**Section I. Overview/Proposed Report**

Guiding questions:

*What will students be able to do that they can't do now?*

Students will be able to track their progress through the academic system, online, and in one location. This of course cannot replace the personal touch of face-to-face interaction that the orientation process currently provides, but significantly, it does add the asset of convenience to the experience. It will also “personalize” the experience for the students, as a personal progress bar will be programmatically generated for each student.

*What will students be able to do more easily?*

Students will be able to track their progress the critical components of their academic careers much more quickly and easily, as the information will be consolidated and presented visually in the form of progress bars. At a glance, students will be able to tell whether they are on track to complete registration, orientation, advising, and more.

Note: Care will be taken to ensure that those with visual disabilities have access to equivalent information.

**Section II. Assumptions & Functional Requirements**

**A. Assumptions**

1. The site should assist students in all aspects of their online learning experience, as a convenient, but powerful, supplement to the current process. The student will be able to access this information 24/7, and on mobile devices, thus making the process extremely convenient.

2. This experience provides a possible top-level navigational structure for the site. The intention is to align the technology to extant offices, simultaneously dovetailing USFSP assets to SACS requirements:

**About Online Learning at USFSP**

**Orientation**

**Registration**

**Advising**

**Financial Aid**

**Research & Study**

**Technology Support**

**Taking classes and Exams**

3. The purpose of the site is neither to recreate the functionality of existing systems nor simply link to them but rather somewhere in the middle. In this regard, it will be both a portal and an endpoint. We will both provide information and help students accomplish certain tasks. **A key goal is to work with other content providers/maintainers to maximize the effectiveness of their resources.**

4. We will survey what resources we have now and then evaluate their effectiveness for online students. However, we will assume that we will work within the strengths and limitations of all existing systems.

5. Audiences will include current students (1) involved in fully online program, (2) taking one or more online courses, (2) taking one or more hybrid courses, (3) enrolled on campus not yet taking online classes but considering doing so, (4) potential students. (Undergrad vs. grad distinction)

Ask Casey: Automatically generated progress bar--why do we need distinct portals? Can’t the information be currently displayed as a list of requirements?

Ask Casey: If we are going to do progress bars, shouldn’t we really just need two portals? Those that are enrolling, and those that are enrolled? Are different algorithms employed for graduate versus non-graduate? Shouldn’t the student ID be enough to tell us what “kind” of student we are talking about?

6. The site experience will likely vary from one of the above groups to the next. Ask Casey WHY it will vary; variation may be necessary but tends to cause confusion where it exists.

7. Faculty and staff will not be considered audiences for this site, though they may inform its design.

8. The spring deadline is firm, and therefore the site scope needs to be commiserate.

9. The presence needs to be fully mobile-capable. Ask Casey: Will web-kit responsive suffice, or are we thinking apps?

**B. Functional Requirements:**

The platform for the site should be a library-hosted WordPress site. The platform will be enhanced with customization to take advantage of extant technologies, and to be able to integrate with outsourced applications.

Rationale: Departmental and institutional knowledge of WordPress is already in place, and documentation is readily available for the open-source WordPress platform.

**Section III. What Others Have Done**

**There was a wide variety of approaches, but a common thread was to separate the portals by audience. Common audience groups were undergraduate, graduate, freshmen, transfer students, veterans, and international students. Although in the early stages of investigation we considered portals for professional development courses, we found that typically, such portals were not bundled together with portals for traditional students.**

**We were surprised at how many third party applications were involved. Outsourcing made sense, due to sophistication of any application required to safeguard the sensitive, personal information of the students, and the requirement to handle the information securely. However, it also raised issues of one technology being able to shake hands with another, preserving the critical personal information all the while.**

**A few universities employed ombudsmen, which we thought was a great idea. It was apparent by visiting some sites that one hand did not know what the other was doing, because the “owners” of the different processes were in silos, and were unaware of the impact that each had on the others’ processes, and therefore, on the student experience. An ombudsman kept processes united, and therefore, made the process easier on the student.**

**Several universities used a form of chat technology to provide on-the -spot assistance to those who were “lost”. We thought this was a terrific idea. Any website dealing with providing a roadmap through an academic career is a complicated one. The information may be out there, but knowing how to get to the information is more challenging than generally recognized by those already familiar with the system. In a sense, a “chat” system is a technology that allowed a portion of the “advantage” of an ombudsman (a student could be routed to the proper location of information within a site) without necessarily incorporating the expense of a high-profile position of an ombudsman. Several organizational representatives, already hired by the university, could monitor the chat and respond appropriately if they saw a question arise that dealt with their area of responsibility.**

**What We Have**

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## [Online Learning and Instructional Technology Services](http://lib.usfsp.edu/online-learning) **Orientation (Listed as Undergraduate**)

[Ask Casey - Orientation for Graduate?](http://www.usfsp.edu/undergrad/orientation/)

**Registration**

NOTE CONFUSION ABOUT USF CLASSES VERSUS USFSP CLASSES

Register for classes:

Requires NetID

Registration Tutorials found in the “Advising” Section

<http://www.usfsp.edu/advising/student-resources/registration-tutorials/>

**Advising**

(Ask Casey I didn’t see a link for deadlines, such as drop-add dates etc. except for on Facebook)

**Research & Study**

**Recommend breaking into two sections: Research Assistance, Technology**

**Taking classes and Exams**

**Ask Casey: Praticums?**

<http://www.usfsp.edu/fsc/ifmh/student-responsibilities/>

**Additional Communications/Information Tools Possibilities**

Create a Q&A feature, and how we might design and manage this.

(There is a FB group that accomplishes some of this now.)

3rd party chat possibilities

Oohlala

Google Chat

Rationale: Human interaction should be supplemented by technical features that allow students and/or parents to continue to research information online, after hours, to supplement and strengthen the knowledge gained from face-to-face interactions in orientation. This will serve multiple purposes: Convenience, (location, time) re-enforcement, ….

Supplement to forms for accessibility purposes

<https://stptusf.askadmissions.net/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=undergraduate>

Provide a means for graduate questions

A dashboard that shows an online student her or his info at a glance

**Proposed Login Levels to Work Toward for Customization...**

Informational only (nothing login-specific)

Choose Role (To filter what information is shown, prioritized)

Custom Login (WP-based, dedicated account)

Scrapped Single-Sign On (Prototype in progress; probably connects to WordPress site)

Single-Sign On Login (To be explored)

**What We Need To Know and How We Plan to Find Out**

Survey(s)

Conduct surveys through specific classes

Demographics

Experience with online learning

best/worst part of the experience is?

Are there tool that would help the regular experience that could occur online? (Online supplements to classroom-based experience.)

**Ongoing Support Needs, Possibilities**

In general, what kind of ongoing support is needed for the site is an important ongoing issue. We can design the platform in such a way that minimal support is needed, but that may mean curtailing certain features.

Two kinds of support that we can look at are content and technical.