

P1: TEAMS AND TOPICS

EECS 330: Human Computer Interaction

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Fantastic 100!

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(3) Problem Statement:

For many people that aspire to enroll in a full-time graduate school master's or PhD program, the process of applying to multiple schools simultaneously can be a time consuming, confusing, and at times stressful endeavor. In particular, the large number of tasks and the importance of meeting deadlines requires organized thinking and planning on the part of the applicant. For this reason, a novel tool for tracking the behaviors required by the application process is of great potential value. These behaviors include paying the application fee, writing a statement of purpose, and submitting transcripts and standardized test scores, all while keeping track of important deadlines. Our project seeks to answer the following question: How can prospective graduate students keep track of all the graduate schools to which they have applied and ensure that all the required application deliverables, including statements of purpose, recommendations, transcripts, test scores, and others, are submitted by the required deadlines?

(4) Related Work:

(i) Existing Product:

MyGradSchool Apps by PowerScore Test Preparation

Link:

<http://info.powerscore.com/get-my-grad-school-apps-tracker-from-powerscore>

Description:

MyGradSchool Apps is a spreadsheet in which users can manually input information about their graduate school applications. In particular, there are two versions of the spreadsheet. One can utilize a Google Sheet that can be downloaded to one's Google drive. Alternatively, one can download a Microsoft Excel file. In both cases, the spreadsheet is organized into tabs, and each tab has columns

have been pre-labeled. In addition to the tracker tab, which organizes the application status information, there are additional tabs for an FAQ, abbreviations key, and a tab containing a pair of additional columns that can be cut and pasted into the tracker tab.

Potential for improvement:

First, when one opens the spreadsheet, the first tab contains a large picture of the PowerScore logo, which appears to be an attempt at self-promotion. Second, the user interface relies on tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet that are not readily apparent. Third, accessibility is potentially problematic, as not everyone has a Google account and or Microsoft Office subscription. In contrast, it is desired to formulate a solution, that avoids self-promotion, has a more intuitive interface that does not rely on easy to miss tabs, and is available to users that have neither a Google Account or Microsoft Office subscription.

(ii) Existing Product:

Spreadsheet provided by UT College of Liberal Arts - University of Texas at Austin

Link:

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUK Ewi89tfR LXRAhUnj1QKHeZsDgEQFggcMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fliberalarts.utexas.edu%2Fflacs%2Ffiles%2Fmsdocs%2FGrad%2520School%2520Application%2520Activity%2520Sheet.xlsx&usg=AFQjCNHPgaK9_rE8Z_xDVpc0w0Q19hYCdw&sig2=6pp5TRPBFRry_HYKYVjTNA

Description:

This spreadsheet is an Excel Online document created by University of Texas-Austin's College of Liberal Arts. The concept is similar to MyGradSchool Apps in that at least one of the tabs of the spreadsheet is used for application status tracking. It is different in that the tracking tab in that it is oriented differently and some of the cells are prepopulated with sample entries. Moreover, there are separate tabs for planning and tracking information, which necessitates repeatedly switching between two different tabs for closely related information.

Potential for improvement:

Because the spreadsheet affords a large amount of space to enter information in the cells, the tracking table is large and requires the user to scroll up and down the page in order to enter and access information. Additionally, important information is contained on multiple tabs, which requires the user to alternate between two tabs. Finally, the text is small, which can be frustrating for typical users and more seriously problematic for users which impaired vision. A better solution would contain information on a single page that is not too long and with text that is large enough to be easily viewed by the user.

(iii) Existing Product:

PDF provided by Seattle University Career Services

Link:

https://www.seattleu.edu/media/career-services/files/undergraduatestudents/exploregraduateschool/GradSchoolTrackingForm_10.4.12.pdf

Description:

Seattle University Career Services provides for its students a PDF containing a table in which graduate school applicants can enter information. Much like the previous two products, columns are pre-labeled and the first row contains sample information.

Potential for improvement:

Because the document is a PDF and not an Excel file, the column names cannot be edited. Moreover, the columns are too few in number to contain enough information. Finally, the download link for a more detailed excel form is outdated. A novel product should be more flexible with regards to column names, be able to handle a larger quantity of information, and be free from broken hyperlinks. An ideal scenario may also include additional features such as an autocomplete feature when the user begins entering the name of a school, links to individual schools' application tracking web pages, and a built-in notification functionality that alerts the user when a deadline is approaching.

(iv) Different but Relevant Products:

Various job applicant tracking applications used by employers such as Paycor, Bullhorn, JobDiva, ApplicantStack, bambooHR and Workable

Link:

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

Description:

There exist many applicant tracking software applications that are designed for employers to track job applicants and search for ideal candidates based on specified search criteria.

Relevance to and insight into the current problem:

Although these applications solve a problem different from the one posed earlier, the manner in which the applications organize the information, provide functions, feature well-designed interfaces, and make the web interface work seamlessly with existing installed software and local machines can serve as an example of a well-designed tracking application. For example, some of these systems include email integration with Outlook and Gmail, in which important information from email conversations is automatically recorded. This functionality can be potentially useful in graduate school application tracking systems because students often contact professors and other staff by emails during the application process.

(5) Preferred Sections:

First Choice:	Friday from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
Second Choice:	Friday from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM
Third Choice:	Friday from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM