ISTM 631: IS Design & Develop Project

Project - User Documentation

DREAM TEAM DYNAMICS

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Group 15 (602) Team Members:

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A. Background

1. Team Overview

Our team, Dream Team Dynamics, consists of 5 graduate students each obtaining a master's degree in Management Information Systems. The team has various skills in engineering, computer science, information systems, systems development and design, cooking, smart grocery shopping, quick tire changing, binge watching to mention a few. Apart from completing homework and hunting for jobs, we travel over the weekends, have house parties, or just enjoy some time off.

This team was formed with the intention of completing projects together for ISTM 631. However, our mission has a larger scope and expands beyond meeting deliverables. Our mission is to get to know each other, work together, exercise our skills in User Research, Information Systems Design, and Development, and develop high-quality end-products that meet the project deliverables and user expectations. Below is more information about each member:

1. Manisha

Manisha is the team member in charge of hyping up the team and reducing tensions if any were to rise. She is also in charge of adding the 'if any' in most interview questions that do not have them already. Her background includes a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and a minor in Harry Potter literature. Manisha spends her free time working out, reading, watching The Office, and getting surprised that some of the show is not

exaggerated as bosses can be ridiculously bad. She is looking forward to working with her team for ISTM 631.

2. Saniya

Saniya is the devil's advocate of the team, she tries to provide helpful critique and then lighten the mood with lame jokes. Her background is in computer science, she worked for a few years before deciding to switch careers to a lion tamer for her love of cats and danger while pursuing her master's degree in Management Information Systems. She hopes to get a job in a large software company where she can work on technical challenges and eventually make her way toward product management (on the off chance that the lion-tamer career falls through). She enjoys visiting new places, trying out new food, and perfecting telekinesis.

3. Vinitha

Vinitha is the creative mind in the team who loves to throw out random ideas and alternatives for each of the tasks and realizes that most of them are moonshots. She completed her bachelor's degree in Computer Science Engineering and wants to build a career in product management. In between classes, assignments, projects, part-time work, and house chores (which never end), she finds time for herself to paint and bake. She has a very strong opinion that sitting by the beach is always better than hiking in the mountains. She is excited about the ISTM 631 project and how the team comes together to build something that aligns with the Aggie Core Values.



4. Sumeet

Sumeet is the research person on the team who tries to identify relevant information/reports that could help provide more context to the team's work or sometimes further confuse the team members. He has completed his bachelor's degree in Information & Technology and got several opportunities to mess around with critical projects at big organizations. In his free time, Sumeet enjoys exploring new music and learning more about the artist and their stories around their music creation. He looks forward to working with his team on the class project.

5. Yash

Yash dons many hats from brainstorming an idea to critiquing the design but importantly bringing clarity or simplifying things for the team. He holds a bachelor's degree in Information Technology and has extensive screen time experience (Gaming & Binging counts, right?). After trekking the Himalayas, Bungy Jumping, River Rafting, and Paragliding, this adrenaline junkie is constantly looking out for his next big adventure and feels that ISTM 631 may very well qualify as one.

2. The Problem/Solution

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The aggie core values started as an effort to capture the brand of Texas A&M, and what it means to be an Aggie. Loyalty, Integrity, Excellence, Leadership, Selfless Service, and Respect are the themes that are recurring in Aggies' lives and will prove to be an inspiration to incoming freshmen. It is simple to say that one stands by the core values, but how does one practice them?

How does one put these values into action? The answer to these questions can be found in the student organizations and the activities they organize. For example, the essence of selfless service is found in The Big Event, a large student-run project where students assist the residents of Bryan/College Station by doing community service.

With over 1000 student organizations available on campus and around 20 emails on average being received about them every day, it has become difficult to keep track of events and find them when required. Since the core values are an integral part of student life, one might want to participate in events to further their knowledge and interaction with a certain value, say leadership workshops. These reasons drove the team to arrive at the solution of creating a platform where organizations can post about events and details about them. Some of the features under consideration for this platform, which are subject to change based on the results of user research, are events categorized by core value, notifications when the event date is close, and easy sign-up. We believe that this platform can help students better find what they are looking for, help organizations get better exposure, and reduce spam email all while strengthening their alignment with the core values.



B. User Research

1. Participants Recruitment

To perform the user research, the team decided to recruit participants who were actively involved or were interested in the events conducted at Texas A&M University. The team interviewed a total of 10 participants, who were students at Texas A&M University and also were enthusiastic about events hosted by the campus. The team defined 'enthusiastic' or 'active' or 'interested' participants as follows:

- a. Participants who were involved in at least one club/organization of Texas A&M or,
- b. Participants who signed up and attended at least one event per semester hosted by the university or any of its affiliated organizations

The participants that each team member interacted with were their roommates or part-time co-workers (student workers), or friends of friends.

To ensure the team was talking to participants who had met these constraints, the team prepared pre-screening questions (refer to section <u>Questions</u> for the questions used) that gave information about participants' active collaboration/interest at the events, prior to beginning the interview. This allowed the team to talk and interview only those people who could give insights about their pain points and their interests with respect to the events that aligned with aggie core values.



2. Participant Demographics

For the user research, the team interviewed a total of 10 participants. These participants were from different levels of education from freshman to graduate students who had an interest in getting involved with different events at Texas A&M University. The demographics of each of the participants are described below.

- 1. Squidward is a 22-year-old male, final-year Animal Science student at Texas A&M University. He is a member of the Asian American Students organization at A&M and also an active participant in the Office of Diversity events. Leadership is one of the core values he sees resonating the most with the Aggie Core values. He usually loves to attend any events on campus with his friends and finds these organizations a great way to meet new people. He also works part-time at the Office of Admissions.
- 2. Mrs. Puff is a 24-year-old female graduate student at Texas A&M University. She is a member of the TAMU Graduate Consulting group. She works part-time at the Office of Admissions. One of the core values she aligns herself most with is Excellence. She believes that the events/organizations help her meet people outside of the classroom setting learning something different beyond her program.
- 3. Lordy Lord is a female, 19-year-old sophomore student at Texas A&M University majoring in psychology. She is a member of the Aggie Keys organization and enjoys their service and social events. Lordy knows of events mostly through her organization and likes that they are able to help the community around the Bryan-College Station area. She

also likes that there are social events (or socials) where they all have a chance to get to know each other better. She looks forward to growing into leadership positions in her organization.

- 4. Flighty Floo is a female, 24-year-old graduate student at Texas A&M University majoring in Environmental Engineering. Flighty has a demanding advisor and a thesis to complete while searching for jobs or suitable labs to pursue her Ph.D. She participates occasionally in university events such as the Big Event or other service/social events. She enjoys being the best in whatever she does. Excellence is important to her and is a core value she aligns herself with. In the little free time that she gets, she likes to bake or catch up with some of her friends or watch TV.
- 5. Spongebob is a 22-year-old male senior at Texas A&M University majoring in Biochemistry and is on his way to doing a Ph.D. in the same field. He's participated in community service through the organizations A&M Refugee Advocates and Young Democratic Socialists of America. So naturally, one of the core values that mean a lot to him is selfless service. He's a little shy, but he enjoys participating in traditions and events with his friends, especially art-related events. In his free time, he hikes, plays board games, and paints.
- 6. Aladdin is a 21-year-old male senior at Texas A&M University majoring in Finance. His favorite core value is respect. He believes that the professional environment of a job is filled with respect and it's also the reason why he actively tries to improve his soft skills.



He has participated in career fairs, networking events, start-up pitch events, and many other events Mays Business School has to offer. He is a natural leader, hence the core value he aligns with the most is leadership and he is an outgoing person. During his free time, he enjoys building computers, watching football, and playing with his dog, Bruce.

- 7. Foo Fighter is a Male, 27-year-old, final-year Construction Management graduate student at Texas A&M University and Student Assistant (Grader) for undergraduate courses. He relates the most with the aggie core value of 'Leadership' and actively attends pertinent workshops. He likes to attend these workshops in person to make long-lasting connections that help him in his personal and professional growth. In his free time, he loves hanging out with friends and playing Football.
- 8. Darth Vader is a Male, 25-year-old, final-year Mechanical Engineering graduate student at Texas A&M University and works as a Graduate Research Assistant. He loves the aggie core value of 'Selfless Service' and practices the same by joining mentoring programs and volunteering events. He believes these programs & events are a great way to give back to the community. Two things he struggles the most with are schedule conflicts with the events and motivating himself to drive back to campus for events. He is a DC comics geek and a die-hard fan of 'The Batman'.
- 9. Prince Eric is a 22-year-old male who is a member of the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets. He was an enthusiastic participant who proudly spoke about his experiences as a cadet corp member. He mentioned how the Corps of Cadets' values align with that of



the Aggie core values. By being a Corps of Cadets member, he lives by several of the aggie core values, but the one he aligns with the most is Selfless Service. He likes attending events hosted by the Corps of Cadets conducted online and in person. He also loves teaching elementary mathematics and art to various NGOs.

10. Velma is a 21-year-old female who supports various Texas A&M initiatives involving international students in her free time. She believes excellence is a critical core value that can affect her success in life, and therefore she aligns the most with excellence. She enjoys drinking coffee, watching football, and trekking. While she is an active member of a few clubs, she does not take the initiative to participate in new events hosted at the university. She has limited free time and intends to use it judiciously.

3. Research Methods

To execute the user research, the team had to evaluate the good fit among the three research methods - interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Each user research method has several limitations and advantages that influenced our choice in conducting user research. Given the research objectives, resources, and constraints, the team decided to conduct the user research via interviews for the following reasons:

- Interviews provide in-depth information and detailed insights into a participant's experiences, motivations, and behavior
- Interviews enable us to ask additional questions to delve deeper into a participant's responses



• Interviews help build trust with participants, resulting in more candid and open responses

• Interviews can be helpful when examining a specific user group with particular

requirements or characteristics, as is with the aggies and aggie core values.

Some of the factors that led the team to not conduct user research using surveys and focus groups

are as follows:

• While surveys and focus groups can offer broad details of user opinions and behaviors,

they may fall short of depth and specificity when compared to interviews.

• Surveys pose the challenge of not capturing sufficient and detailed information necessary

to conduct user research

• Focus groups can be resource intensive and expensive when compared to interviews.

• Focus groups may be affected by group dynamics, such as peer pressure or strong

personalities, which can affect our participant's responses.

4. Instructions and Consent

The instructions given to the participant before the interview are as follows:

"Hello, we are a team of MIS students looking to interview students who are active in the events

and activities taking place at Texas A&M University, and who are interested to engage further

with the aggie core values. This interview is part of our user research where we seek out

students' pain points related to events so that we can create a product that can help solve

problems. We will be asking a few questions about who you are and about 8-10 open-ended

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questions related to activities on campus. The interview should take about 15-20 minutes. If you choose to participate in this interview, we would like you to know that there is no right or wrong answer and there is always the choice to skip a question or opt out of the interview anytime. We assure you that names will be anonymous and your data will be secure. Keeping the information we provided you in mind, do we have your consent to start the interview? If yes, do you consent to us capturing and using the information you provide us for our class project? [they say yes] Thank you! We appreciate you taking the time to participate."

5. Questions

To understand our user group, the team asked the following questions in the interview

- What are some of the ways, if any, you practice the aggie core value on campus?
- What experiences have you had, if any, while trying to find activities/workshops related to the aggie core values?
- What aspects of an event at Texas A&M motivate you to participate in the event?
- How do you typically attend events at Texas A&M online or in-person and why?
- What is your preference while attending events in a group or alone and why?
- How do you gather information (if you do) on the activities/workshops at Texas A&M?
- What are some of the challenges, if any, you face while learning about the events at Texas
 A&M?
- How do you like to receive information regarding events?



Prior to beginning the interview with participants, we also asked some pre-questions that allowed

the team to learn if the participants belonged to the set conditions of the user group we were

targeting. These conditions included - a student of Texas A&M University who is involved in at

least one club or attending at least one event per semester.

1. How many organizations of A&M are you involved in?

2. How often do you attend events organized by A&M and its affiliated organizations

in a semester?

3. What is your age?

4. Are you currently working part-time along with your studies?

5. What year are you currently studying at Texas A&M?

6. Discovery

The team conducted a total of 10 user interviews and the following are some common themes we

discovered.

Discovery 1: Participants face problems in correlating events with aggie-core values

We discovered that multiple participants were not sure if and how the events they participated in

could help their understanding of the Aggie core values. A participant, Aladdin said, "Events

related to core values are difficult to find since they are published by different groups. It's also

difficult to find events in general, you have to find the organizations or know the people". As we

were asking the questions, we realized that students do not participate in events for the purpose

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of furthering their association with the core values since they seemed thrown off when we moved from core values-related questions to events-related questions.

Furthermore, participant Mrs. Puff said, "I haven't really found any events/workshops related to the Aggie core values". Plus when asked a follow-up question about why they couldn't find any workshop, they said "I guess, I haven't seen any particular categorization of these events based on values or maybe I missed reading them in emails"

Discovery 2: Participants desired to receive preference based event information

We discovered that some students have niche interests and would like to receive information only about certain types of events. For example, participant Spongebob said, "I get a bunch of emails about a bunch of things, but something like a reminder notification for things I really like, like the gallery event at MSC would be preferred". Participant Lordy Lord said, "I almost only depend on my friends or texts from my org to know about events. Sometimes these end up being university events. Some other times, I get my event information through banners or stalls on campus. I get too many emails and I don't always have the time to go through them all. Seeing the notifications I want would be useful."

Discovery 3: Participants want events that help in professional development

The team strategized questions such that the participants provided insights on what motivations they have to sign-up for an event or what core values they aligned the most with. One of the common themes that arose through the user research was that most of the participants leveraged their participation in these events/workshops for their resume-building. The two most common



aggie core values that participants resonated the most with are **Excellence** and **Leadership**. When asked why they aligned with these core values, one of the participants - Mrs. Puff said with respect to Excellence, "This value motivates me to push myself and work diligently towards all my academic, professional, and personal commitments".

Participant Flighty Floo further supported the sentiment in her interview and said, "I want to pursue my Ph.D. in the future and I want to be the best in whatever I do."

In addition to that, participant Squiward also mentioned, "through these opportunities on campus I can showcase my leadership skills", when the team asked him about what motivates him to participate in these events and get involved in the organizations.

Therefore, the team concluded that these opportunities went beyond getting involved on campus. Some participants want to grow in their organizations and hold titles of responsibility and influence as they can add these accomplishments showcasing leadership skills and extracurriculars on their resumes. Participants also seemed more eager about events that could teach them a new skill or where they could practice or improve their transferable skills.

Discovery 4: Participants have too many sources of information and lose track of events

The team discovered that most of the participants faced issues with how the information for each event/organization was presented. The source of information about events for many of our participants was emails. As the participant, Mrs. Puff mentioned, "I gather most of my information about activities on Campus through my email". However, the biggest challenge and pain point of this medium was how scattered the information is. When the team followed up with



Mrs. Puff, about her challenges, she said, "Navigating through hundreds of emails to find an event is challenging. At times, this means an email getting overlooked" and also, "It's difficult to keep track of all the events that I have registered and plan to register. Sometimes, this leads to me registering for an event twice."

In fact, Prince Eric, who is an active member of the Corps of Cadets, wanted to participate in events organized outside of the Corps of Cadets. But, unfortunately, he is flooded with emails about all the events hosted and he says, "The biggest concern is event emails appearing as junk emails."

He was inundated with emails and was unhappy about the current situation of information dissemination. While he acknowledged the high volume of events at the university, he certainly expressed his desire and hoped to have a convenient solution to the problem. Participant Aladdin mentioned a point of concern regarding keeping up with the events, he said "Although I enjoy attending the first couple of meetings I get caught up with school and life, and I hate to admit it but I kinda forget that the org exists".

Based on the responses about the challenges the participants faced through the current medium/channels for information gathering, the team concluded that one of the pain points is details being cluttered and scattered, which makes it difficult to track their interest and participation in these events.

Discovery 5: Participants wish to have a one-stop application for all events and information overload



There were few participants who hoped to receive information related to events they cared about in one place. Participant Lordy Lord said, "sorting through the emails and finding information about events I am interested in takes time". This was one of their pain points and their goal was to try to find an easier way to find events. When asked about the idea of one application with all event information, Lordy liked the idea but had very reasonable concerns - "I would not want to search a lot to find the event I want. That site could get crowded and confusing."

Additionally, participants also mentioned if there was a portal to track their event registration at one place, like Squidward said that, "Maybe a portal displaying the events on campus on a weekly basis and a tracker to show if I have registered for an event or not" when we questioned on how he would like to receive information about the events, which overlapped with what Aladdin said, "I like those TVs they have at Mays that shows what's happening. Or even a unified calendar for all Mays events would be great!"

This confirmed that participants were interested in having a uniform platform that catered to every event and workshop happening on/off campus.

Discovery 6: Participant's personality and environment

The common theme across all participants that the team discovered was that these participants were students who were inherently seeking opportunities to explore and go beyond the set expectations.

Velma was a brilliant participant who displayed the vigor and enthusiasm to make an impact in the life of others. Velma said, "My personality has been shaped by the people I have met



throughout my life, and I want to have a similar impact on the people I meet in the future." She embodied almost an extroverted personality, shades of which were found across most of the user research participants. Therefore, the user research team drew various personality traits from Velma that shaped Sally, our primary user persona. Velma spoke at length about various event engagements over the past few years and some of the learnings and challenges that came with them. She briefly discussed her life outside the university, and how she enjoys hiking, an opportunity to engage with people and nature.

We also noticed that most of our participants were comfortable using and accessing technology that is common today (emails, social networking mobile, and web applications, connecting to the Wi-Fi, creating hotspots, etc.). They considered themselves quick to learn new technologies and preferred free applications over paid ones. Lordy said, "Most apps that are new to me have been easy to use and have a help tutorial or something to understand it." Participants were also most likely to use resources on campus or from their dorms or apartments. Both environments usually always had fast and easy access to the internet.

Unexpected result

The team noticed that a few participants preferred the use of social media applications over the official channels of communication. For instance, Darth Vader, when asked about how he would like to receive information, answered 'Instagram' without a second thought. He further explained that he was one of the many students who are very active on Instagram, spending a good amount of time sharing memes, exploring places, and finding out about events through their social media



handles. We found this unexpected because we thought that students used Instagram to keep up with their friends and family rather than student organizations.

Additionally, one of the unconscious biases that we discovered is that people are pretty outgoing. Irrespective of their year, whether they are graduate students or seniors they still want to participate in events. We assumed that as graduation comes close, students lose interest in organizations due to burnout. We found it interesting that Spongebob, who is soft-spoken and seems like an introvert has gone door-to-door campaigning about the Democratic party. We can conclude that students will make time or overcome obstacles for organizations that they are passionate about and have a genuine interest in them.

C. User Persona

Based on the results discovered from the interview, the team decided to build the below persona



D. Appendices

1. Team Contract

ISTM631 (Spring 2023) Team Contract

Team Name: Dream Team Dynamics

Section 1: Guiding Principles and Purpose

1a. Our team is motivated by: the challenge of completing the objectives set forth for the

project. In doing so, the team wants to ensure that the project deliverables cover a wide range of

topics from the class and provide a way to incorporate new information gathered through

additional research and analysis.

1b. Our team prides itself in: leveraging the understanding of the Information Systems (IS)

Design topics to deliver on the project objectives. Additionally, the team prides itself in utilizing

the IS insights gained from every member's past academic, professional, and personal

experiences.

1c. Our team will never: lie, cheat or steal or tolerate those who do.



Section 2: Collaboration

2a. We will ensure every member has an equal and regular opportunity to contribute to each deliverable by: making sure everyone's opinion and thoughts are heard in the meetings. The division of tasks for each team member will be based on their strengths and interests.

2b. We will ensure no member gets left out of any deliverable intentionally or accidentally by: making sure that we track the contributions made for each deliverable through excel sheets and trackers. We will hold a 'planning' call at least a week before the deliverable due date and divide the tasks based on everyone's consent during that call.

2c. For each deliverable, team member roles/responsibilities will be decided by: the consent of every member of the team. There are no roles or responsibilities assigned to each member, however, it is assigned based on the deliverable requirements.

2d. Our members will work together to ensure all submitted deliverables are high-quality and completed in a timely manner by:

We will be using several communication tools and document management tools:

 We have a WhatsApp group for our team to communicate with each other throughout the project



2. We set up a Google Share drive for maintaining and storing our working documents

3. End-of-meeting notes will be taken which will include assigned tasks and roles for the deliverable for each team member.

2di. We define "high-quality" as:

- When we meet or exceed the deliverable's requirements and rubrics
- The deliverable is well-researched and is supported by appropriate citations beyond the material provided in the lectures and reading materials
- Making sure the formatting is as per the deliverable requirements
- Avoiding grammatical errors through multiple proofreads performed by Vinitha
 Chukkala & Saniya Farahath

2dii. We define "timely manner" as:

- Submitting the deliverable at least 3-5 hrs prior to the deadline.
- Having buffer time prior to the deadline, allows the team to make corrections (if any) or deal with any technical issues.



Section 3: Team Meeting/Communication Strategy

3a. Our team plans to discuss and meet (in-person or virtually) at least a week in advance to

start working on the assignment deliverables. We are open to modifying this based on special

circumstances and any other engagements.

3b. Our primary methods of communication will be a combination of meeting in-person or

virtually. We will use Zoom for virtual meetings and WhatsApp to communicate and coordinate

meeting times, submission, formatting details, and other minor details that can be discussed over

text.

3c. Our group will reach a consensus and make decisions by going with what the majority of

the team agrees or disagrees upon.

Section 4: Conflict Resolution

4a. In the event a member fails to meet team expectations around collaboration (as outlined

in Section 2), the following will happen: One incident would be excused, and subsequent ones

would be addressed in a team meeting until the right course of action is decided upon by the

majority.



4b. In the event a member fails to meet team expectations around meeting and communication (as outlined in Section 3), the following will happen: Two instances would be excused, and the following such instances would be discussed in the team meeting and appropriate course of action will be finalized by common consensus.

4c. In the event of any other sort of significant disagreement, lack of participation (real or perceived) on the part of one or more members, or exclusion (real or perceived); our group commits to taking the following steps to resolve these: The group will set up a meeting to understand the case and reach a common consensus by the virtue of voting. In case, if no consensus is reached or a member of the team would like to further appeal/challenge the already reached consensus, then the group will set up a time with the Professor to discuss the same.

- **4d.** Team members will be rewarded for meeting or exceeding expectations around collaboration (as outlined in Section 2) by: The team member will be applauded in the group meeting for the efforts he/she puts in and may also see a reasonable reduction in workload in the following assignment as decided by the team members.
- 4e. Team members will be rewarded for meeting or exceeding expectations around meeting and communication (as outlined in Section 3) by: Verbal acknowledgment of exceptional



performance by other team members, and by a reasonable reduction in the load of work in the next task should it seem fair and acceptable to do so.

Section 5: Other Provisions

5a. Changes to the above provisions may be made on the following conditions:

If all team members agree beyond reasonable doubt that a change needs to be made, and each provides a logical explanation for the change. Changes will also be made to the above provisions under extenuating circumstances including but not limited to major illness, changes in the deadline, changes in expected task result, and so on.

5b. List any other additional provisions in this section that your team would like to establish which are not otherwise included in this document.

- On successful completion of the project, at the end of the semester, the team will celebrate the achievement by acknowledgment of a job well done and a celebratory meal.
- If for any reason, a team member is not able to complete his/her task, then the team member is required to inform the others at least 3 days prior to the deadline to redistribute the work.
- Team meetings will be documented by making a note of Minutes of Meetings ('MOM') by Saniya and shared with each of the members.



• In the occurrence of festivals or spring break plans, work should be completed before time off is taken.

Project Team Members Names and Sign-off

Name	Sign-off on Team Contract
Sumeet Shrikant Nazare	Sumeet Shrikant Nazare
Vinitha Chukkala	Vinitha Chukkala
Saniya Farahath	Saniya Farahath
Manisha Rao	Manisha Rao
Yash Umeshkumar Katariya	Yash Umeshkumar Katariya