**Section I. Overview/Proposed Report**

**Purpose**

Students involved with online courses at USFSP currently have all the information and tools they need to complete their studies successfully. However, because this content and these services are spread across many systems and presented in different (and sometimes conflicting) ways, students encounter various roadblocks and frustrations. The student portal we propose to build will remove these hurdles by providing a central, personalized, easy-to-understand hub.

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.

By incorporating information from DegreeWorks, the public academic calendar, Canvas and other sources, we can build on data already available to students by:

1. Streamlining content and drawing attention to the most important data
2. Providing a comprehensive, bird’s eye view of an online student’s status at the University.
3. Optimizing data from sources that are currently not mobile-friendly, such as content from DegreeWorks, and presenting the information in a manner that students can view on a cellphone or tablet.

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

**Target Audiences**

This is a portal for students involved with online learning at USFSP. This includes students:

1. involved in a fully online degree program
2. taking one or more online courses
3. taking one or more hybrid courses
4. enrolled on campus not yet taking online classes but considering doing so

Critical to our goals is the construction of a system that supports students throughout their academic careers. To that end, the portal we design will provide assistance to the following groups:

1. Prospective students interested in understanding the online learning experience at USFSP.
2. Students who have been admitted to the University but who have not yet commenced their studies.
3. Students of all levels, including both undergraduate and graduate students, working toward a degree.

By organizing critical information in an easy-to-digest format, support personnel, including academic advisors, professors and librarians, will also benefit from this new resource. It is important to note, however, that faculty and staff are not the intended audience for this portal and their training and professional development needs should be addressed elsewhere.

**Access Levels**

To support students at different phases of their studies, our system will provide for different levels of access.

First, anyone can browse the portal and glean information about online learning at USFSP.

Second, before a student receives a NetID, a Portal ID (PID) is generated for the student in order to personalize and expedite …..with the USFSP orientation and registration process. A progress bar will be visible, with successful completion of all the steps leading to a NetID.

Third, upon receiving the NetID, the student will receive a new progress bar, leading them to graduation. The look and feel of the experience will be similar to Phase One. The progress bar or bars in Phase Two are more elaborate, and more detailed, than those in Phase One. This is because the components are more comprehensive.

A two-phase system has the advantage of “training” the student to use the “progress bar” system in Phase One, without penalty to the student’s academic progress. By the time the student has successfully attained a NetID and has entered Phase Two, the student will be familiar with the tools that enable him/her to track academic requirements necessary for graduation.

Each phase builds on the previous one while providing more comprehensive layers of personalization.

**(These phases are described in more detailed in the “Login Options” section.)**

**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**

**A list of classes currently enrolled in, with links to access those classes in Canvas.**

**A combined academic/course calendar.** By integrating critical entries from both the USFSP academic calendar and the Canvas class calendar, we better position students to recognize key deadlines that will affect their success.

**Integration with the Canvas “Conversation” system, which allows students to send and receive messages with instructors and classmates.**

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.**

To this end, we will identify key links for the initial launch that will eventually become endpoints unto themselves. One example is the OASIS-driven registration process. In the beginning, we will provide a link to the page to add and drop classes, with some helper text to assist students. This will allow us to immediately assist students by providing a roadmap to essential functions.

However, we will also consider a more elaborate approach in which we “recreate” the registration process on the portal by scraping data from OASIS. This “endpoint” approach will provide distinct advantages, for example, by making the registration process mobile-friendly, but it will also require a significant investment of time and, in many cases, coordination with other groups in campus. Additional ongoing support demands is another consideration.

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

**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.

Should be able to tie into programs such as Degree Works, OASIS,……...in order to take complicated, convoluted information and be able to present it in an easy-to-understand visual presentation.

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.**

**Relevant Organizational Units**

These are the University groups who currently provide support of one form or another to our online students:

**Records & Registration (Linda Crossman)**

**Academic Advising (Joan Eldridge)**

**Cashier’s Office (727-873-4107)**

**The Library (Carol Hixson)**

**Arts & Sciences (Frank Biafora/Susan Toler)**

**Business (Gary A. Patterson, Alison Watkins)**

**Education (Bill Heller, Lyman Dukes)**

**Office of Graduate Studies (Donna Knudsen)**

**Campus Computing Help Desk (Gavin Peacock)**

**Financial Aid, Scholarships & Veterans Services (727) 873-4128**

**Academic Success Center (CeCe Edwards)**

**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)

Possible Dashboard Components

* Progress Bar(s)
* GPA, classification (freshman, sophomore), credits attained
* “This Semester” panel, with a list of currently-enrolled in courses, etc.

**Combined WordPress Account / NetID Login System**

1. **A student comes to the portal without a NetID or Portal ID.** They can browse the portal and access basic information, or they can create a Portal ID. This Portal ID (PID) will be advertised as a way to personalize the experience. It will allow us to filter and prioritize content based on the individual needs of the student. We will do this in two ways:

a. By tracking how the student uses the portal after logging in with a PID.

b. By reacting to the responses students provide to a sign-up survey that must be completed when a PID is requested.

**2.** **A student comes to the portal without a portal ID but with a NetID.**

a. We allow students with Net IDs to login to the portal. There is no need to assign a portal ID. We require Net ID students to complete the same sign up form so we can capture that information and tie it to their portal account.

**3.** **A student who previously created a Portal ID now has a Net ID and wants to tie the two together.**

a. We allow students to merge the two together. If a student has created and logged in with a PID but has not yet connected a NetID, we show a prominent prompt somewhere on the site (upper-right corner, for example). This prompt says that the NetID has not been supplied, provides background on what the NetID is, and allows the student to enter her or his NetID username/password to link the NetID account.

b. We can periodically redirect users to a page when they come to the site that asks them whether they have a NetID that they want to link.

**4.** **A student comes to the portal with a NetID or a PID that was later linked to a NetID.**

a. In this scenario, the student can log in directly with their NetID. They can also log in with their original PID.

The login form consists of a single username/password combination. We prompt students to enter a NetID or PID. We provide help text explaining what each is. We provide a link to create a PID for students who don’t have either login credential.

Login states include:

1. **Not Logged In** – (Limited personalization, no progress bar)

2. **Logged In – Unlinked NetID** (Some personalization, restricted progress bar)

3. **Logged In – Linked NetID** (Full personalization, unrestricted progress bar)

**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.)

Assemble a list of processes (which may cut across various departments) that students undertake (registration, for example). Then, present that list as part of a survey to online students and ask them to rate how much friction they presently experience completing the task. (We will also include open-ended text box for additional comments.)

*For each of the following tasks, indicate how easy or difficult you have found the process to be:*

***Registering for classes***

*Works perfectly, relatively easy, i’ve had some problems, i’ve had many problems, impossible to use*

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***STUDENT ACTIONS***

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| *[Admissions](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=bmenu.P_AdmsMnu)*  *Apply for admission, view the status of your admission application and pay your admission deposit (for first time in college students only)* |  |
|  | *[DegreeWorks](https://degreeworks.usf.edu/)*  *Undergraduate academic advising, GPA calculator, What-If Major Change, and more…* |
|  | *[Registration](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=bmenu.P_RegMnu)*  *Check your registration status, registration holds, class schedule, and add or drop classes* |
|  | *[Student Records](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=bmenu.P_AdminMnu)*  *View your transcript holds, grades and academic transcript* |
|  | *[Tuition & Fees](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=bmenu.P_FeesMnu)*  *Pay by bank card, view charges and payments to student account, subscribe to eDeposit and view tax information(1098T). Please do not pay admissions deposit in this area.* |
|  | [*Student Organizations*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=bmenu.P_StuOrg) |
|  | *[Reserve Textbooks at start of each semester](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/wsak_bkstr_reg_feed.wp_crt_bkstr_reg_rec_db)*  *TextBook Reservations through USF Bookstore for Tampa, Health Science Center, and St Petersburg Campuses ONLY is closed at the end of each term and reopens after registration for the new term begins.* |
|  | [*Apply for Graduation*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/wshk_gradapp.wp_landing_page_db) |
|  | [*Apply for Post-Baccalaureate Majors/Minors*](http://www.registrar.usf.edu/forms/USFSPUSFSMPost-BaccalaureateApplication2013-10-21_15_48_00.pdf) |

**STUDENT RECORDS**

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| --- | --- |
| [*View Student Information*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskgstu.P_StuInfo) |  |
|  | [*Midterm Grades*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskmgrd.p_write_term_selection) |
|  | [*Final Grades*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskogrd.P_ViewTermGrde) |
|  | [*View Holds*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskwtrr.P_holdpage) |
|  | [*Request Proof of Enrollment*](https://shibboleth.studentclearinghouse.org/WAYF/SelfService/OPEID/00153700) |
|  | [*View Unofficial Transcript on Florida Virtual Campus*](http://facts.org/) |
|  | [*Request an Official Transcript*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskwtrr.p_disp_transcript_address) |
|  | [*View Status of Transcript Requests*](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskwtrr.p_disp_order_requests) |
|  | [*Contact the Office of the Registrar*](http://www.registrar.usf.edu/office_contacts.php) |
|  | [*Create a Co-curricular Transcript*](http://involvement.usf.edu/cocurric.htm) |

**REGISTRATION**

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| [Select Term](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskflib.P_SelDefTerm) |  |
|  | [Registration Status](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskrsta.P_RegsStatusDisp) |
|  | [Register, Add or Drop Classes](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskfreg.P_AltPin) |
|  | [Change Class Options](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskfreg.P_ChangeCrseOpt) |
|  | [Class Schedule Search](http://www.registrar.usf.edu/ssearch/search.php) |
|  | [Active Registration](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwsksreg.p_active_regs) |
|  | [Week at a Glance](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskfshd.P_CrseSchd) |
|  | [Student Detail Schedule](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskfshd.P_CrseSchdDetl) |
|  | [Registration Fee Assessment](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskffee.P_FeeAsses) |
|  | [Excess Hours Student Counter](https://www.registrar.usf.edu/applications/excess_hours/) |
|  | [Withdrawal Information](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwrktivw.P_TitleIVWithdraw) |
|  | [Contact the Office of the Registrar](http://www.registrar.usf.edu/office_contacts.php) |

**TUITION & FEES**

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|  | [View Account Summary and Pay My Bill](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwskoacc.P_ViewAcct) |
|  | [Student Bill Payment](https://secure.touchnet.com/C20235_tsa/web/caslogin.jsp) |
|  | [Benefits of eDeposit](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/wcheck/eDepositBenefits.htm) |
|  | [Subscribe to eDeposit](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/wtfk_web_direct_deposit.wp_web_dd_subscribe) |
|  | [View My eDeposit Transactions](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/wtfk_web_direct_deposit.wp_web_dd_trans_status) |
|  | [Select Tax Year](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwtktxys.p_get_tax_year) |
|  | [Tax Notification](https://usfonline.admin.usf.edu/pls/prod/bwtktxns.p_disp_tax_notification) |
|  | [Ask a Question](http://askrocky.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/askrocky.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php) |
|  | [Perkins and USF Student Loan Exit Interview](http://www.fc.campusoncall.com/cgi-bin/home.pl?campus=USF) |

Buy Books from Bookstore

<http://www.usf.edu/campus-life/campus-resources.aspx>

<http://www.usfsp.edu/for-current-students/>

**Ongoing Support Needs, Possibilities**

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

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.

Technical Needs

Monitor and, when necessary, update scrapping code to reflect any substantive changes to external systems.