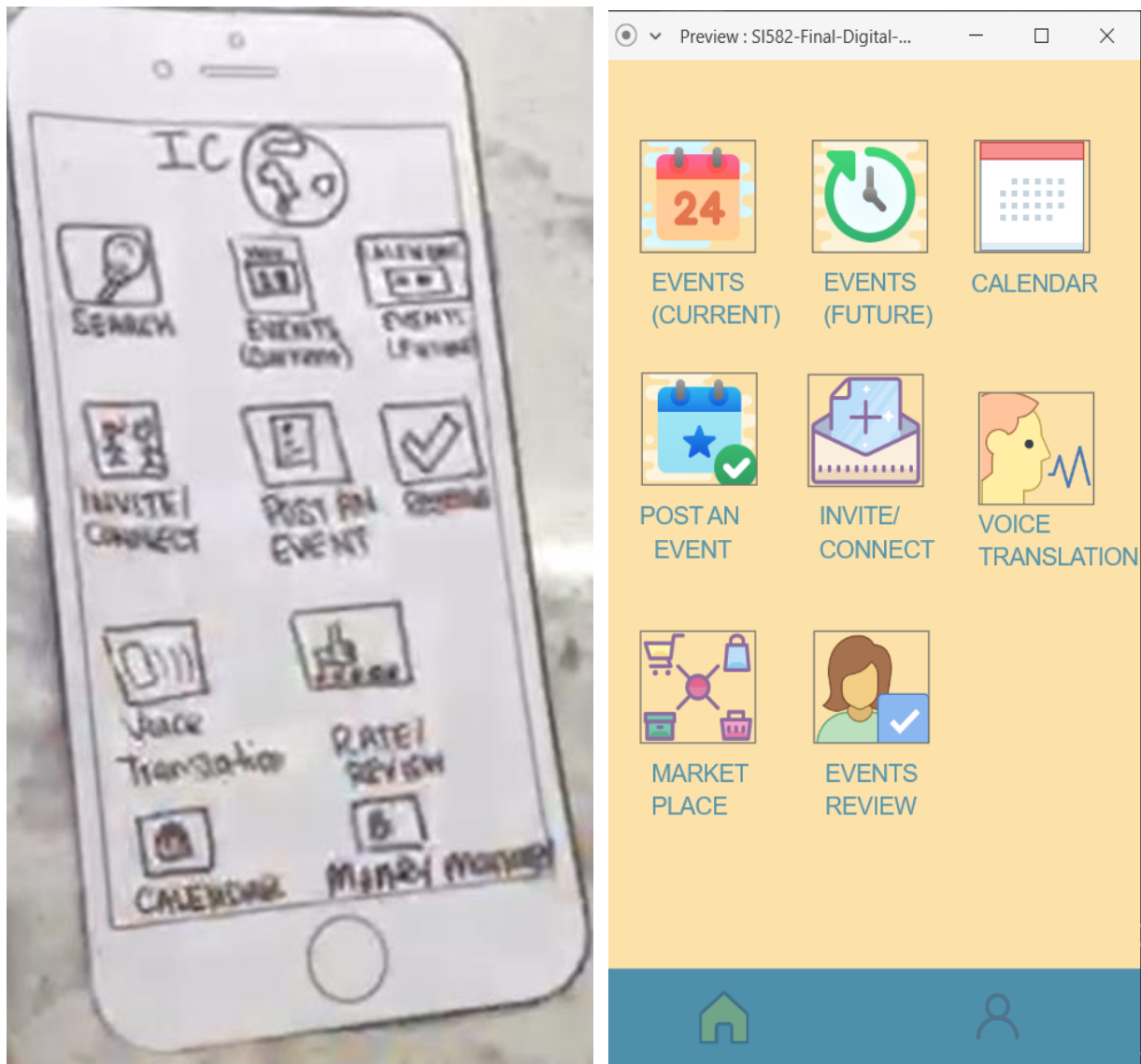
\*\*\*\*\*

☐ Remember Me

**SIGN IN**





I already have an account





Appendix 8: Home Page of Paper Prototype and Final Digital Prototype

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