**Summary From the USFSP Online Student Portal Interviews**

****

**Dr. Casey Frechette, Assistant Professor, Journalism and Media Studies**

**Mr. Berrie Watson, Head, Library Systems and Digital Technology**

**Ms. Sharon Austin, Library Web Applications Specialist**

**Introduction**

Last year, Dr. Frechette, Mr. Berrie Watson, and Sharon Austin were tasked with investigating how best to support students involved with online learning at USFSP. On Jan. 28, Dean Hixson announced on the Harborside listserv our plans to develop an online student support portal. She also shared [an initial report](http://dspace.nelson.usf.edu/xmlui/handle/10806/12977) that we completed late last year.

In the Fall of 2015, the team reached out to several key stakeholders, in order to better understand how to design a system that will serve students in all aspects of their online studies. 21 key stakeholders were interviewed. A full list of the questions asked is presented as an appendix at the end of this summary. During the interviews, several unexpected important considerations arose; to that end, the responses generated points above and beyond those posed by the initial set of basic questions. We recorded the additional information as fully as possible, as it was invaluable. In general, the questions dealt with these themes:

1. What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?
2. What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?
3. How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

From these interviews we found that certain consistent themes of values and concerns predominated. We wanted to preserve the concepts behind them, so as to address them in designing the portal. What follows is a summary of values and concerns that presented themselves to us through these interviews. To each of the major key points and sentiments expressed through these values and concerns, we developed a proposed plan of action to address the values and concerns through specially-designed portal features.

We did this by looking at the input from those we interviewed, and looked for any common threads. These, we categorized as values and concerns. From that, we looked for technology that could support the values, and address the concerns. The challenge was in our commitment to make the interface as simple to use as possible, using as few as possible technological components. In this manner, we could reduce the cognitive load on any user.

**The list of the stakeholders interviewed, in alphabetical order**

1. Gary Austin, Distance Learning Librarian, *16 April 2015, 1 - 2:15 p.m.*
2. Mr. Patrick Baxter, Assistant Director, Digital Communications, *Thursday, Dec 3, 10:00am*
3. Robert Beasey, Student, *14 April 2015*
4. David Brodosi, Interim Director, Online Learning and Instructional Technology Services, *17 April 2015, 11 a.m. to noon*
5. Dr. V. Mark Durand, Interim Regional Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, *Sep 8, 2015 3:15pm – 4pm*
6. CeCe Edwards, Student Success Center, *15 April 2015, 4 - 5:30 p.m*
7. Dr. Joan Eldridge, College of Arts and Science Advising Coordinator. Advising for Junior and Senior Anthropology and Mass Communications students, *17 April 2015, 9 - 10 a.m.*
8. Carol Fisher, M.Ed. Instructional Designer, and Cameron Solley, Enrollment Specialist, College of Business, *August 4, 2015*
9. Dr. Bill Heller, Dean, College of Education, *April 23, 2 - 3 p.m.*
10. Chief David Hendry, USFSP Police. *Nov 2, 2015 9:45am – 10:15am*
11. Holly Kickliter, Senior Director, Enrollment and Marketing Services, *Oct 21,2:00 - 3:00pm 2015*
12. Donna Knudsen, Director, Graduate Services. *Sep 9, 2015 3:00pm – 4:15pm*
13. Barry McDowell, Assistant Director, USFSP Student Disability Services, *4 November 2015 2:00pm*
14. Dr. Kathleen Moore, Special Assistant to the Regional Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, *Tuesday, November 17*
15. Dr. Matt Morrin, Director of Student Life
16. & Engagement, *Thursday November 19*
17. Tina Neville Head, Public Services, *Nov 5 2015 2:00pm*
18. Online Learning and Instructional Technology Group, *Thursday, October 22, 1:00pm*
19. Gavin Peacock, Campus Computing, *17 April 2015, 10 - 11 a.m.*
20. Dr. Anita Sahgal-Patel, USFSP Wellness Center, *17 April 2015, 2 to 3 p.m.*
21. Dr. Susan Toler, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, *April 20, 1 - 2 p.m.*

21. Mr. Milton White, Veteran’s Services, *Friday, November 20, 10:00am*

**Values that arose as a result of the interviews.**

1. We celebrate the distinctive identity and brand that is USFSP

2. We are profoundly concerned for student well-being

3. We celebrate student success

4. We believe in empowering students

5. We highly value a personalized experience

6. We believe in community involvement

7. We are proud to be a veteran-friendly campus

8. We believe in inclusion

9. We are leaders in accessibility initiatives

10. We are a research institution

**Concerns that arose as a result of the interviews.**

1. Obtaining information is confusing and hard

2. Student Wellness and Safety needs to be paramount

3. Students are unprepared for online learning

4. Students are unprepared for college

5. SACS

6. Use of computers/device compatibility

7. Private channels are necessary

8. Students need to be able to connect with professors

9. Accessibility for students with disabilities is still a challenge

10. Legal Requirements to post Title IX, CLERY, and more online

We found that we could address the vast majority of the values and concerns in the portal interface with only three major components. They are:

1. A customized, specially-configured USFSP-unique Chat capability
2. A customized, specially-configured USFSP-unique Search capability
3. A customized, specially-configured dynamically generated link-set that continuously updates to reflect the most sought-after topics and adjust the display accordingly

We believe that through smart coding, we could incorporate special features into chat, search, and a dynamically-updating set of links. By making the technology “smarter” and personalized to a user’s interaction with the interface, we think that we can bring the content to the user, rather than the other way around.

We discovered this for ourselves when we looked at the contents of the interviews, categorized them into values and concerns, and sought to seek answers to challenges they presented. We found that the same handful of answers could be used to solve multiple problems, if the technology was specially coded to do so.

What follows is a more specific breakdown of comments made that led us to denote the values and concerns that arose from the interviews, as well as, some of the recommendations made.

There are two sets of breakouts. The first is by values, the second is by concerns.

**Themes of Values.**

**1. We celebrate the distinctive identity and brand that is USFSP**

**Pride in the USFSP brand was obvious in all we spoke with. However, one of the best examples made to this point was in interview #13:**  **“We try to celebrate the brand that is USFSP!”**

[Note: Distinctive Identity is one of the Vision 20/20 “Bold Goals” outlined in the USFSP Strategic Plan. To that end, we sought to align our efforts accordingly. The definition is as follows:](http://www.usfsp.edu/vision2020/?p=132) “USFSP is a dynamic research university that offers world-class academics and personalized real-world experience in a culturally vibrant, urban, waterfront community.”

**Proposed portal features to strengthen and support this value include**:

1. A highly specialized chat capability that emphasises the interest of one-on-one, personalized help that university staff extend to their students.
2. A custom search feature that has the ability to tie into the many different networks that hold research assets.
3. Mobile-first design to enable students to engage online everywhere they go, including into the community and at the waterfront!

**2. We are profoundly concerned for student well-being**

**Example reference, from interview #17.**

An array of services are offered to students both on a face-to-face basis, and online. For example, for one program, students must come in twice and also participate in video conferencing.

**Proposed portal features to strengthen and support this value include:**

1. A highly specialized chat capability that enables private as well as public communications to the Wellness Center.
2. A mobile-first design that enables the Mo-Bull feature to alert students in event of emergency.

**3. We celebrate student success**

**This was a noted theme throughout all interviews.**

**Recommendation from interview #17:** A link to the writing center (or at least the Student Success Center)

**Proposed portal features to strengthen and support this value include:**

1. A link to the Student Success Center, and/or the ability to find it when using a search term, “help” in a custom search function.
2. A custom-built chat capability in which search terms for help are tracked, and provided as feedback to stakeholders.

**4. We believe in empowering students**

**Recommendation from #11** Link to syllabi in the USFSP Digital Archive so that students may shop first, explore classes before committing

**Proposed portal features to strengthen and support this value include:**

1. A link to the archives in the USFSP Digital Archive to any courses that have uploaded syllabi, and/or the ability to find it when using a search term, “syllabus” or similar term, in a custom search function.
2. A custom-built chat capability that directs potential students directly to faculty in event a current syllabus is unavailable.

**5. We highly value a personalized experience**

**Example Reference from interview #1** When asked for one thing that could be changed regarding the online learning experience for him at USFSP, the interviewee replied the “*not so personal interface*”.

**Example Reference from interview #3** “From a general sense, contact is important. Not just an anonymous student taking a class. *A sense of belonging*. They need to know the university and people are behind what we do, not just an automated experience”

**Example Recommendation from interview #4:** One piece of advice is to connect with professors since they’re hearing on campus.

**Proposed portal features to strengthen and support this value include:**

Proposed plan: incorporate chat and/or videoconferencing with channels dedicated to faculty. This has the added value of adding convenience for students who work, or are otherwise unable to come to campus.

Note that chat technology has record of success: In contrast to traditional PD that often casts teachers into passive roles, chats can be dynamic, engaging, and even “oddly invigorating,” as one of our students said. Carpenter, J. P., & Krutka, D. G. (2014). Chat It Up. *Learning & Leading With Technology*, *41*(5), 10-15.

**6. We believe in community involvement**

**Recommendation from interview #10** Communicate to students that there are groups, Facebook pages, etc., that they will want to join. Some will be general, others program or college-specific.

**Example reference: From interview #19** “PETESYNC”. To have access to it, one needs a NetID. It houses the various campus activities, and the ability to sign up and obtain “PetePoints”. This is something wildly popular with the students.

**Proposed portal features to strengthen this value:**

1. Ensure a link or promotion to Student Activities is available through an interface that does not require a login.
2. Ensure a link or promotion to Facebook is prominent, and/or comes up customized search.
3. Possibly include as a chat room or channel in a customized chat feature.

**7. We are proud to be a veteran-friendly campus**

**Example reference: from interview #20** The USFSP Veteran Success center is very new, and more resources are being added constantly.

**Recommendation from interview #20** Veteran’s most need to know how to get their benefits as it applies to education.

**Proposed portal features to strengthen this value:**

1. Ensure the portal is able to function on low-bandwidth technology. Those serving overseas often don’t have the luxury of working on high-powered desktop computers. If we make the portal truly mobile-friendly, this should accommodate our student-service members overseas.
2. Continue to keep accessibility in mind as we develop the portal. Many veterans suffer disabilities from combat.

**8. We believe in inclusion**

**General comments showing strong support for the well being of students especially in interview #7.**  Along with not knowing how best to navigate an online course, there are different learning styles that could be easier to handle in the classroom. Probably harder to tailor this online. Might be hard to see what those differences are in an online forum.

**Proposed portal features to strengthen this value:** Ensure that there are private, as well as public, channels for students in order to seek help online. To ensure privacy, most instances require a login. We should look to see how we can supplement these important, private channels with paths to help that don’t require a login.

**9. We are leaders in accessibility initiatives**

**Those we interviewed in interview #1 and in interview #16 highly welcomed our outreach to those who deal with accessibility concerns, and feel lucky to be part of the USFSP family.**

Recommendations from interview #16:Chat sessions could be very helpful...Skyping, or video, could also be a possibility. Text chat…

**Proposed portal features to address these concerns:** A specialized chat and/or video-conferencing capability, with back-up methods of connecting to help should the technology fail for any reason.

**10. We are a research institution**

[Identifying as a research institution is one of the Vision 20/20 “Bold Goals” outlined in the USFSP Strategic Plan. We intend to do anything we can to help make it easier to do research.](http://www.usfsp.edu/vision2020/?p=132)

Proposed portal features to strengthen this value:

Recommendation from interview #3, #17:

1. Re-institute the “Ask-A-Librarian” chat feature, and make it prominent.
2. Online Tutorials on how to find information could be very helpful:

* Identifying opportunities for research
* Finding information
* Knowing how to use information (and how to avoid misusing information)

**Themes of Concerns.**

**1. Obtaining information is confusing and hard**

Multiple references to the difficulty of obtaining information were noted throughout the interviews.

**Example reference from interview #14:** In the Psychology department, that a student had to choose among two different "menus" of courses that had different code prefixes. This contributed to the frustration of searching for courses that were applicable to his degree, because in effect, one had to search twice, once for each prefix.

**Proposed Portal Feature:** A customized search could be developed enabling search by course code.

**Recommendation from interview #14**: Incorporate keyword searches that are “soft”

**Proposed Portal Feature:** A customized search could be developed whereby both course title and prefix could be entered in the same search box, generating a targeted result.

**Recommendation from interview #6**  Pulling content may be best. This way, everything is updated in one spot and kept in sync.

**Proposed Portal Feature:**  A lookup search box, where one can start typing a keyword and get a list of matching properties/elements/attributes/functions and further details on those when selecting the one of interest.

A “smart search” capability would accomplish the following:

a. Greatly reduce the need to become “trained” and “educated” on department terminology before becoming enabled to find relevant content.

b. Pulls in content as appropriate into one location. Reduces the likely-hood of getting lost within a website.

c. Align with with one of the bold goals for “de-silo-ing” content. see

<http://www.usfsp.edu/vision2020/bold-goal-1-distinctive-identity/>

**Finding Appropriate Forms is Problematic:** Example comments in #7, #12, #21

**Recommendation from interview #12**: Generate a “one-stop” location for all forms needed for graduation, especially for Thesis, as well as a checklist (or checklists) to be available, possibly on the form itself.

**Proposed Portal Feature**: A localized, and alphabetical location for all forms, able to be found by a special search function.

**2. Student Wellness and Safety needs to be paramount**

**Proposed Portal Feature:** Chat, with private chat-room capability.

Links to telephone numbers, addresses, and more need to be made prominent or easily found for the In-person services offered.

**Proposed Portal Feature:**  A lookup search box, where one can start typing a keyword and get a list of matching properties/elements/attributes/functions and further details on those when selecting the one of interest.

**Proposed Portal Feature:**  Coded with a mobile-first design, to allow Mo-Bull alerts to be received on cell phones.

**3. Students are unprepared for online learning**

See example references in interviews #1, #2, #3, #6, #7, #9, #10, #11, #18, #19, #20, #21:

**Recommendations** from interviews #1, #2, #3, #7, #10, #11, #18,#19, #20, #21: Coordinate with Online Learning and Technology Services to provide an Introductory or Orientation Video

**Recommendation** from interview #6: Having chat or video chat for students could be useful, especially since calls and emails don’t always lead to immediate responses.

**4. Students are unprepared for college**

Noted throughout the interview process.

**Recommendation from interviews #2:** Highlight, or make easily found, the “Smart Thinking” online tutoring service, two hours of which are available free to USFSP students

**Recommendation from interview #17**: A link to the writing center (or at least the Student Success Center)

**Proposed portal features to address these concerns:**

1. A custom-built keyword search capability to map help suggestions
2. A “Help Me” or “Get Help” Button
3. Custom chat features. Enable the chat feature so that students are able to reach their professors on a one-to-one basis. The chat feature could log questions by student ID, so that the student would be able to pick up again where a conversation left off previously. Also, the chat feature could keep track of certain keywords, to better understand where students are having the most trouble, thus enabling a data-based feedback resource. (Casey needs to check this wording)

**5. SACS**

An overarching theme of the conversation was that any services provided to students face-to-face, must also be provided to students online. We were provided with some SACS guidelines and are currently in the process of reviewing it in order to see how efforts with the portal may dovetail with SACS requirements.

**6. Use of computers and device compatibility is a concern**

References from interview #5 “One of the things I’ve seen is that there are a lot of students who don’t understand the technology and don’t have the technical competencies.”

**Recommendation from interview #5** “I would offer a live chat if I could.”

**Proposed portal features to address these concerns:** Enable the chat feature so that students are able to reach their professors on a one-to-one basis. The chat feature could log questions by student ID, so that the student would be able to pick up again where a conversation left off previously. Also, the chat feature could keep track of certain keywords, to better understand where students are having the most trouble, thus enabling a data-based feedback resource. (Casey needs to check this wording)

**7. Private channels are necessary**

**Proposed portal features that address this concern include**:

1. A capability to login to private channel in a chat room.

**8. Students need to be able to connect with professors**

**Example comment from interview #9** Students may be missing out on a big part of the interpersonal aspects of being a college student.

**Proposed portal features to address this concern include:**

Incorporate chat and/or videoconferencing with channels dedicated to faculty. This has the added value of adding convenience for students who work, or are otherwise unable to come to campus.

**9. Accessibility for students with disabilities is still a challenge**

**Proposed portal features to address this concern include:**

1. Incorporate chat and/or videoconferencing with channels dedicated to faculty. This has the added value of adding convenience for students who work, or are otherwise unable to come to campus -- and a feature especially valuable to those who must schedule special transportation to accommodate wheelchairs.
2. Include a back-up method of communicating if the chat technology should fail.
3. Include in the specialized search capability terms that would allow students with disabilities to download browser extensions that assist them in their studies.

**10. Legal Requirements to post certain documents, such as Title IX, CLERY, and the Annual Security Report.**

**References: Noted in interview #15.**

**Proposed portal features to address these concerns**: Ensure links to these are prominent, easily found, and easily accessed. Ensure these are also mapped in the specialized Search capability.

**Interview notes, by order of date.**

**Interview #1**

Notes from Sharon Austin:

Paraphrasing: When asked for one thing that could be changed regarding the online learning experience for him at USFSP, the interviewee replied the “not so personal interface”. We went on to confirm that this specifically meant, student-to-student interaction, student-to-faculty interaction, student-to-staff interaction, interactions in general. This person highly favored a “video chat” type of interaction.

A brief side discussion immediately ensued, in that a video chat scenario with “scheduled” video chat times could dovetail well with the current manner in which students are given guidance in a face-to-face manner. A staff member, in her office, equipped with a camera, would have access to all of the resources available to her normally, but by using the face-to-face interaction of a video chat, would enable the student to have real-time interaction with a staff member while providing convenience and relief from the necessity to find transportation to a staff member’s office. This last feature figures prominently for those with disabilities, who are reliant upon specialized van services to meet these appointments.

We may also want to explore Firefox “hello”, a browser extension that may allow video chat. This would be an inexpensive way and very convenient to add video chat capability to extant computers already in staff offices. Put another way, the infrastructure already exists on campus for the technology.

Further, virtual office hours for video chat conferencing could be enabled for all students very easily through the portal interface, thus reinforcing the capability of a robust web presence that would allow USFSP students to all aspects of their academic careers without needing to come to campus, as outlined in the original tasking of the portal.

As we explored ways to make the interface easy to use for those with disabilities, the interviewee brought up the subject of an audio “supplement” to speak text for those with weak vision. This specifically was NOT a reference to voice recognition software, simply a way to “speak” an option when selected. (text-to-speech). Dr. Frechette expanded on the idea, asking if providing access to the information by phone would be helpful. This immediately felt like a great solution to many problems; it would allow mobile access, low-bandwidth, and almost built-in accessibility features for many students with mobility and/or speech challenges. Significantly, it could also be tied into a portal interface to allow notifications of deadlines or important events to the student, or tied into a synchronized calendar. He had heard of a company called “Twilio” that could perhaps offer relevant technology; we’ll look into it a bit more to see what it’s about.

The interviewee mentioned that he used shortcuts considerably to help him navigate through an interface; further prompting found that he tended to use Internet Explorer quite a bit, mainly because that is the OS commonly found in public institutions, so we want to explore a little more whether the shortcuts he is familiar with are specific to IE, or are more general. It did not appear that he was particularly familiar with any shortcuts in Canvas, nor are we. This is also something we need to explore further. If there are shortcuts available to students, how are they made known to the students?

Finally, the interviewee made specific recommendation/request to incorporate a video featuring a student with actual disabilities as a “visual” ADA statement that is incorporated into courses and learning management systems.

**Interview #2**

Mentality of taking online classes to work as much as possible. (applies to on campus work).

Example of a student taking four classes over the summer.

Our students work more than the national average, by a significant degree.

Importance of setting expectations for work required in an online class.

Lack of responses from teachers is a point of frustration.

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

Different populations need different things

Addressing some needs will be offensive to some of the other populations

Points to the value of customization?

Modules on “How to Learn Online” could be valuable…

Could have Q&A about how to be successful online; searchable

Different tutorials, could come from professors in different disciplines.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Student Success Center:

Acudemia has been used; its future use is uncertain. “Smart Thinking,” two hours a semester -- live, one-on-one tutoring, in various subjects.Just last week added this to our site.

Having tutors, a system, ability to use WordPress have been necessary to move forward with online writing tutors, which has become a roadblock.

Some better system, where things can go to a queue, would be better.

Website has a page of resources, broken down by discipline…

Updated about once an academic year.

Stats and calculus are the biggest, chemistry, writing (science writing tutors).

Software that asks questions and also asks for confidence levels.

Test that measures online learning readiness.

Time management, study skills, expectations for the experience, ability to use technology

Possibility of providing virtual tutoring sessions

Setting up a Canvas Organization to handle submissions, for writing help.

Grammarly subscriptions, or something similar, could be very useful.

Turnitin -- (everything submitted is turned in, and never let go).

Pearson Grammar check

Self help tools could have a lot of value, helping students improve on their own.

Additional Notes from Sharon: During the interview, the issue that adult learners tend to flock to the computers at night, after work, for such programs as SPSS. Perhaps we could help these adult learners out by ensuring a prominently placed link to the USF virtual lab. There was also a reference to “Smart Thinking”, a service provided by the university for free, online, 24/7 tutoring for a total of 2 hours.The “sense” is that it is something students would use, but are generally unaware of. Perhaps a direct link to the service in the portal interface would be useful, but there would need to be some education as to the time limits of the service, and the need to come “prepared” to the tutoring service. Of special note, availability of such a service would be of great benefit to some of our students with disabilities. Video chat would enable them to bypass the normal keyboard interface that can be exceptionally challenging to use.

**Interview #3**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

From a general sense, contact is important. Not just an anonymous student taking a class. A sense of belonging. They need to know the university and people are behind what we do, not just an automated experience.

More than just a link that says “Nelson Poynter Library.” We need something that provides understanding for the research that will be needed for most courses. We do have resources that you can use. Not just technical resources, but people resources.

Everything is available to fully online students, it’s usually a matter of time. Physical resources can be shipped, and of course all online resources.

Students don’t have an obvious tutorial about what resources are available and how to get into it? Much of this will be degree-specific.

Cultivating an information literacy frame of mind seems to be an important aspect of this.

Tutorials on how to find information could be very helpful:

* Identifying opportunities for research
* Finding information
* Knowing how to use information (and how to avoid misusing information)

Need to define appropriate citation, paraphrasing practices, because students are getting some bad information at the high school level.

This kind of resource could be built as a standalone resource that’s linked to from both sites (Library site, Portal site).

We need to figure out what information / services need to be restricted (inside the portal) and which can be completely open.

Another problem is that many students go straight to the Tampa library website and don’t come to ours and see all of our specific resources.

Berrie: We might talk to the OLITs group to make sure any template information that loads into a course includes links to the portal.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

We need to find ways to guide online students through the process of accessing resources and services.

Portal needs a tutorial, introduction so students know what’s in it and how it can be used.

We could ask questions that ask about research skills before getting started as a way to determine user ability.

Since the portal can find out certain info about the student, certain tutorials, tools can be provided.

Task-specific tutorials seem to have a lot of value. Something modular, that students can customize for themselves depending on their needs.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Incorporating libguides and Ask-a-Librarian very important.

From a public standpoint, reference, access to resources, IIL.

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

How often does this content change?

Modules/tutorials in some cases will need varying degrees of updates on a case-by-case basis.

Who’s responsible for the changes?

Libguides are done by subject librarians. Tina’s a good overall point of contact as the head of reference. Kaya did the current tutorial for basic research skills for comp 1 perhaps need a different model for the business students

Other Topics

Berrie: Students seem to have a higher expectation in the realm of doing library research vs. other areas. I wonder, from a portal standpoint, whether there will be concerns about privacy being eroded.

How much expectation is there … what about creating a terms of use?

Gary: Seems many students have just given up. But I personally think that it’s best to not keep any information about anyone longer than necessary.

Please note that this portal connects you to many other points of service that have their own privacy policies and terms of use.

Berrie: Let’s see if we do anything above and beyond or different from University policy guidelines.

~~Gary:~~ We can also link to university policies on this.

We can look into the use of<https://www.olark.com/> as a platform for managing an in-house chat Q/A system.

**Interview #4**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

Two types of students. I love online classes. I’ve done it a lot. I work full time. And I want more! When a classes isn’t offered, it’s a pain.

Other students are nervous about online classes, especially when they have multiple online classes. Some are older students. Some concerns come from lack of experience, others from bad previous experiences.

Younger students also sometimes feel like the online experience can be isolating.

One piece of advice is to connect with professors since they’re hearing on campus.

Technical concerns make students nervous, in terms of submitting work. Advice is needed in terms of when to submit assignments.

A page dedicated to calming down nervous people’s fears could be very valuable.

Transfer students must come to advising to register. They make an appointment and they see me through orientation. Phone appointments are possible.

Majority of students are still transfer students. But more state-funding comes from freshman.

Freshmen tend to be used to in-class experiences.

Online classes can reveal personal time management challenges.

Berrie: Good intro requirement could be watching a video about how to succeed in an online course.

We use eScheduler to make appointments for advising. They call or email when they can’t do it.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Some classes are very technical and end up overwhelming students.

Casey: Custom descriptions that accompany online classes to set expectations could be important.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Students need information about the advising process. They need to know that they have two advisers -- general academic (and graduation certifier) and departmental adviser. The later can help with course-specific questions.

Don’t forget about 2.5 GPA in concentration.

DegreeWorks is an online student audit system. But many only look at it when they’re sitting in my office. There are exceptions, but they’re few and far between.

I’d never try to pull only parts of DegreeWorks in. It could provide a false picture of what’s required.

Better advising on Exit Course requirements would be useful. Three of these are needed to graduate, all are upper level, and a C or better is required. Six (6) hours credit in Major Works and Major Issues. Three (3) hours credit in Literature and Writing.

*Would be very helpful to pull a list of outside major elective requirements.*

We also have a Registration Error Form that we use to funnel questions about trouble getting into courses.

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

Some links and some content can be imported.

How often does this content change?

Not very. But Cindy Collins updates the website.

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

Something I can refer them to.

What about linking to career information?

I get a lot of requests about taking courses in Tampa, but there are often restrictions that need to be understood (because they haven’t met the admission requirements).

Low completion ratios can also lead to restrictions.

Capacity restrictions also apply.

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

Degree audits are required. Warnings to check catalogs is important, as the requirements change year to year. Most, but not all, are catalog driven. Link to DegreeWorks (with active, current information)

Warning about excess credit hours is important.

Perhaps there’s a way to keep key catalog information front and center within the portal. Links to relevant PDFs would also be useful.

Always be sure to consult financial aid. Students need to do this, because there’s a firewall between academic advising and financial aid.

Additional Notes from Sharon: It may be worth looking at how well the military, or their children, are able to complete the process of registration. We weren’t able to cover this fully in the interview. Military could have a home of record in St. Petersburg, Florida, but be physically located half-way around the world. There’s a possibility that we could make things smoother for the military and/or their children seeking to go to school, particularly if they are declared residents of St. Petersburg or Pinellas County.

**Interview #5**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

One of the things I’ve seen is that there are a lot of students who don’t understand the technology and don’t have the technical competencies. I provide detailed steps, but students get stuck and want to come in in person.I’m teaching Information in Organizations in fall, and I’m working on a new Business Intelligence and Data Analytics course.

We’re playing around with Office 365 to see if we can bring that in for College of Business students to use.

Device compatibility is a big issue. Some want to take the whole class on a phone. Some on a Mac. Often, instructions are written specifically for Windows PC.

Canvas is in pretty good shape, but the issue comes in when other third party software becomes part of the course experience.

No remedial courses here on computer usage.

I think the portal needs to be integrated rather than built on a new platform or additional place that students need to go.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Getting approval from Tampa and campus security to move the project forward.

“017” Form. Talk with NetID group. This is needed for new applications, for both onsite and hosted products. Things over a certain threshold also need to go through our group.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Help Desk, how to contact us, how to submit support requests.  
 For the new portal, how will support requests be handled? will they go into the general queue.

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

I would stay away from duplicating information, as we’re constantly updating things and they can fall out of date.

How often does this content change?

Frequently.

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

There will likely be login troubles. In terms of general difficulties, we often get calls about a lot of different issues, and we’re good about routing.

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

There will likely be login troubles. In terms of general difficulties, we often get calls about a lot of different issues, and we’re good about routing.

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

Make sure you’re in compliance with all USF system regulations.

Would be good to talk to Jeff about State Legislation.

FERPA. Make sure @mail.usf.edu addresses are used for communication.

Be aware of what’s needed to get access to different systems.

* Oasis...Class schedule search is open.
* Canvas - available without VPN but requires .
* Any links to the virtual computer lab would need to state VPN requirements.
* Banner...

Class hold information would be very useful to show online students...this information may come from Banner. At the very least, if we can say there’s a hold, with a prompt to contact the relevant department.

I would offer live chat if I could, but we don’t have the manpower right now. Though I know this is something that some students are interested in.

Tampa has a chat feature built into the ServiceNow ticket system that they use.

A news feed could possibly be helpful to spread information about new initiatives.

Patrick is looking at creating an intranet for the campus. He wants to take off the information for faculty and staff and treat the website as purely a marketing tool for students.

But one site with additional content after logging in may be the best solution.

April 17, 2015, 11 a.m. to noon

**Interview #6**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

Hard to think outside of our internal box. And that’s the challenge I have with helping with the process. We try to design courses so that everything needed is housed inside the course.

Online library support, tutoring support, advising.

Everything else should be maintained inside the course.

One thing to bear in mind is that we don’t support students directly, but rather support faculty.

In Tampa, learning objective / instructional design support isn’t really provided. The focus is on media production. Multimedia developers instead of instructional designers.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Not really sure of any, at least from the standpoint of our department.

One issue is faculty that bypass our department in building our courses. They don’t pick up our getting started information, which provides critical support to help students be successful.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key

information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Getting Started module should be included within the portal.

ID Card support, information. This can be done remotely, and it’s processed through Tampa. Our website has the link to get there and complete the process.

Getting into Oasis and getting all the courses currently offered online. If you do a regular filter for online classes, you may only find 10 responses, when there are usually over a hundred online courses per semester.

Some classes have a face-to-face component (for exams, for example), and this results in different coding in Oasis.

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

Pulling content may be best. This way, everything is updated in one spot and kept in sync.

How often does this content change?

It does change with some frequency. We can update our template, but what about updating modules?

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

Instead of putting up a module, we might provide a link to the portal or a section of the portal. Could be specific to the subsection in the guide, for example, on ADA. In this way, the portal is feeding the content in other places.

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

Having chat or video chat for students could be useful, especially since calls and emails don’t always lead to immediate responses.

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

**Interview #7**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

Knowing how to take online courses. Current generation probably has more familiarity. They may have experience with other kinds of online activities (social media), but not learning online.

Showing students how it’s different than face to face classes.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Along with not knowing how best to navigate an online course, there are different learning styles that could be easier to handle in the classroom. Probably harder to tailor this online. Might be hard to see what those differences are in an online forum.

So, how are different styles accommodated online?

Need to be prepared for students who need to take an online course in order to graduate.

There may not be a lot of self-awareness of learning styles and study habits / challenges.

Online courses also seem to have a different take on the nature of student to student interactions.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

We get referrals from faculty, staff. We’re embedded in the orientation process

We have online resources and a website. And we have resources to health and mental health issues.

Website outlines services offered as well.

Online mental health screenings that can be completed.

Links to events are also posted here. Resources to faculty and staff and students.

Video tour of the office is posted as well.

In-person services offered:

* Individual counseling
* Group counseling
* Biofeedback program
* Anxiety management (hybrid program)
* Psychiatry services
* Nutritional services
* Medical services

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

A link to the website. The health educator (Victoria) maintains the content on the site.

How often does this content change?

Some not often, others with a good deal of frequency.

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

We have to see students in person to provide care. A few exceptions: We have an online anxiety management program, that’s done via an online portal. It’s psycho-educational, much like a class. Students must come in twice and also participate in video conferencing.

Another aspect of access is our after hours setup -- between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m., along with weekends, we have three different services:

* Victim advocate, for students who have experienced a crime of some sort. They can call this person and get concerns addressed.
* We have an after-hours nurse advice line.
* We have a mental health after hours line.

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

Casey: Is there a possibility of virtual events?

We want to educate students about sexual assault across campus, and we will create some digital materials for this that could also be part of an online resource.

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

We all have medical state licensure which includes professional, ethical boards.

Additional notes from Sharon: Links and resources representing the Wellness Center are a special case, and may require additional legal review because of the sensitive nature of the communications. Also, in terms of technology, this may be an instance where an embedded video makes sense. Videos in general are problematic, not the least because they are not an “agile” technology that is easy to keep current. However, videos from the wellness center aimed at providing guidance and assistance to troubled students may be appropriate, as the anonymity and privacy offered by an online interface may actually be an asset to view a sensitive video quietly, and in one’s own space.

**Interview #8**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

One of our advising positions was going to work specifically with online students. *(Need to double check on the name.)*

Would be helpful if there were a way to get live interaction while working through the portal, for example, getting academic advising. This could help students navigate through the process.

Information on financial aid, working with the cashier’s office.

Using USF email, since that’s where official communication goes.

Calendar-based presentation of deadlines, events, etc.

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Emphasizing differences between our campus and Tampa may be important.

OASIS is one example, where Tampa resources can be accessed. How to use OASIS to find a course would be a really helpful aspect of the portal.

An instructional module on this could be a great help.

DegreeWorks is another way to search for courses. This is a great program. It provides a way to plan a schedule. Specific courses can be inputted, and then a search can be run to see when the course is available. But no way to filter by campus.

For the college, we go into Banner to build courses, and we set all the properties. I work with Jason Morris, and we set up the courses.

I give a template to the chairs based on what rolls into Oasis. There’s a long lead time on the deadlines.

Oasis pulls data from Banner. Banner can generate unofficial transcripts. It includes a catalog of what students have taken.

Development of a single repository for forms could be extremely valuable campus wide.

The structure of forms also varies widely. Word documents, PDFs, web pages. There’s a lack of guidelines for designing, creating, storing, etc.

Tampa has a great online site for program/course vetting.

How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

Forms, final exam schedules (important to check for conflicts), academic regulations (and petitions).

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

Important to contact people in charge of managing pages to make sure forms linked to are accurate and up-to-date. COAS website may be the least up to date since no one person has been able to take the time to manage it. Program assistants cover each program, and we’re asking them to clean up our resources.

Casey P. has been asked to help begin to audit the COAS website.

One example is the ARC petition, which involves, for example, making a request for an excused leave from school.

Sometimes students pick up forms from Tampa, not realizing we’re a separate institution.

How often does this content change?

Not often enough.

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

Additional Notes from Sharon: It was mentioned during the interview that sometimes, those searching for forms find “a” form, but it is not the “correct” form. Consequently, erroneous forms may be filled out, or the correct forms may be sent to the wrong location. We had a similar problem at an aerospace manufacturing plant I had worked at, and solved the problem by first centralizing the location of the documents, and then adding “expiration for review” dates on the documents. The documents were required to be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure currency, as well as to ensure that they were being sent to the proper location. Another recommendation was to add a “phone” point of contact for ARC petitions. The special consideration for ARC petitions lies in the fact that these petitions may be used by students under stress or duress, and in the case of those under physical duress, or with special physical challenges such as those with motor disabilities, the advantage of a “phone” point of contact would be greatly appreciated. Forms are a particularly challenging interface to use, I have seen some official forms in which those using assistive technology cannot access the form, and on more than one occasion I have seen forms accidently sent to the wrong place, or not received at all, due to the technology. Students in duress could really use a “phone” point of contact to be on the lookout for an incoming form.

**Interview #9**

What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?

Important not to take too much for granted. Students aren’t always prepared to do online work. They get messages about the scheduling flexibility, but they don’t understand what the requirements are, or what the added demands are in terms of schedule management.

Even after taking several classes online, there’s a sense that it’s still an adjusting and learning process, in terms of understanding what the expectations of the student are.

Many students feel the discussion board is obsolete in current form. There’s not the level of interaction that would be desired. They’re making a comparison to a face-to-face class, and seeing a gap.

They also see a lost opportunity for the kind of “incidental” learning that can happen in the classroom.

Teachers get some responses, but student-to-student interaction in particular is a struggle.

Seems to be hard to spark genuine interaction, wherein students are really taking in and responding to one another’s work.

The convenience factor does seem to be a big plus for many.

The hybrid approach seems to be one solution that offers the best of both. Students seem interested in this, even though there’s the added fee to contend with.

Online with some synchronous sessions could help to address the interaction component. (But there are technical considerations with this approach, too, and it doesn’t always work.)

Many students claim to want an online tutorial on taking online courses. This applies especially to student fresh out of highschool who may not have a lot of experience.

With our grad students, many are not as computer savvy as the undergrads are. There’s a lack of comfort level for these students.

No time during the year to talk about what wasn’t working online.

Concerns are more in delivery / hosting than powerpoint.

Student success courses are being developed, and on is being offered by this College. In some case, it may

What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?

Many students feel that exams are done in a less than above-board fashion. So, the students think there’s dishonesty happening, and that has a negative effect on the experience.

There are also cases where students are taking tests and get booted out of the course. They feel it’s unfair as they have to work back to where they were as the clock continues to tick.

Students want to be asked what would make the experience better (perhaps as part of the evaluation). They aren’t sure that the evaluation is appropriate as it’s designed (and better-suited) for face-to-face instruction. The ratings may be lower than deserved due to a mismatch between an online format vs an issue with the format.

Meanwhile, professors say the participation rate is too low to make it meaningful.

Some students feel online courses are oversubscribed and setup only as a cash cow.

Some students feel that those taking only online courses shouldn’t live on campus.

Students may be missing out on a big part of the interpersonal aspects of being a college student.

Content suffers; not enough content is there, or it isn’t fully used.

How should the college of eduction be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?

There’s some content on the college website.

What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.

Content can be in both places ideally.

How often does this content change?

How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?

How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?

Is there any state legislation that affects the services you provide?

Terry Rhodes Gordon Rule course. Capped at 25 students. Education and Ethics course (Gen. Ed. possibly).

Giving students calls when they’re in a fully online class seems to be a good way to build connections and interactions.

**Interview #10**

Essentials / Required Classes ... Cameron works with them at this point

If you're accepted a couple months before summer, you may do a lot before you get your first orientation

25% totally online ~

25% on campus

50% mix

Carol:Baseline: They're looking, seeing some information, but they're.

Carol: Some students have never taken online classes.

Carol: Students have very high expectations in terms of quality, support, communications

Some compare what we're doing to other experiences, for example, Nova University

Speed of access in Canvas is a theme that comes up a lot -- technical issues.

Setting expectations around this important, if not directly addressing the loading problems...

CAMERON: Students don't know their textbooks. They don't know what the structure, pacing is going to be. They don't have access to syllabi.

Expectations for course publishing -- nothing is established across the board.

When is syllabus due by faculty?

Orientation videos by college?

Not sure what the content is but might be worth seeing what's inside it.

Test/template course in Canvas might be of some value?

A video that shows how things are structured, where things are located, could also be of value.

Use of dates within syllabi is also a consideration -- this can be a problem in terms of keeping syllabi up-to-date.

For fully-online students, knowing what to expect is the biggest consideration.

Having access to the right equipment is a big concern, including computers themselves.

Certain software is required. Students don't always know.

New accounting masters program ... not online, but it's a possibility.

Cameron:

VIRTUAL ORIENTATION

Rolling admissions, could happen any time.

###### Identify and Assign Essentials ... 1-8.

A student could have no exposure to website. They go straight to application site, filled that out and then three weeks later, they have an acceptance letter. They may have never seen Canvas, etc.

Set up a NetID

Go into OASIS, make a payment of some amount.

They send ~~Cameron~~ an email, and he sends physical material.

Explaining student GMail and other parts of My.USF.edu interface.

Students may not realize that they need to login to this account to get access to correspondence.

OPEN QUESTION: What happens when NetIDs are created, exactly? Who is notified?

There's a lot of ambiguity around this.

Cameron:I tell them to go to the address, and it usually happens immediately.

After the initial Essentials conversation, look at financial aid.

Then, class schedule search. (I show how to navigate, what filters to use, etc.)

Application Gateway (Online Software) apps.usf.edu

Atomic Learning (Software Tutorials)

Blackboard Collaborate. Can take up to 20 minutes to get everything -- plugin, mic, camera, etc.

Library Resources (integrated into orientation as a section)

Carol: As far as library resources go, nice to highlight what's available locally, and what's not...

General computer setup -- what's a good setup?

Two-screen recommendation

Mic, camera, may need to buy...

Would be nice to have video introductions from all students...

###### General advising video -- not 100% up-to-date, but it's there.

###### = College-specific steps.

Carol willing to follow up with programs and will see about having them create short advising videos.

Communicate to students that there are groups, Facebook pages, etc., that they will want to join. Some will be general, others program or college-specific.

Highlight internship, study abroad, and other opportunities.

Home page of portal may need to list all online programs, each of which would have its own landing page.

This landing page is where

Student checklist, individual version, plus a dashboard that admins can see of all students.

**Interview #11**

The interview surfaced points on the possible use of course components to be open and available for review to the public, archiving syllabi in the digital media, and connecting with students who were seeking help.

A belief that the ability to publish to the world, the first part of a Canvas Course, along with syllabi and course descriptions, would provide a great way to allow visitors to see the nature of the course before signing up for class. This would encourage exploration of USFSP and its offerings, and would follow a model that tends to be becoming more and more popular; a “try-before-you-buy” model. There was also a recommendation that the syllabi archived publicly, strongly recommending the use of the USFSP Digital Archive to do so. (Note: Berrie rightly cautioned that a strong versioning system be in place if we do this). Also, there was brief discussion of the advantages of putting a current, active syllabus online through a standardized piecemeal process by faculty submitting content into standardized form fields, and the advantages that would bring. (The two concepts are very complementary ideas; current syllabus content embedded live in the courses, material from past courses to be archived in the digital archive). Further, if course descriptions could be put in a digital format, they could also be indexed and searched both internally and externally much more easily. These ideas squared well with results from the student survey, in which 85.2% said that it was very important or extremely important to be able to browse and enroll in all online classes.

The conversation then turned to the “Schedule Planner”. Dr. Durand explained its benefits, and according to him, was strongly welcomed and loved by students from other universities which implemented the scheduler. As he described it, the advisor would input recommended courses into the student’s individual planner; the student, in term, would input the available or preferred times he would be able to take the courses, as well as look to see if his friends were taking the same courses. (That data was provided by a “sanitized” version of Banner) The students loved this, and actually spoke to one of the results from the student survey, in that they expected or wanted to be able to get help from fellow students (59.2% thought it was very important or extremely important, 93.3% thought it was important, very important, or extremely important to be able to getting support answers from fellow students). However, there was much needed by the student population that the Schedule Planner did not provide; feedback to the students. To that end, we felt that the portal would be able to provide necessary services that the Schedule Planner did not or could not, particularly for students who needed additional assistance on some level.

This is partly because the Schedule Planner was based on Banner, but so many important events in a student’s life affects other administrative offices and other databases. No one database source can provide for all the distinct needs of a student, and to that point, we came to understand just how much good the portal could do. For example, cross-notification between student and instructor on Canvas was suggested, as well as direct links to Financial Aid, or notification to faculty and/or the advisors if a student simply does not show up in class. We all felt that a “Help Me” button would be appropriate embedded in the portal interface; the problem is not a lack of capability of providing one, but that the “roadmap” for who to notify whom has not yet been firmly outlined. Once that’s in place, a “Help Me” button could be embedded in the interface with links to advisors, SOCAT, Financial Aid, etc.

Such personalized information would be available in the second phase of the portal, in which students used their NetID to check on course progress and work with all things academic through this interface. The first phase of the portal would not do that, but would be a great place to integrate the course descriptions, syllabi, and sample lesson. This would not only allow students to have a more gentle introduction to life in (? a virtual?) classroom, but would provide a marketing tool available to the world.

Finally, Dr. Durand recommended that we connect with Kathleen Moore, a SACS liaison that would be in place twice a week at USFSP.

**Interview #12**

Donna graciously provided an invaluable insight into the nuts and bolts of working with graduate students, and from that, we discovered the very “individualized” aspect of interaction with the students, in order to enable their success. For example, she was reluctant to use “canned” responses and form emails because she felt that it was important to reach out personally to the graduate students. There is real power in this, but it also brought up the contextual nature of working with the graduate students; much of the path a graduate student took was determined on a case-by-case basis. An example would be whether a course previously taken by the graduate student should be accepted for credit into the program. There is not a straight-forward, hard-and-fast rule as to whether a course should be accepted--it is a decision by faculty, and others. Consequently, it would be difficult to simply generate a list of required courses that definitively would apply to the graduate student’s degree.

In the spirit of ensuring personalized interaction with the students, Donna felt that an online chat service would be a very good idea. She also felt that New Student Orientation would be a welcome presence online, and specifically, totally online, as that would help the many working students, and very specifically the military, who are stationed overseas. She suggested including a slideshow as part of the New Student Orientation. She also welcomed the idea of faculty office hours online, perhaps by chat or video.

In discussions about searching for courses, Donna pointed us to an invaluable resource -- the Search-A-Bull database; per Donna, this was based on the “BDMS” database system. <http://ugs.usf.edu/course-inventory/>

(Further research after the interview showed this to be a version of Banner, “Banner DataBase Management System).

Donna had several concerns that she felt should be addressed in the Portal. First, she was concerned about FERPA requirements and privacy. We wondered if the protection of a NetID was sufficient to address FERPA concerns. Next, she addressed concerns of Title 9, training, and federal requirements.

She felt too, that there should be links to the appropriate course catalog, as that is considered a binding contract; link to the student’s advisor, as well as the office hours of availability,

A major recommendation was to generate a “one-stop” location for all forms needed for graduation, especially for Thesis, as well as a checklist (or checklists) to be available, possibly on the form itself.

Finally, she made a specific recommendation that we meet with Milton White, of the USFSP Veterans affairs. There is much that may be done for them through online resources.

**Interview #13**

A very important piece of information that came out of our meeting with Holly is that there is a correlation between students coming to campus for Orientation, and their subsequent enrollment to USFSP.

Anything that helps fuller enrollment numbers is welcome.

We try to celebrate the brand that is USFSP.

Hobson’s pulls into OASIS.

<http://www.hobsons.com/>

40 days to completion (of registration).

OASIS -> NetID -> Sunflower connects all.

Banner -> looking at Starfish as a possibility

Starfish is a retention software

Starfish by Hobsons

<http://www.starfishsolutions.com/>

<http://www.starfishsolutions.com/home/technical-specifications-for-the-starfish-enterprise-success-platform/>

Eluican

<http://www.ellucian.com/>

**Interview #14**

This afternoon, Dr. Frechette, Berrie Watson, and Sharon Austin met with the Department of Online Learning and Instructional Technology Services, to seek advice on how to best conduct beta-testing of an important component of the USFSP Online student portal, the component which allows students to search for classes applicable to their degree.

Dr. Frechette presented the prototype, pointing out key features: On a top-level tier were buttons for campus selection, semester selection, and format selection. The second-level tier had filter options for courses, departments, and colleges. The top level had options that were pre-set to a default for the USFSP campus, a dynamically rotating semester option, and an online or offline format.

An immediate concern, brought up by Mr. Brodosi, was the definition of "Online", as some hybrid and tele-courses were considered to be online courses by some, but face-to-face courses by others. He recommended that we align the definition by the one provided by the state, which is to say if 80% of the course or more was online, then it was considered to be an "online" course. (We strongly agreed, of course, but we may want to look at making available a definition or explanation of what it means to be an online course, and that one "may" be expected to come to campus at some point, even if it falls under the definition of online).

Many of the OLITS group noted the confusion about the use of codes in OASIS. The College of Education, for example, tended to use the three-letter prefixes tagged as "SUBJ" rather than the three-letter code tagged as "DPT" in OASIS to identify their courses. (e.g., for the course titled, "Selected Topics University Success" the department code is COE, but the subject code is EDG. ) In general, students have learned to search for a course on the SUBJ code rather than the DPT code. This lead Dr. Frechette to question the presence of the Department tab in the portal, and stated an intent to possibly re-purpose the tab to a search more closely aligned with typical use.

Also related to the above issue on codes, Otis noted that in the Psychology department, that a student had to choose among two different "menus" of courses that had different code prefixes. This contributed to the frustration of searching for courses that were applicable to his degree, because in effect, one had to search twice, once for each prefix. Dr. Frechette noted that a search could be developed whereby both course title and prefix could be entered in the same search box, generating a targeted result.

The question was raised whether the search could be "soft" and accommodate mis-spellings -- not yet, but it's planned to incorporate the soft search into the capability.

Stephanie recommended a search by major; almost immediately everyone saw the common sense good in doing something like this. The problem is that the majors are tied to the four-year plan, and these are not consistently available on a public basis yet. However, this made so much sense by all that we are going to look for ways to do this.

Another great suggestion from OLITS was to incorporate keyword searches -- for example, "child" to search for Psychology courses that deal with child psychology, etc.

Rich recommended an ability to "save" favorite information when selecting options from the portal. This was actually in the early plans of the portal, but was dropped when it was discovered that there was a strong resistance against the need for more passwords. To that end, we re-visited the issue, and will be exploring ways to save favorite information without needing a password. Dr. Frechette suggested a method by which a number could be saved, and then entered again when revisiting the site; a "shopping cart" of selections. Also, there is some new HTML5 technology that we could explore for this.

We asked for how to best obtain student testers for the portal, and came to find that each department has its own student workers; to that end, we'll ask for permission from the departments individually. Currently, Robert Beasey, a student with disabilities, helps with design of the portal by coming in weekly, and offering many great insights as to the problems a student faces when trying to register for courses. He is simply invaluable, and has already impacted the design of the portal. However, he is also becoming familiar with it, so we want to supplement his insights with the insights from other students with disabilities who are not familiar with the project. Karla said she would be able to find some students with disabilities to help test. We'll coordinate with her on that.

Rich also recommended a "visual" presentation of the information where possible. His recommendation dovetails neatly with plans to present an interface with multiple visual components in it.

Some concerns were with how the portal would integrate with the "Scheduler" software that is soon to be implemented at USFSP. Although it is still early yet, it appears that the design of the portal would dovetail beautifully with the Scheduler software. The portal would allow a student to "shop" for classes knowledgeably, and on his own terms, on his own time, before working with the advisor (the advisor is the one who plugs the courses into the scheduler). Allowing students to explore a bit at a time, and "saving" their favorites, should help make their limited time with their advisor much more productive.

**Interview #15**

The largest concern for Chief Hendry is the incorporation of Orientation materials into the portal; there are federal and state mandates that must be covered, and these are covered in the Orientation process. The University Police Department (UPD) provides several documents that must be provided by law or statute, such as documents that provide for injunctions against abusers.

Title IX and the CLERY Act requirements figured prominently in student Orientation, as well as providing ready access to the Wellness Center (Mental Health) and SOCAT. Most of what needed to be covered at Orientation had its grounds in Federal, State, and Local Requirements; if students were to receive their Orientation through an online process only, they must receive this information. Also mandated was that the Annual Security Report be made available online, as it is now. Key to the Chief was the ability to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through phone, email, chat, or other.

The Chief outlined his responsibilities to students, parents, faculty-staff and the community. This is a scope that is broader than what we’ve been dealing with previously; heretofore, we had been focusing on students and FERPA requirements. The scope of audience expands greatly here, as authority is based on jurisdiction. This applies to the online world as well. The Chief made more than one reference to concerns of online bullying and/or harassment, and reporting it. It’s not uncommon for someone to “report” harassment via social media.

The Chief’s main concern was that someone receiving a personal threat via social media would not know how or where to report it, so he wanted to see a highly visible, easily-found path to the University Police Department (UPD). By easily found, he means in two clicks or less online. In an acknowledgement that those who have been abused are hesitant to report abuse, the Chief had set up several links and opportunities to report anonymously (the links are included at the end of this report). He also alluded to the fact that those suffering abuse will sometimes only tell faculty members, as students are concerned that their grades are suffering due to the neglect of their studies. To that end, he recognizes the robust role that faculty must play in alerting authorities about abuse, and has some concerns as to how adjunct faculty may or may not receive training on this matter.

As a visual aid to finding help fast online, he recommended the word “Safety” for a button to push, where it would lead to multiple resources: The Police, The Wellness Center, SOCAT team, and more.

We talked about chat technology; his office is actively looking into a particular chat technology to be incorporated into the police pages. He asked about the robustness of the portal in times of emergency; I responded that the intent is to make the portal fully mobile, so that students could use the portal on their phones. That fact alone aligns the portal with a goal of being robust in times of emergency; SMS messaging requires the least bandwidth for the technology commonly used by students, and has a history of being used successfully in emergencies, such as during the earthquakes in Haiti. (Please note: making the portal mobile in and of itself is not enough -- other features must be built in, but of all the technologies used in emergencies, mobile technology has figured prominently). The Chief made mention of the Mo-Bull SMS system that currently is only one-way messaging; a good future would be one in which communication could be two-way through texting.

He also made reference to some online forms used by the UPD; we should make a point to make sure they are included in the central form repository. When asked who maintains the web presence, he listed several offices, that work through the webmaster. The offices included the Police, the Wellness Center, SOCAT, among others, so there is no one person responsible.

Here are the important links provided by the Chief:

police@usfsp.edu here is our generic email

<http://www.usfsp.edu/university-police-department/> UPD webpage

here is SOCAT

here is the anonymous reporting<http://www.usfsp.edu/university-police-department/silent-witness/>

replicate orientation material

you will need MoBull<http://www.mobull.usf.edu/>

know Clery information from orientation materials, including the Annual Security Report<http://www.usfsp.edu/university-police-department/annual-security-fire-safety-reports/>

here is our orientation materials from UPD<http://www.usfsp.edu/university-police-department/files/2014/06/USFSP-Police-Student-Orientation-2014-v6.8.pdf?file=2014/06/USFSP-Police-Student-Orientation-2014-v6.8.pdf>

here is the Wellness<http://www.usfsp.edu/wellness/>

**Interview #16**

Accessibility issues are disability specific, and that makes it very hard to generalize.

All online registration is probably the best for access.

There is, however, a confidentiality factor. Program that does this would have to be through Disability Services.

We do a lot in person that might be better in terms of doing test taking and other interactive features.

- Application for accommodation, services

- Test, Exam Scheduling is done online via program called / based on Clockwork.

- Switching home campus means hand off of documentation from one campus to another.

- Pasco education online students register through Barry's office for accommodations. (Though not sure if these need to be proctored).

If classes are taken on devices, accessibility demands change.

Could be valuable to provide advice on what kind of devices to use, and what the inherent pros and cons of those devices might be.

Remote interpretation possible.

Roadblocks tend to be psychological in terms of thinking more can be done than what they're capable of.

Audio could remove the for a need an interpreter. But audio accessibility is a roadblock.

An FAQ page is underdevelopment, student and teacher

~

SDS on a portal site could have:

The kinds of online services that Tampa uses.

Forms are available on the site, or have been, and then can be emailed, mailed, or brought in.

Often, this material is presently faxed.

Note taking service requests part of first option

We send an accommodation letter out via PDF attachment to email.

Other service requests (interpreter)

~

Changes don't happen often but, when they do, they can be significant.

~

Most issues arise in a class setting when proper accommodation steps aren't taken.

Chat sessions could be very helpful...Skyping, or video, could also be a possibility.

Text chat...

~

USFSP Security Downloads has some software that students can get.

Empire State (New York, online school)

California State system

Additional references :

<http://www.gatfl.org/favorite-search.php>

[http://www.augsburg.edu/class/groves/assistive-technology/everyone](http://www.augsburg.edu/class/groves/assistive-technology/everyone/)

**Interview #17**

Research, of course, is critical to the success of any serious academic endeavor. It so happens that USFSP and USF Tampa use lib guides as a way to access the databases, but it should also be noted that lib guides are used almost as a kind of "standard" in academic libraries.

A primary point of focus in our conversation was "how" students would get to library databases in order to do research, particularly with respect to initial stages of the portal, which do not require a login. A contract is written so that if a student is on campus and comes into the library, that the databases will be accessible. Otherwise, a student must have a NetID and login to the databases if off-campus. For the initial phase of the portal, no login would be required, but if the portal were to provide links to a centralized location for library services, it would easily dovetail with existing interactions with the library presence online; some assets require logins, some don't.

Chat figured prominently in our discussion, as it seems to have in our conversations with many, if not most, of the other stakeholders we've interviewed. From a historical perspective, when chat was visible, it was used heavily; once the chat feature was removed from a prominent position in the web pages, use went down. To that end, in the re-development of a new front-facing page for research, the intent is to put chat in a highly visible position, thus making it readily available for students. Chat was used heavily when it was visible, and it is the intention to re-introduce it to a prominent position if at all possible.

Online content changes regularly; the library has many sources of online content. In the case of the libguides it is maintained and updated by the librarians. There is current work on a beta version, 2.0, that would enable mobile access. This should be ready soon. Of note is that the user interface of the new version happens to use many of the same icons that the USFSP Online Student Portal and the Campus Scheduler use; this "unified" use of the same or similar icons should help ease the cognitive load that a student faces as they move between the different components of online work. Other online content is maintained through the USFSP Nelson Poynter Memorial Library website; this is coordinated through the web committee and maintained by Berrie. Additional online content is found the Tutorial Modules; these are actually used heavily by faculty, and developed and maintained jointly by the Library and Online Learning. Currently, these are accessed through the libguides. Finally, and last but not least, there is the USFSP Digital Archive; a link to this is also found on both the USFSP Nelson Poynter Memorial Library website, and the libguides. Content is maintained by library staff.

Tina thought that a "one-stop-shop" should help students greatly; students have the overwhelming task of having to find a different web page for each facet of their responsibilities on campus. This alone is time-consuming, and a cause for frustration. Putting major links into a "one-stop-shop" should really help students, in her opinion (and ours!)

Tina suggested that a link to the writing center (or at least the Student Success Center) be placed prominently on the interface, as students come into the library looking for help on using citations and writing in general.

Tina asked for a definition of "online" and how "completely" a student would be able to accomplish all facets of registration through an online process -- I told her that we were currently working with a definition used by the State of Florida, "80%" or more ...but this may not align with the definition a student may have. Tina made mention of a form, the "immunization" form, that a student must fill out before enrolling, and asked whether a totally online student would still need to complete the form. This is a good question, and we hope to speak with the office of the Registrar soon to answer these kinds of questions.

We also briefly discussed other online assets that are typically associated with libraries; e-books, and Browzine. No one is certain why, but Browzine does not seem to be used heavily, except by certain faculty. As far as e-books are concerned, Tampa is only buying e-books, but it is too early to tell how well received this is.

I asked Tina about potential confusion of a USFSP student trying to access library resources from USF Tampa; she replied that libraries actually favor, and market, the close relationship between Tampa and USFSP. More databases are available, and fewer confusing logins for the student. The close relationship between Tampa and USFSP, as it relates to accessing library resources, is of benefit to students.

When asked about potential legislation that may apply, FERPA came up of course, but really the privacy and other issues that typically come up are handled by the database vendors and Information Technology. As a check, we visited the link at<http://www.higheredcompliance.org/>, but did not find any surprises.

Tina also provided a great link for the Portal team to review, so that we may ensure critical paths to resources are in place when the Portal goes live. Excerpt follows:

"Here is a link to a LibGuide that we feel incorporates essential library information into a one stop location for students. Most of this does not require a login.

<http://guides.nelson.usf.edu/StudentPortal>

This should give your users something to access and comment upon. Please note that it is not yet mobile-friendly. The chat widget colors need work as well but those changes should come with the switch to the 2.0 version which will happen soon. As we mentioned, because we are asking for a link to a LibGuide, it is with the understanding that the library staff will keep the news current and make any tweaks that we need down the road."

**Interview #18**

Notes from Sharon:

Casey provided a brief introduction on the nature and work done to date on the portal; afterwards, addressed multiple facets of serving students online. An overarching theme of the conversation was that any services provided to students face-to-face, must also be provided to students online.

When asked what USFSP students needed to be successful with online courses, the responded that students needed an initial orientation online, and that online paths of support need to be provided for these students.

We briefly discussed some of the misconceptions surrounding online learning generally, for example, that it is easier to pass a course online than it is face-to-face. We should make clear in the online orientation process that there are many challenges to online learning, but simultaneously, point them to, or have readily available, paths/links to support them when they run into trouble. Specifically, not just academic help, but all the support functions that help ensure student success at a university. Furthermore, these points of aid should be standardized in the sense that services across the spectrum are similar in strength and reach. Of course, the person or office at the other end will offer assistance in a manner that reflects the speciality of their office; but the paths and links getting to that help should be equally robust, and should be able to help all diverse student populations equally.

Regarding logistics; a phased approach may be best for implementation. Also, it should be noted, that the university should support the supporters -- faculty should be given training and support to ensure their presence online is robust, and able to address the needs of students seeking help.

A recommendation was that not only should a video be provided for Orientation, but different “Orientation” videos for different offices. For example, a “general” welcoming video to USFSP, with references to (online) places by which one may find more help or information, as well as other “Orientation” videos by department or program, for example.

We talked about military students, and some of the special cases of administrative challenges involved with these students. A robust online presence of the University’s office for veterans would enable the best possible support for our veteran students.

At the end of the interview, we were provided with some valuable SACS guidelines we could use to help evaluate the interface as it is developed.

**Interview #19**

When asked what USFSP students needed to be successful with online courses, Matt thought that a way to direct students to the proper resource associated with their school would be very helpful. Doing so is complicated by the nuts-and-bolts reality that the students are not all from USFSP; students need to be directed to the proper online resource that belongs to their “home” campus in the USF System, whether it be USF St. Petersburg, USF Tampa, or USF Sarasota-Manatee.

The biggest roadblock to student success is a general misconception that online classes are easier to complete than face-to-face classes. One actually needs more personal discipline, not less, in order to complete classes online, and this is not something generally recognized by newer students. He recommended a video for orientation to kindly alert the students to the upcoming challenges of studying online.

His office has a tremendous asset in a software application known as ORGSYNC (<http://www.orgsync.com/>); the version that USFSP has is called, “PETESYNC”. To have access to it, one needs a NetID. It houses the various campus activities, and the ability to sign up and obtain “PetePoints”. This is something wildly popular with the students. There’s no public interface for this, because it is tied to a system that tallies personal points earned, as well as to prizes that have real financial value to them. The PETESYNC interface is automatically made available to the students when they receive their NetID, and becomes available to them in one of the drop-downs available in the myUSF login page.

We talked a little about chat and videoconferencing technology; for his particular organization, it has not had a record of being used much. That said, his office has been actively exploring ways to bring services to students who are fully online, such as considering making available yoga videos to those who are unable to come to campus. In that manner, even fully online students would be able to take advantage of yoga classes! But the discussions are still ongoing as to how to best support the fully online student.

Currently, the online web presence is maintained by USC, in coordination with the USFSP webmaster. How often the content changes varies by office. Most of the heavily used online presence for his office is really through the PETESYNC interface rather than the web pages, however. PETESYNC is probably the most important feature of Student Life and Engagement to be highlighted on the portal.

<https://orgsync.com/115955/events/1267080/occurrences/2838857>

**Interview #20**

Veteran’s most need to know how to get their benefits as it applies to education. Highlighted on the home page for USFSP’s veterans<http://www.usfsp.edu/military-and-veterans-success-center/> is a link that provides instructions on how to apply for benefits.<http://www.usfsp.edu/military-and-veterans-success-center/apply-for-benefits/>

This page breaks down the benefits by chapter.

There are many benefits that only apply to veterans AFTER they have registered for classes; one link that deserves prominence after students have registered is CLOCKWORKS.<http://vetclock.forest.usf.edu/ClockWork/custom/misc/home.aspx>

As so many others before him, the interviewee recommended that an orientation video be produced for new veteran students. He mentioned a text file transcript be added to the video. Although the captions in a captioned video assist cognition in many cases, the recommendation is that an actual text file be added, not just captions to a video. The issue is that for many areas overseas, the veterans are working in areas with poor Internet connections. To that end, the veteran is forced to work with technology that is low-bandwidth; consequently, a video may not be able to be loaded and/or downloaded. The text file is important in allowing a service member to obtain the information with technology that is low-bandwidth -- and -- has the added advantage of being more easily “restarted” in event of disruption or distraction.

Additional points concerning the orientation video is that it must address the cultural shock that some service members encounter when dealing with civilian resources. Discipline is not so much a problem for military members as it is for other segments of society, but hard deadlines are an issue. They need to know where to go for adjustments when service calls them away from school. They need to know what exceptions may be made for their hardship, in the way that those students with disabilities need to know the accommodations that are available to them.

As far as a web presence, the interviewee said that he coordinates with the USFSP webmaster to create and update his pages. Of note, he is currently working with Patrick to provide a FAQ page, that would also include links to where to go for help when a student falls behind. To the point of ensuring robust communications with veterans, Mr. White readily welcomed the idea of chat or Skype technology; this would fit well into the outreach effort to those overseas, trying to go to school.

Finally, the USFSP Veteran Success center is very new, and more resources are being added constantly. We’ll make a point to keep in touch to see what we can do to keep our veterans connected, and taken care of!

**Interview #21**

Patrick shared with us several initiatives happening at the campus and system level that could have major implications on our work. Most notable is the move toward a two-pronged approach to our web presence -- an external internet site and internal intranet site.

USFSP will deploy its internet site on WordPress as it now does. However, a good deal of the content presently accessible through this site will be removed and put into the forthcoming intranet site. The different campuses will manage their internet presences separately but use a shared tool for the intranet site.

The project is being managed by Chris Akin in Tampa. Patrick believes that the online student portal should be integrated into this system and serve as a model for other other units or areas of emphasis might also be represented.

The project has a two-year timetable, and it’s about six months in at the moment.

Another development that we should be aware of is the change to the “For Faculty/Staff” and “For Student” sections of the website. There’s also this page: <http://www.usfsp.edu/future-students/>

Patrick also shared his experiences at PARK, where there is a tutorial system that is available publically.

<http://www.park.edu/future-students/undergraduate-online.html>

**APPENDIX OF QUESTIONS**

1. **What do you think USFSP students need to be successful with our online courses?**
2. **What do you see as the biggest roadblocks to student success online?**
3. **How should your department or area be represented in the portal? What key information should students have access to? Does this content now exist and, if so, where?**
4. **What’s the best way to integrate the content into the portal? (1. move it into the portal and remove it from where it’s at now, 2. copy it into the portal because it needs to exist in both places, or 3. link from the portal to the content -- don’t move it into the portal.**
5. **How often does this content change?**
6. **Who’s responsible for the changes?**
7. **How do you see the addition of an online support portal impacting the services your department offers to our online students?**
8. **How much interaction would you expect, or can we hope to expect, via the portal. Chat? Phone number? Email? Discussion board / Q&A?**