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User-centered design drives new Campus Solutions navigation [1]



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When the new CU-SIS Campus Solutions navigation [3] launches on Oct. 24, administrative users from all four University of Colorado campuses will experience the fruition of their collaboration with UIS.

Campus Solutions serves each campus differently. Even within the same campus, users in different roles or departments use it differently. So, when the latest update from Oracle required a new tile-based, responsive navigation, UIS aimed to involve users early in the process.



“With a system that is used so broadly, we knew that it would be essential to have users input and perspective,” said Joseph Ciecior, associate director of Student IT Services. “Our goal was to curate a navigation that was, in essence, designed by our users.”

To achieve that, Ciecior worked with Emilie Young, a UX developer at CU Boulder now with the Office of Data Analytics. Ciecior had been impressed with Young's user-centered perspective during their collaboration on the launch of CU's online education program.

Inviting participants

"The biggest challenge in UX is getting participation from users," Young explained. "Everyone has full-time jobs and is busy, so that's always difficult. I was pleased that the UIS team already had deep connections in their user base on each campus and good personal relationships. That definitely helped us."

UIS sent a survey to everyone who had logged into Campus Solutions in the past year on all four campuses, around 3,700 individuals. The questionnaire gauged people's perception of Campus Solutions' usability and navigation. It also asked participants how long they had been using Campus Solutions, in what capacity and how frequently.

Some power users use the system all day every day, and some log in only once a month.

Sarah Thompson, a course coordinator for CU Denver's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a self-described power user, was eager to participate.

"Change is rarely welcome, so it helped to know that we are changing because we have to — Oracle is changing," Thompson said. "I so appreciate that the UIS approach was 'How can we make the update as useful as possible for all and prepare them for the new interface?'"

Facilitating group activities

The survey also asked whether users were willing to participate in future activities. The first activity was a card sort, where users organize topics into groups and label them.

"It's a multi-campus conversation," said participant Elizabeth McVeigh, director of operations & system integration in CU Boulder's Office of Admissions. "People from CU Denver, UCCS, CU Boulder were together virtually, trying to sort the cards into groups and talking through things. UCCS might have a particular need, and Boulder a different one. So, it was important to share all those perspectives and discuss the options for grouping and organizing."

McVeigh has been a member of the Campus Solutions Admissions module group since UIS formed it 10 years ago. Similar modules and groups exist for registrars, financial aid and other areas, and each group did their own card sorting activity.

"Phillip Curry (Admissions CRM manager) and Christie Ruemenapp (senior business systems analyst) from UIS did a great job of giving us space to move forward when we hit hard spots and also leading us back to address those areas," McVeigh said.

About 100 people participated in the card sort and tree testing. Tree testing gives people a specific task, such as "How would you update a student's financial record?" and then observes how they click through and navigate to accomplish it.

Analyzing and applying the data

The UIS SIS team compiled all the survey responses, statistics and notes from the card sort and tree-testing activities and pulled data on the most visited and most favorited pages.

“It was so helpful to have our users tell us where they see pages that are similar and should be grouped together,” Ciecior said. “Then our app managers and module teams, with their subject matter expertise, used that information to refine and ensure that we were encompassing everything. Ultimately, we’re leveraging the extensibility of the fluid framework to create navigation that works for our customers.”

Sharing the result

Users are encouraged to explore the redesign at New CU-SIS Campus Solutions Navigation [3] prior to the launch on the evening of Oct. 24.

“I’m looking forward to a better user experience,” McVeigh said. “The tile format is more user-friendly and similar to navigation in MyCU. Even though I’m dependent on my favorites, I’m looking forward to this new grouping—and glad to learn my favorites will transfer over!”

Even so, Young recommends users anticipate some disruption.

“Even when it is a good change, it’s still hard,” Young said. “Learning a new way to interact with a familiar product is something we’ve all found frustrating. Hopefully, by participating in the survey, activities and design of the new navigation, users know how dedicated the UIS team is to understanding what their users need and how to best serve them.”

“I see this directly benefiting the end user,” said Rick Rowcotsky, Financial Aid application manager in UIS. “For one, onboarding new users will be much easier. Looking at the old navigation, it was difficult to find things, often nested deep within six folders. Now, users can save the page to their homepage and never go digging again.”

User-centered design will not end with the launch. Ciecior emphasized that UIS will continually iterate with users as their needs change. UIS wants to hear from you. Send us your feedback, questions and suggestions [4].

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