

MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: WENDY BONNER, SEAN HENDERSON [CLA COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING TEAM]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES [CLA GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS]

SUBJECT: FULL PACKAGE OF DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDA FOR CLA DEPARTMENT CHAIRS-
REGARDING RESULTS OF OPEN CARD SORTING ACTIVITY

This package includes all departmental memoranda addressed to CLA department chairs regarding the results of CLA's Open Card Sorting Study project, which took place between June and September 2019.

During the process of the Open Card Sorting Study, eight different usability testing sessions occurred throughout Auburn's campus, including areas such as the Ralph Brown Draughon Library, the Auburn University Student Center, the Auburn University LUCIA Lab, and the College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing.

Ninety-Four unique card sorting tests were performed during this time, with participation from 73 undergraduate students, 18 graduate students, and three faculty members. Approximately 150 total tests were completed, with many of the 94 unique participants completing more than one test.

The data and student feedback pulled from these tests are the basis of all recommendations provided in these memoranda.

All data can be viewed in the shared Auburn Box folder, under *Web Revisions > Usability Testing > Card Sort (Round 1)*.

All individual copies of the memoranda within this package can be downloaded in the shared Auburn Box Folder, under *Card Sort (Round 1) > Open Card Sorting Activity: Completed Exercises > Departmental Memos*.

Please contact us with any questions regarding this report.

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MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF ART AND ART HISTORY OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Art and Art History. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the department of Art and Art History's homepage contains 8 main navigation links: About, Students, Programs, Apply, People, News/Events, Galleries, and Give. Nested under these main headings are 28 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.2 main navigation links for the same 28 additional links (2.8 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for Art and Art History, 11 created a main navigation link titled "About Us" or "About." Though the prevalence of "About Us," specifically, can likely be attributed to the presence of an "About Us" card/navigation link, we consider this finding significant as it aligns with findings from other departments and suggests that students expect to find an overview section on department pages.
- Generally speaking, participants successfully grouped the department's programs together (e.g. 15 out of 15 grouped BFA in Studio Art with Minor in Art History). However, while the department's current configuration includes "Non-Majors" and "Study Abroad" with the degree options, participant data suggests that the link between specific degrees and general course-related options may not be as strong as anticipated. For example, only 3 out of 15 participants grouped "Study Abroad" with the degree options.

- While the current Art and Art History navigation bar does contain a main navigation link specifically geared towards prospective students (titled “Apply”), participants were more explicit in their naming of similar main navigation links (e.g. “Prospective Students,” “New Student,” “High School Seniors”). This suggests that students may prefer clarity over brevity for these types of links.
- Regarding confusion about individual links, 13 out of 15 participants placed “AVA” in the ‘unsure pile’ during their sort, explaining that they did not understand the meaning. Additionally, both participants who attempted to sort the “AVA” link misunderstood its meaning (both placed it alongside the degree offerings). This supports findings from other department sites and suggests that students often struggle with undefined acronyms.
- Similarly, 12 out of 15 participants misidentified “Studio 5” (a student-led organization) by placing it under titles such as “Facilities” or by placing it in the ‘not sure’ pile. Presently, the “Studio 5” link is located under the “Students” tab on the Art and Art History homepage, but may do better under a more appropriately named main navigation link, or with a different, clearer name (e.g. “Studio 5 Club”).
- Art and Art History’s current directory is titled “People” and contains “Faculty,” “Staff,” and “Alumni & Friends.” Of the 15 participants who completed a card sort for the department, only 1 created a main navigation link titled “People.” It is also worth noting that only 3 out of 15 participants created a main navigation title specifically for faculty and staff (e.g. “Contacts,” “Staff & Friends,” and “Faculty & Alumni”). This differs from all other tested departments, in which the majority of participants explicitly created main navigation links for faculty.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 1) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 2) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 3) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Art and Art History, several participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind (further supported by the fact that 5 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link specifically for prospective students). One participant in particular explained that they were thinking like a high school senior and wondering what they’d want to see. The same participant also explained that they thought about current students as well and created the “Advising” main navigation link for that purpose. Another participant thought only in terms of current students and explained that their “Opportunities” main navigation link would be good for finding scholarships and study abroad information.

Participants also created divisions between students and faculty. One participant expressed that they would like to have a way of toggling away from “all the student junk” if they didn’t want to see it. Several participants, though they didn’t create this division explicitly, implied it by speaking in terms of “general” information, versus “student-focused” information.

Regardless of their methodology, a majority of the participants thought in binary terms and view the Art and Art History homepage as multi-faceted, or intended for multiple audience types. Additionally, several of the participants explained that they worked with schemas of similar university websites in mind.

In terms of groupings, several participants expressed that their “About” group was difficult to create as it was general enough to house many different links.

In terms of individual cards, participants had trouble with “AVA,” “Studio 5,” “Biggin Gallery,” and “Student Project Spaces,” as they felt that the meanings were not clear enough. Additionally, several participants felt that the “Faculty” and “Staff” links could be combined into one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

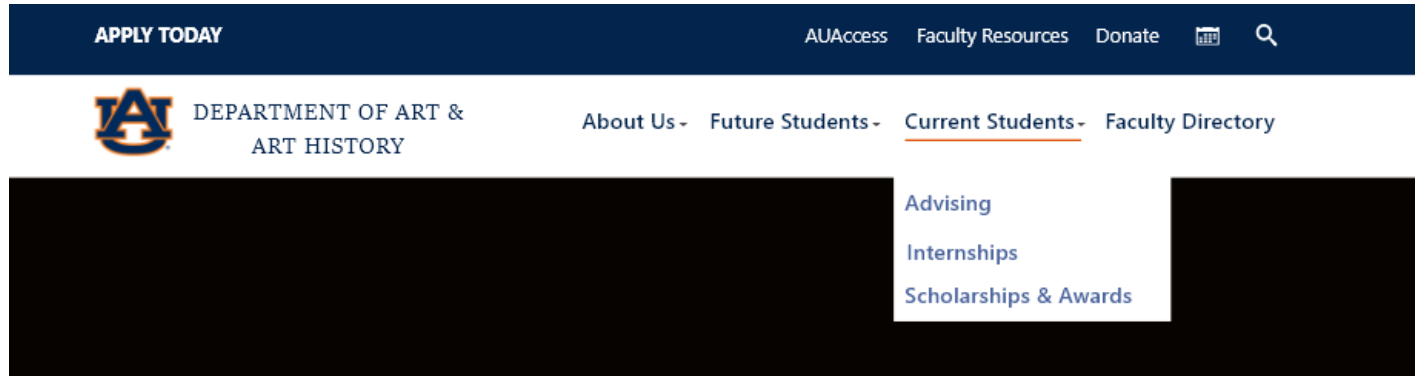
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Art and Art History’s homepage from 8 to 4
 - The new main navigation bar would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Programs, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, faculty resources, news and events, and donations
- Change the main navigation link “About,” to “About Us” to offer more clarity and to put forth a more personal tone
- Change the main navigation link “Apply” to “Future Students” and make it the second main navigation link from the left to offer more clarity and to greater emphasize its importance
 - This tab may contain links such as “Visit,” “Admissions,” and “First Year Scholarships”
- Change the main navigation link “Students” to “Current Students” to offer clarity and better reach the intended audience
 - This tab may contain links such as “Advising,” “Internships,” and “Scholarships and Awards”
- Change the main navigation link “People” to “Faculty Directory” to better define its contents
 - We also recommend housing all faculty on one page with the ability to filter by type
- Remove the “Galleries” main navigation link and move the links housed underneath to a more appropriate location, such as “About Us”
- Remove the “Give” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar
 - We also suggest renaming it to “Donate” for greater clarity
- Remove the “News/Events” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Create an “AUAccess” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Art and Art History’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding

whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Art and Art History (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MAIN NAVIGATION BAR – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPT. OF AVIATION BASED ON A COMPARABLE WEBSITE STUDY

The College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing has recently concluded open card sorting studies for 10 of the college's departmental pages. As part of this process, participants were asked to categorize and organize main navigation links and explain their methodology. With findings from these studies (both qualitative and quantitative) it is our goal to design a more standardized navigation menu that better meets our audience's needs.

Because the Department of Aviation was not included in this study (as there were too few navigation links to work with), this memo provides an overview of the findings gathered for the Department of Psychology which, like Aviation, exists under the Social Sciences area of study. Following this overview, the memo concludes with several recommendations for the Department of Aviation's navigation bar.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Unlike Aviation, the Department of Psychology currently divides most of their website's information between undergraduate and graduate students. During our card sorting study for the Department of Psychology, a majority of participants substantiated this configuration by creating a main navigation link specifically for graduate students, or by creating navigation links for both graduates and undergraduates (though the high frequency of these groupings likely resulted from the prevalence of cards/links with "Undergraduate" or "Graduate" in their title).

While this finding was deemed significant, the same pattern (of dividing information between undergraduate and graduate students) did not emerge during studies with any other departments. In fact, overall, participants were more likely to sort information between prospective and current students with undergraduate and graduate student subsets for each, much like Aviation already does.

Regardless of how participants chose to divide information, our findings reveal that CLA site visitors view department pages as multi-faceted, or intended for a variety of audiences. Thus, it is important to create clear divisions between information so that site visitors can better navigate and use the website to meet their needs.

Additionally, our study revealed that participants are generally uninformed about faculty distinctions (e.g. Instructor vs. Lecturer vs. Adjunct vs. Emeritus). For example, a majority of participants for the Department of Psychology did not understand the meaning of "Emeritus." Through interviews, participants furthered

this point by explaining that they would only know how to search for professors by name and not by their official title. Again, Aviation’s current site configuration already supports these findings by housing all faculty and staff on one page with names more prominent than titles.

[Please see attached the full memo of findings for the Department of Psychology].

RECOMMENDATIONS

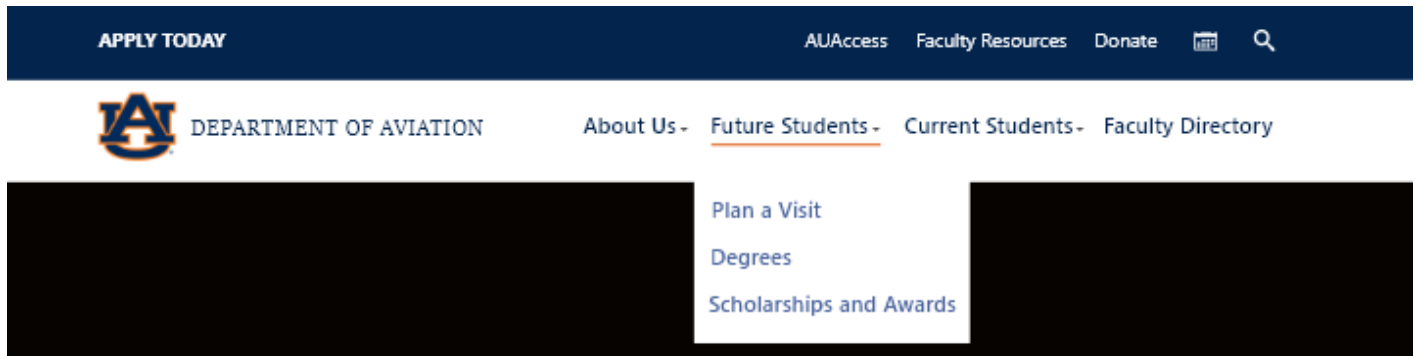
Based on the general findings for the Department of Psychology discussed above, the following recommendations are offered for the Department of Aviation:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Aviation homepage from 6 to 4
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, Faculty Resources, News and Events, and Donations
- Create an “About Us” main navigation link to provide new site visitors an overview of the department
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - The dropdown may contain links for degrees, planning a visit, and scholarship information
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to make site navigation easier for enrolled students
 - This dropdown might contain links for advising, internships, and student organizations
- Change the main navigation link “Faculty & Staff” to “Faculty Directory” to offer more clarity
- Remove the “Students” main navigation link and split content between the newly formed “Future Students” and “Current Students” links
- Relocate the “Aviation Safety Report” to a more appropriate area
 - e.g. under “About Us”
- Remove the “Contact Us” main navigation link and ensure contact information is prominent in the footer of every page
- Create a “Donate” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create an “AUAccess” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “News and Events” link and add to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Aviation’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students rather than students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

On the next page is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Political

Science (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MAIN NAVIGATION BAR – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPT. OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS BASED ON A COMPARABLE WEBSITE STUDY

The College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing has recently concluded open card sorting studies for 10 of the college's departmental pages. As part of this process, participants were asked to categorize and organize main navigation links and explain their methodology. With findings from these studies (both qualitative and quantitative) it is our goal to design a more standardized navigation menu that better meets our audience's needs.

Because the Department of Communication Disorders was not included in this study (as there were too few navigation links in the top-navigation bar to work with), this memo provides an overview of the findings gathered for the School of Communication and Journalism which, like Communication Disorders, exists under the Communications area of study within CLA. Following this overview, the memo concludes with several recommendations for the Department of Communication Disorders' website navigation bar.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

While Communication Disorders currently organizes information on their website with a clear distinction between an undergraduate and graduate audience, the School of Communication and Journalism does not. The School of Communication and Journalism currently lists all programs together with no clear breakdown between which programs have a graduate counterpart, which was found to be confusing for usability testing participants.

During our card sorting study for the School of Communication and Journalism, we saw that participants substantiated this configuration by creating a main navigation link specifically for graduate students, or by creating navigation links for both graduates and undergraduates (though the high frequency of these groupings likely resulted from the prevalence of cards/links with "Undergraduate" or "Graduate" in their title).

Regardless of how participants chose to divide information, our findings reveal that CLA site visitors view department pages as multi-faceted, or intended for a variety of audiences. Thus, it is important to create clear divisions between information so that site visitors can better navigate and use the website to meet their needs.

Additionally, our study revealed that participants of the School of Communication and Journalism found the “Faculty” breakdown easy to understand. For the School of Communication and Journalism’s participants, only 1 out of 15 participants placed a faculty-related card in the ‘not sure’ pile. The one participant who did, placed “Adjunct Instructors” there because they did not understand the meaning of the word “adjunct.” This finding suggests that, generally speaking, the School of Communication and Journalism’s faculty-related links are clear and straightforward, and that they may serve as a good example for other departmental websites.

The Department of Communication Disorders current site configuration already supports these findings by housing all faculty and staff on one page with names more prominent than titles.

[Please see attached the full memo of findings for the School of Communication and Journalism].

RECOMMENDATIONS

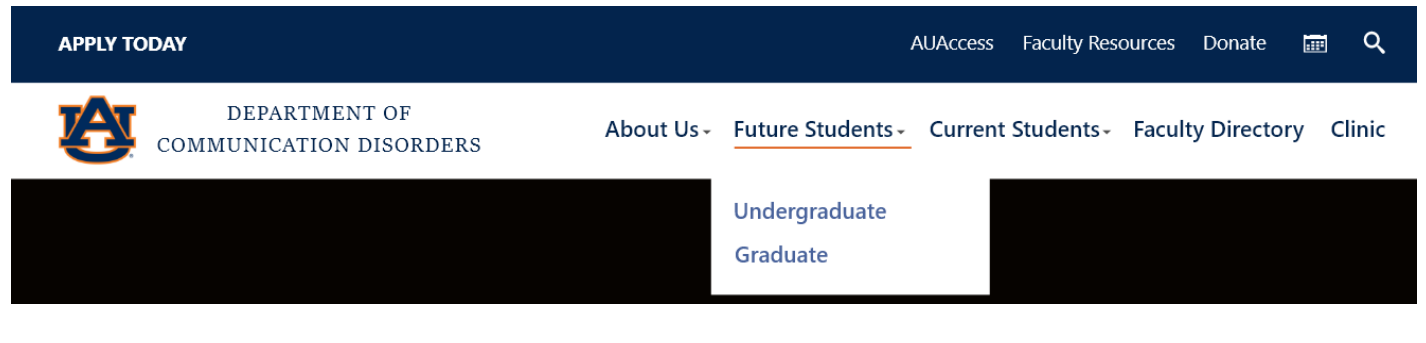
Based on the general findings for the School of Communication and Journalism as discussed above, the following recommendations are offered for the Department of Communication Disorders:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Communication Disorders homepage from 7 to 5
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Faculty Directory, and Clinic
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, Faculty Resources, News and Events, and Donations
- Create an “About Us” main navigation link to provide new site visitors an overview of the department
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - The dropdown may contain links for How to Apply to the CMDS Major, Accreditation, and Course Sequence
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to make site navigation easier for enrolled students
 - This dropdown might contain links for Student Organizations and Curriculum Guide on AU Bulletin
- Change the main navigation link “Faculty & Staff” to “Faculty Directory” to offer more clarity
- Remove the “Students” main navigation link and split content between the newly formed “Future Students” and “Current Students” links
- Relocate the “Research” button to a more appropriate area
 - e.g., under “About Us”
- Create a “Donate” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create an “AUAccess” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “News and Events” link and add to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Communication Disorder’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student

feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students rather than students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

On the next page is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Communication Disorders (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the School of Communication and Journalism. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the School of Communication and Journalism homepage contains 7 main navigation links: About Us, Students, Programs, Directory, News, Alumni, and Giving. Nested under these main headings are 16 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 4.2 main navigation links for the same 16 additional links (2.8 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for Communication and Journalism, 12 created a main navigation link with the word "Students" in its title (7 out of 15 named it "Students"; 4 out of 15 participants named it "Current Students"; 4 out of 15 participants named it "Prospective Students" or "Future Students"). Though this can likely be attributed to the presence of "Current Students" and "Prospective Students" cards, we consider this finding significant as it aligns with findings from other departments and suggests that students expect main navigation titles that are explicitly geared towards specific audiences.
- Across all 15 participants, 11 sorted the program offerings into their own distinctive categories, separate from "Current Students" or "Prospective Students" (e.g. "Majors," "Academics," "Courses of Study," etc.). This suggests that students may prefer program information front and center rather than embedded under a differently named main navigation title.

- Similarly, 12 out of 15 participants successfully grouped all four programs (Media Studies, Communication, Journalism, and Public Relations) together under the same main navigation link, suggesting that making changes to these titles is likely unnecessary.
- Communication and Journalism’s current directory is titled “Directory” and contains “Faculty,” “Adjunct Instructors,” “Graduate Teaching Assistants,” “Staff/Administration,” and “Academic Advisor.” Of the 15 participants, 0 created a main navigation link titled “Directory.” Instead, 7 out of 15 participants created a main navigation title with “Faculty” in the name, and 4 out of 15 created one with “Staff” in the name. This suggests that while “Directory” may be succinct and all-encompassing, it may not be the best descriptor for modern site visitors on its own. Rather, the word may need to be accompanied by the words “faculty” or “staff” for clarity.
- Presently, Communication and Journalism’s homepage has a main navigation link titled “About Us” that houses “About Us,” “Diversity & Inclusion,” “Outreach & Initiatives,” and “Visit Us.” While many participants paired “About Us” with “Visit Us” and “Diversity & Inclusion” with “Outreach & Initiatives” (10 out of 15 and 11 out of 15, respectively), data suggests that the same may not apply when looking at all four links together. For example, “Visit Us” was placed in the same group as “Diversity & Inclusion” by only 4 out of 15 participants.
- Notably, only 1 out of 15 participants placed a card in the ‘not sure’ pile. The one participant who did, placed “Adjunct Instructors” there because they did not understand the meaning of the word “adjunct.” This finding suggests that, generally speaking, Communication and Journalism’s links are clear and straightforward, and that they may serve as a good example for other departmental websites.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 4) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 5) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 6) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the School of Communication and Journalism, a majority of participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind. In some cases, participants furthered this division by also factoring in faculty and general departmental information. One participant put this best by explaining how they thought in terms of future students, current students, and non-students.

Even when participants did not explicitly name main navigation links for prospective and current students, their decisions still reflect a similar line of thinking. For example, one participant specified that their “About Us” main navigation link was intended specifically for incoming students.

A few participants explained that they had graduate students in mind as well while sorting. In fact, 3 out of 15 participants had the word “graduate” in one of their main navigation link titles.

Of those participants who divided information between prospective and current students, at least 2 explained that it was sometimes difficult to determine which category information fit best under. For example, one participant noted how “Advising” could fit under either main navigation link (“Prospective Students” or “Current Students”).

In terms of individual cards, participants mostly had trouble with the faculty-related links. Though only 1 out of 15 participants placed the “Adjunct Instructors card/link in the ‘not sure’ pile, at least 5 participants expressed confusion related to this link. In these cases, participants were able to sort based on the word “instructor” but did not know the meaning of “adjunct.” Additionally, at least 3 participants explained that they did not understand what differentiated “Faculty” from “Staff/Administration.” To mitigate this issue, participants recommended combining these two links into one.

Outside of faculty-related links, the “Visit Us,” “Diversity & Inclusion,” and “Outreach & Initiatives” links also caused some confusion as they were considered, by some, to be too vague.

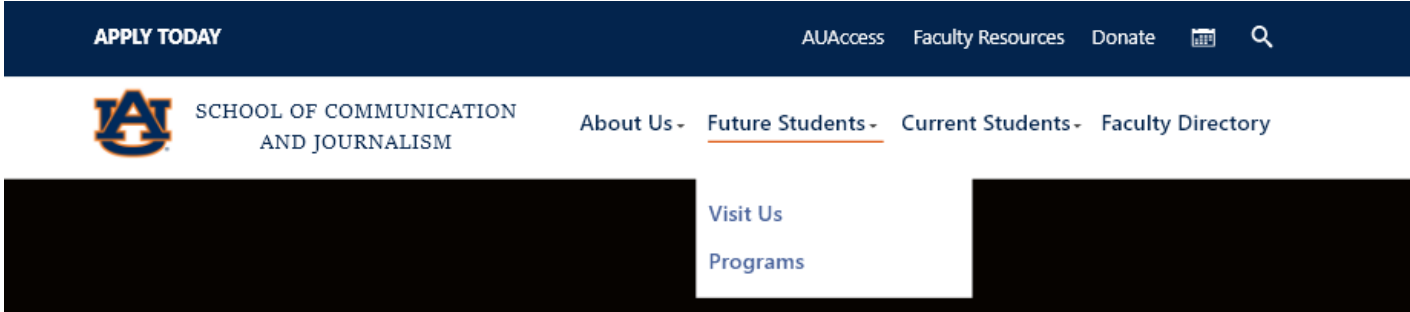
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the School of Communication and Journalism’s homepage from 7 to 4
 - The new main navigation bar would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, faculty resources, news and events, and donations
- Split the main navigation link “Students” to create “Future Students” and “Current Students” to offer more clarity and better reach intended audiences
- Change the main navigation link “Directory” to “Faculty Directory” to more clearly define its contents
 - We recommend housing all faculty on one page with the ability to filter by type
 - We also recommend moving the “Academic Advisor” link to another, more appropriate location, such as “Current Students”
- Remove the “Alumni” main navigation link and relocate to fit underneath another navigation link
- Remove the “Giving” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar
 - We also suggest renaming it to “Donate” for greater clarity
- Create a “News and Events” link and add to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Create an “AUAccess” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the School of Communication and Journalism’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the School of Communication and Journalism (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MAIN NAVIGATION BAR – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPT. OF ECONOMICS BASED ON A COMPARABLE WEBSITE STUDY

The College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing has recently concluded open card sorting studies for 10 of the college's departmental pages. As part of this process, participants were asked to categorize and organize main navigation links and explain their methodology. With findings from these studies (both qualitative and quantitative) it is our goal to design a more standardized navigation menu that better meets our audience's needs.

Because the Department of Economics was not included in this study (as there were too few navigation links to work with), this memo provides an overview of the findings gathered for the Department of Psychology which, like Economics, exists under the Social Sciences area of study. Following this overview, the memo concludes with several recommendations for the Department of Economics' navigation bar.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Like Economics, the Department of Psychology currently divides most of their website's information between undergraduate and graduate students. During our card sorting study for the Department of Psychology, a majority of participants substantiated this configuration by creating a main navigation link specifically for graduate students, or by creating navigation links for both graduates and undergraduates.

Though this finding was deemed significant, the same pattern (of dividing information between undergraduate and graduate students) did not emerge during studies with any other departments. In fact, overall, participants were more likely to sort information between prospective and current students with undergraduate and graduate student subsets for each. Thus, the high frequency of graduate and undergraduate groupings for the Department of Psychology likely resulted from the prevalence of cards/links with "Undergraduate" or "Graduate" in their title.

Regardless of how participants chose to divide information, our findings reveal that CLA site visitors view department pages as multi-faceted, or intended for a variety of audiences. Thus, it is important to create clear divisions between information so that site visitors can better navigate and use the website to meet their needs.

Additionally, our study revealed that participants are generally uninformed about faculty distinctions (e.g. Instructor vs. Lecturer vs. Adjunct vs. Emeritus). In fact, a majority of participants for the Department of Psychology did not understand the meaning of "Emeritus." Through interviews, participants furthered this

point by explaining that they would only know how to search for professors by name and not by their official title.

[Please see attached the full memo of findings for the Department of Psychology for more detail].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the general findings for the Department of Psychology discussed above, the following recommendations are offered for the Department of Economics:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Economics homepage from 6 to 4
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, Faculty Resources, News and Events, and Donations
- Create an “About Us” main navigation link to provide new site visitors an overview of the department
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - This tab would contain information for both undergraduate and graduate students
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to make site navigation easier for enrolled students
 - This tab would contain information for both undergraduate and graduate students
- Change the main navigation link “Directory” to “Faculty Directory” to offer more clarity and house all faculty and staff on one page with the ability to filter by name and type
- Remove the “Economics Club” main navigation link and relocate to a more appropriate area
 - e.g. under “Current Students”
- Remove the “Alumni” main navigation link and relocate to a more appropriate area
- Relocate the “Donate” main navigation link to a global navigation bar
- Create an “AUAccess” link in a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link in a global navigation bar
- Create a “News and Events” link in a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Economics’ homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating more appropriate divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

On the next page is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Political Science (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Undergraduate Programs

Graduate Programs

Economics Club

Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jd0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF ENGLISH OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of English. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of English's homepage contains 8 main navigation links: "About," "Current Students," "People," "Resources," "Events," "Alumni," and "Give Online". Nested under these main headings are 22 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.3 main navigation links for the same 22 additional links (2.7 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links, which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for English, only one participant created a main navigation link titled "About Us." Instead of creating a grouping titled "About Us" and filling the grouping with cards detailing the department, participants organized those cards within various other groupings with titles such as, "General (Info)," "FAQ," "Need to Know," and "Additional Information." We consider this finding significant as it appears students prefer straight-forward information on the English site and do not prefer a departmental overview.
- The study showed that only 5/15 participants created groupings that divided "undergraduate students" and "graduate students" into separate categories on the home
- page. While the present English site currently displays a clear divide between undergraduate and graduate programs, this data suggests that students may be looking for a broad overview of what the department offers instead of diving straight into student specializations.

- The study showed that 8/15 participants paired “Specialty Listing” and “Alphabetical Listing” together on the homepage; however, 0/15 participants paired both terms under a “Faculty & Staff” or similarly titled group. This finding suggests that while students understand that these terms are related in nature, they are not sure what these terms mean in relation to Faculty.
- Similarly, many students were confused about the breakdown of Faculty-type on the homepage. In the study, 4/15 participants did not pair the term “instructors” with other types of Faculty and Staff. The term “instructors” was most likely placed under the tabs titled “Undergraduate Students” and “Students,” implying students are not sure of the meaning of this particular term. Additionally, 4/15 participants placed the term “Emeritus” in the “Not Sure” category. Many students voiced their confusion during the participant interview, as shown below:

Participant 020:

“Seems incomplete to me” (referring to the cards during the sort).

Participant struggled to place “Alphabetical Listing” and “Specialty Listing.” They felt that these applied to all of the links on the page and not just Faculty.

Participant 053:

In terms of groups that were difficult to create, the participant expressed frustration. They explained that “staff,” “instructors,” and “lecturers,” should all be on one page because they don’t want to have to click and go back multiple times –they would rather just scroll through one page

Participant 021:

The participant found the “Faculty Information” group difficult to create as they believed there was too much separation and too much having to figure out what your professor is (i.e., their title). They were also not sure what “Emeriti” meant, and they did not know what “Specialty Listing” referred to.

These findings suggest that students are becoming confused by the breakdown of Faculty-type on the homepage and may prefer a single-page layout organized alphabetically instead of by type.

- Regarding confusion about individual links, 5/15 participants placed “Faculty Research & Publications” under varying groupings instead of with other Faculty/Staff-related buttons. “Faculty Research & Publications” were found under tabs such as “Department Resources,” “Graduate Students,” “Courses,” “Lifestyle,” and “Resources.” This suggests that students may be looking for this information under a resources-related tab instead of under a Faculty-related tab.
- English’s current directory is titled “People” and contains a breakdown of Faculty-type within. Of the 15 participants who completed a card sort for the department, only two created a main navigation link titled “People.” Participants used the following titles when detailing faculty and staff information: “Faculty & Staff,” “People,” (x2) “Faculty + Staff,” “Faculty,” “Faculty Information,” “Directory,” and “Faculty Info,” which suggests that students are more familiar with buttons actually containing the word “Faculty.” Participant 31 stated that the term “Faculty and Staff” is what they’ve traditionally seen and that they “feel “people” is too confusing as students are people too.”
- In this study, 8/15 participants paired “Announcements” and “Student Resources” together. Currently, the English website has “Announcements” under the “Undergraduate Students” tab. This finding suggests that students are likely to search for announcements and updates in one specific place that lists resources.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 7) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 8) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 9) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of English, several participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind (further supported by the fact that 3 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link specifically for prospective students).

Participant 021:

Sorted with current and prospective students in mind as the main differentiating criteria.

Participant 024 :

The participant sorted with people in mind: undergraduate, prospective, current, graduate, and faculty.

Participant 029 :

While sorting, the participant split things into information for current students and then information for prospective students and graduate students.

When asked about the overall pattern of their groups, many participants agreed that simplicity was best and that items should be clearly organized by audience-type, such as “Current Students,” “Prospective Students,” and “Faculty & Staff.” Participant 24 stated that they prefer organizing information by audience-type – “I know who I am and what I am looking for.”

In terms of groupings that were difficult to create, many participants agreed that “Resources” is a tricky grouping because it tends to contain items that did not always have a clear meaning to the audience. Participant 31 stated that resource-type groupings were the most difficult to create because they saw it as “a hodgepodge of things that don’t fit elsewhere.”

Many students expressed difficulty grouping Faculty-related buttons, as they were not sure of the difference between types of positions. There was confusion regarding the meaning of Faculty-types, such as “Emeritus” and “Instructor.”

Participants also had difficulty grouping “6 Myths About Money & Majors” and “Letter to Parents” because they felt like the buttons were “unnecessary and seemed to be too apologetic” (Participant 26).

Participant 053:

They understood the meaning of “6 myths about money and majors” but didn’t know why it was a card to begin with.

Participant 031:

In terms of individual cards, they had trouble with the “6 Myths...” card. Just wasn’t sure where it should go.

Participant 089:

As an added note, the participant thought that the inclusion of “6 Myths” was a bit weird.

Participant 082:

As an extra note, the participant expressed frustration with the "6 Myths" card. They feel it should be removed. They also didn't know what "Letter to Parents" meant or what would be contained on that page.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of English's homepage from 8 to 6
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Faculty & Staff, News & Events, and Donate
- Change the main navigation link "About," to "About Us" to offer more clarity and to put forth a more personal tone
 - Remove the "6 Myths About Money & Majors" and "Letter to Parents" buttons from "About" tab as student-feedback proves that students are not interested in this information
- Change the main navigation link "Events" to "News & Events" to better organize information on the site
- Add a main navigation link titled "Future Students" and make it the second main navigation link from the left to offer more clarity and to greater emphasize its importance
- Due to the increased number of links housed beneath the "Current Students" navigation link, we recommend the possibility of two sub-categories: "Undergraduate Students" and "Graduate Students," with more information within each page for the audience.
- Change the main navigation link "People" to "Faculty & Staff" to better define the contents listed underneath
 - Remove the Faculty-type breakdown and simply list in alphabetical order for ease of students
- Remove the "Faculty Research and Publications" link from under "People" and house it underneath to a more appropriate location, such as "Resources" (where students are more likely to look)
- Change the main navigation link "Give" to "Donate" to offer greater clarity
- Reassess all links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of English's homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what the new navigation bar might look like for the website. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of English (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Undergraduate

Graduate

Student Resources

Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at: jd0023@auburn.edu
or bj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF HISTORY OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of History. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the department of History homepage contains 7 main navigation links: About, People, Undergraduate, Graduate, Courses, News & Events, and Giving. Nested under these main headings are 21 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 4.7 main navigation links for the same 21 additional links (2.3 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for History, 13 created a main navigation link with the word "About" in its title. Of those, 10 specifically named their main navigation link "About Us." Though the prevalence of "About Us" can likely be attributed to the presence of an "About Us" card/navigation link, we consider this finding significant as it aligns with findings from other departments and suggests that students expect to find an overview section on department pages.
- History's current directory is titled "People" and contains "Faculty," "Staff," "Graduate Students," and "Emeritus." Of the 15 participants, 0 created a main navigation link titled "People." Instead, 7 out of 15 participants created a main navigation title with either "Faculty" or "Staff" in the name. The remaining 8 participants placed the faculty and staff links under differing categories (e.g. "About Us," "Contact Us," "Student Information"). These findings suggest that while "Directory" may be succinct and all-encompassing, it may not be the best descriptor for today's site visitors, as students seem to sometimes prefer clarity over brevity.

- It is also worth noting that only 1 out of 15 participants paired “Graduate Students” with “Faculty.” This suggests that, at present, the link between these items is unclear to students. Specification (e.g. “Graduate Student Teachers” or “Graduate Teaching Assistants”) may help mitigate this issue and strengthen association between the two.
- Though the Department currently divides information between undergraduate and graduate students, only 4 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link for graduate students, and 0 out of 15 participants created main navigation links for both graduate and undergraduate students.
- While, in their interviews, participants expressed that they thought in terms of prospective versus current students during sorting, 11 out of 15 grouped the “Prospective Students,” and “Current Students” together under the same main navigation link. This differs from other departmental findings in which participants more frequently split current and prospective students into separate categories.
- Regarding confusion about individual links, 10 out of 15 participants placed “Emeritus” in the ‘not sure’ pile during their sort, explaining that they did not understand the meaning of the word. This supports findings from other departments with an “Emeritus” link and suggests that students likely need more clarification through titling (e.g. “Emeritus Faculty”).
- Similarly, 5 out of 15 participants placed the “Kicklighter Professorship” in the ‘not sure’ pile during their sort, explaining that they did not understand its meaning. Even for those who attempted to sort this link, 0 paired “Kicklighter Professorship” with “Donate” (though the two are currently grouped together under the main navigation link “Giving”).

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 10) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 11) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 12) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of History, a significant portion of participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind (even though card sorting data does not explicitly corroborate this). More specifically, participants tended to divide information between these two audiences, or at least think about their differences, while sorting. One participant expressed their belief that there should be a page specifically for prospective students on the homepage.

Similarly, several participants saw less of a divide between current and prospective students and more of a divide between student information (both prospective and current) and “general department information.” In this sense, participants gave the impression that a portion of the Department’s current links may not appeal to students at all.

Still, in some other cases, participants sorted information between students and faculty or between students, faculty, and alumni. Regardless of their methodology, it is clear that participants view the Department of History homepage as multi-faceted, or intended for multiple audience types.

In terms of groupings, several participants noted how it was difficult to create their “About” section as so much information could potentially fit underneath it. For example, two different participants pointed specifically to the “Research Strengths” link and were unsure about where it would fit best (both ultimately placed it in “About”).

In terms of individual cards, participants mostly had trouble with “Emeritus,” “Kicklighter Professorship,” and “Diversity & Inclusion.” While for “Emeritus” and “Kicklighter Professorship” participants were unsure of meaning, for “Diversity & Inclusion,” issues stemmed more from the link title’s vagueness. Unsure of which category to place it under, one participant felt that “Diversity & Inclusion” would be better off as a featured section on the Department’s homepage, rather than as a separate link. They further explained that such information, along with a mission statement, should be implied or stated right away.

RECOMMENDATIONS

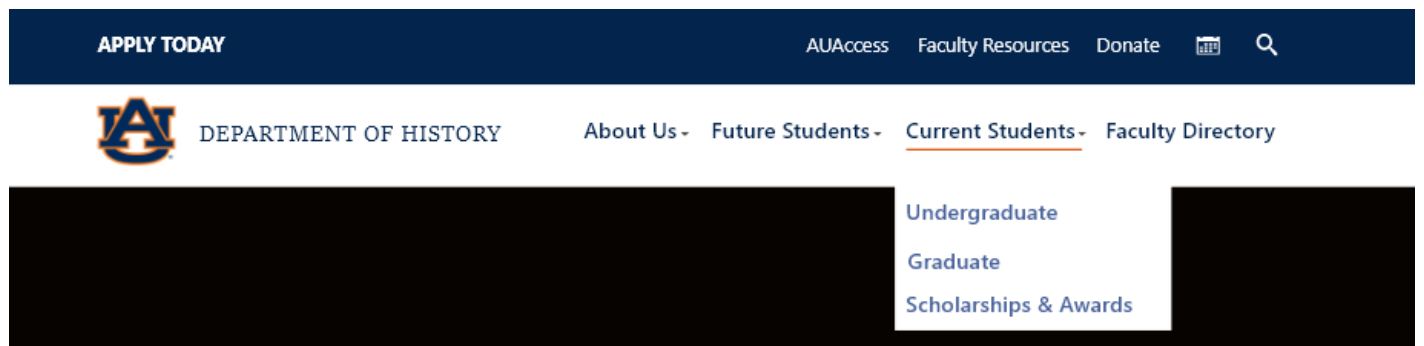
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations for the main navigation bar are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Theatre’s homepage from 7 to 4
 - The new main navigation bar would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, faculty resources, news and events, and donations
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - This tab may contain links such as “What You Can Do…” and “Visit Us”
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to offer greater clarity and better reach the intended audience
 - This tab may contain links such as “Undergraduate,” “Graduate,” and “Scholarships & Awards”
- Change the main navigation link “People” to “Faculty Directory” and house all faculty on one page with the ability to filter by type
- Remove both the “Undergraduate” and “Graduate” main navigation links and redistribute their content to more appropriate areas
 - For example, graduate and undergraduate information could be housed under both “Future Students” and “Current Students”
- Remove the “Courses” main navigation link (which provides overview information about classroom size and types of workload) and place the information in a more appropriate area, such as “About Us”
- Remove the “News & Events” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Remove the “Giving” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar

- We also suggest renaming it to “Donate” for greater clarity
- Create an “AUAccess” link for a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link for a global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of History’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students) and reducing the total number of links, we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of History (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: WENDY BONNER, SEAN HENDERSON

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF MUSIC OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Music. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of Music's homepage contains seven main navigation links: "About Us," "Faculty & Staff," "Admissions," "Programs," "Outreach," "Events Calendar," and "Policies." Nested under these main headings are 21 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.7 main navigation links for the same 21 additional links (1.3 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.7 main navigation links, which is 1.2 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- The study showed that participants had a clear distinction on the website for academic programs for students and events offered or sponsored by the Department of Music.

Participant 068:

"I focused on creating groups for prospective students (their wants and need) first," the participant stated. "Then I focused on [what the] department offers [such as shows], and helpful department information next."

- Nearly every participant paired "Admission" and "Scholarships" together (13/15 participants), and 5/15 participants grouped "Admission," "Scholarships," and "Auditions" together.
- The study found that 12/15 participants paired "Directions & Parking" with "Visiting Information."
- 12/15 participants paired "Directions & Parking" with "Ticketing Policies" despite these items not being related on the current Music site. Only one participant paired "Student Handbook" with "Ticketing Policies," as it currently exists on the site.

- Participants were confused by the meaning of “Monody,” “Living in Auburn,” and “United Sound.” They found the terms difficult to group.

Participate 077:

They did not understand the meaning of “Monody” and “Living in Auburn.” “I feel like Living in Auburn would only make sense on this page if it was about the music scene in Auburn,” they commented.

Participate 062:

As for individual cards, the participant did not understand the meaning of “Monody” and thought that “United Sound” sounded like a music group.

Participate 072:

Additionally, the participant said that “Living in Auburn” was confusing because they weren’t sure if this was just general information about the area or if this was music-specific information.

Participate 088:

As for specific cards, the participant did not understand the meanings of “Monody” and “United Sound” though they assumed they were music groups.

- Some participants in the study explained that having various student handbooks on the site was confusing and not relevant to prospective students.

Participate 077:

In regards to Handbooks, they said “Why do these need to be on the website? They are using up space. Why not email this information to the people that need it?”

- In the study, 8/15 participants paired “Mission” with “Diversity.” Regarding these terms, many students expressed confusion as to why they were on the website.

Participant 052:

They also did not understand what the “Diversity” card was referring to. They said that they understand the actual meaning of the word, but that they thought it might be a choir or something.

Participant 071:

They were confused about mission- “Why is mission and diversity on the website?” they asked.

- 6/15 participants paired “Admission” with “Auditions,” however there was some confusion regarding what “auditions” was referring to.

Participant 033:

The card titled “auditions” was confusing to the participant. They were not sure if this was relating to admissions or if this was auditioning for singing events/concerts sponsored by the Music department.

- Several students noted that they would prefer to see a more notable events and calendar page on the site. “I would want an event/concert calendar front-and-center on the website,” stated participant 059.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 13) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 14) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 15) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Music, several participants explained that they believe the site should operate with a clear audience distinction between students interested in the academic side of the program, and members of the public that are interested in attending performances and visiting the site for more information.

Participant 052:

When asked about the overall pattern of the groups, the participant explained that they were thinking about “anyone interested in pursuing a degree plus people who want to see shows.”

When asked about the overall pattern of their groups, many participants agreed that organizing information by audience-type was the best way to present information on the website. Participant 077 stated that they focused on sorting the cards “logically, focusing on useful information that students [and the public] would be looking for.” They stated that they “tried to make [the website] concise, with information easy to find, and organized.”

Participant 072:

The participant first broke the information into “school information” and then “student information.” They stated that information should be “placed logically in a way that prospective students could figure out easily.”

Many participants expressed difficulty grouping “Monody” and “United Sound” as they were unsure of the meaning of the cards. Additionally, participants had some difficulty placing the “Auditions” card as they felt that it could go almost anywhere on the site- they were unsure of whose audition the card was referencing and which audience the card was geared toward. There was confusion regarding whether this was for prospective students auditioning for admission into the program, or members of the public (non-majors) auditioning for shows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

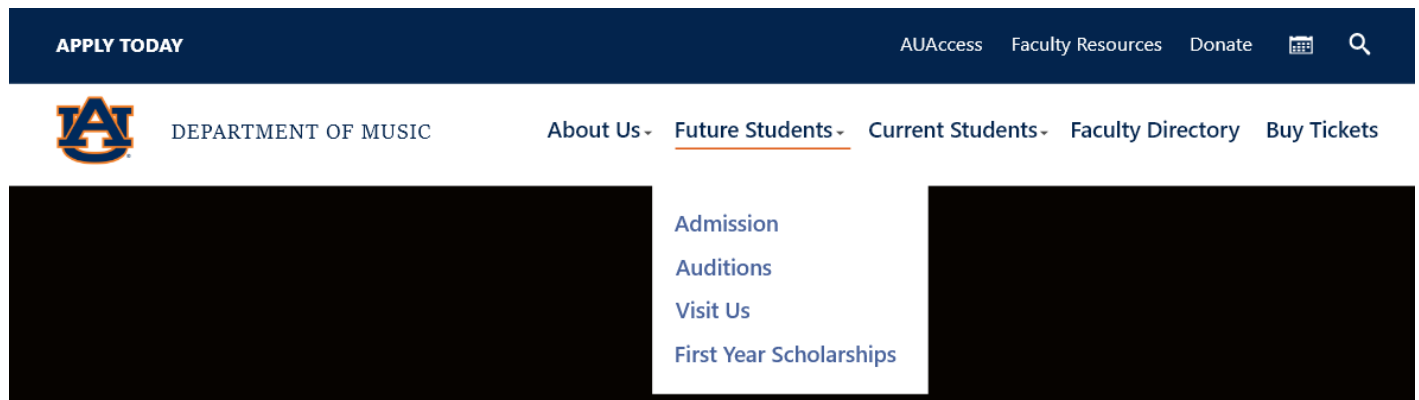
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reorganize the main navigation links on the Department of Music’s homepage, bringing the total from 7 to 5
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Event Calendar, and Faculty Directory (a global navigation bar would contain links for donations and resources for faculty)
- Reorganize and condense the information in the “About Us” tab to give a better overview of the department to prospective students
- Add a main navigation link titled “Future Students” and make it the second main navigation link from the left to offer more clarity and to greater emphasize its importance (have a breakdown between future undergraduate students and graduate students)
- Remove the “Admissions” button from the main navigation menu and reorganize all links inside to the “Future Students” tab

- Remove the “Programs” button from the main navigation menu and reorganize all links inside to the “Future Students” and “Current Students” tabs
- Remove the “Outreach” button from the main navigation menu and reorganize the “United Sound” link to a more appropriate location.
- Change the main navigation link “Faculty & Staff” to “Faculty Directory” to more clearly define its content
- Remove the “Policies” main navigation link and place contents in more appropriate areas, such as “Current Students” or on the “Event Calendar” page
- Create an “AUAccess” link in the global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link in the global navigation bar
- Reassess all links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Music’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Music (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at: jd0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF PHILOSOPHY OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Philosophy. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of Philosophy's homepage contains six main navigation links: "Academics," "People," "Resources," "Contact Us," "News," and "Give Online." Nested under these main headings are 20 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.3 main navigation links for the same 20 additional links (0.7 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.3 main navigation links, which is 1.6 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for the Department of Philosophy, six participants created a main navigation link titled "About Us" or similar. Two additional participants created an informative tab describing the department, such as "What the Department of Philosophy has to Offer." We consider this finding significant as it appears students prefer a departmental overview on the Philosophy site that gives specific information detailing what makes the department distinctive.
- The study showed 6/15 participants paired "Student Learning Outcomes" with "Annual Reports," but that many students were confused as to why this information was on the site. Participant 67 stated their confusion regarding the relevance of "Student Learning Outcomes" ("Why is this on the site?") and "Annual Reports" ("Why is this on the website?")

Participant 094:

When asked about individual cards that were difficult to place, the participant explained that “Annual Reports” was a bit weird to include and that they weren’t sure where it would go.

Participant 055:

They also did not like the inclusion of Annual Reports, stating “Why? Students don’t care.”

- The study showed that, while Philosophy’s site has their Faculty-related button titled “People,” only one participant titled that grouping “People.” In fact, nearly all participants had varying titles for Faculty-related buttons, such as “Philosophy Faculty & Staff,” “Faculty & Staff,” “Faculty/Staff,” “Faculty,” “Staff,” (x2) “Professorial Faculty,” “Instructors and Staff,” and “People.”
- Nearly every participant created a “Clubs & Activities” or a similarly-titled grouping during the activity. This is a significant finding because it shows the importance of extracurricular activities on the site.
- The study found that 3/15 participants placed “Auburn Aesthetics Forum” in the “Not Sure” pile because they did not understand the meaning of the term.

Participant 055:

As for individual cards, the participant had trouble with “Auburn Aesthetics Forum,” adding that they guess it could go underneath “Get Involved,” but that they weren’t sure enough.

Participant 035:

When asked about groupings that were difficult to construct, the participant pointed to the “Clubs/Aesthetics” group and said that they weren’t exactly sure what the “Auburn Aesthetics Forum” was and that they weren’t sure if it needed to be a part of the group name or not

- Regarding confusion about individual links, many participants were confused by “Pictures from the Life of the Department” and felt that these pictures should just be dispersed throughout the website instead of having its own dedicated page.

Participant 094:

They also felt that “Pictures from the Life of the Department” was a “cool idea” but that it should apply to every grouping and not be a separate thing.

- Participants placed “Annual Philosophy Conference” in varying groupings, such as “Faculty” and “Clubs & Activities.” Students were confused as to whether this was a conference hosted by the department, a conference faculty presented at, or a conference that students were encouraged to apply.
- Many participants in the study explained that their “resources” tab or similarly named group was generally comprised of what they saw as extraneous information. The Department of Philosophy’s “resource” tab is the section of the website that contains the majority of their links, which is problematic given how students view this section.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 16) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 17) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 18) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Philosophy, several participants explained that they believe the site should operate with a clear distinction between academics and extracurricular activities since the department offers so many clubs and activities.

Participate 055:

“When asked about the overall pattern of their groups, the participant explained that “academics and social should be separate.”

When asked about the overall pattern of their groups, many participants agreed that organizing information by audience-type was the best way to present information on the website.

Participate 040:

The participant grouped cards by offering information about the department (giving prospective students an idea of what the department has to offer) and then detailing information about faculty and staff.

Many participants prioritized giving an overview of the department in an “About” or similarly titled grouping, giving the impression that an active and involved department is desirable to prospective students viewing the Philosophy site.

Many participants expressed difficulty grouping the “Annual Reports” cards and expressed that they were too broad to pin down to an exact grouping on the website: “What’s being reported?” asked Participate 042 in regards to “Annual Reports.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

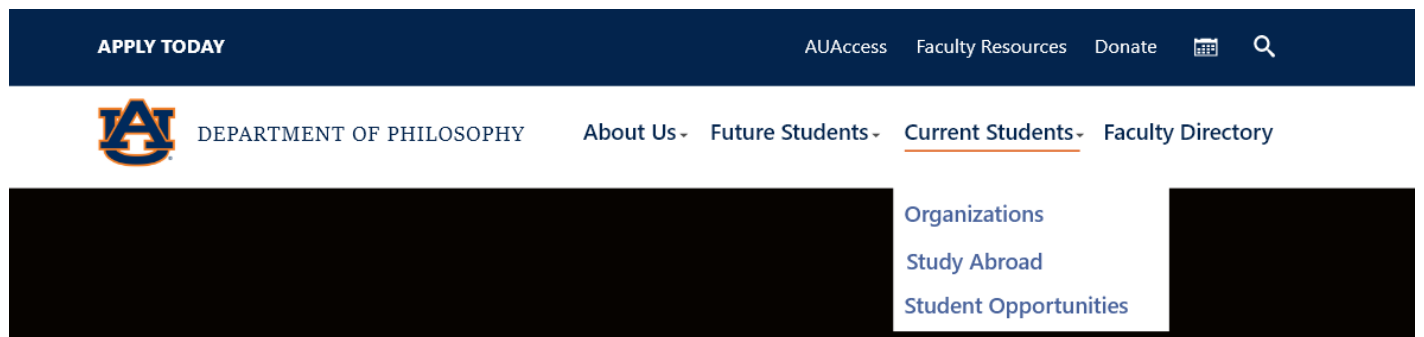
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reorganize the main navigation links on the Department of Philosophy’s homepage, bringing the total from 6 to 4
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory (a global navigation bar would contain links for donations, calendar and events, and resources for faculty)
- Remove “Academics” and replace it with “About Us” to give a better overview of the department to prospective students
- Change the main navigation link “Events” to “News and Events” to better organize information on the site, link in the global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Remove the “Resources” button from the main navigation menu and reorganize all links inside to appropriate locations
- Add a main navigation link titled “Future Students” and make it the second main navigation link from the left to offer more clarity and to greater emphasize its importance
- Change the main navigation link “People” to “Faculty Directory” to more clearly define its content

- Remove the Faculty-type breakdown and simply list in alphabetical order for ease of students (remove “Professorial Faculty,” “Instructors,” and “Staff” from the dropdown menu to just reveal the people listing when “Faculty Directory” is clicked)
- Remove “Contact Us” and have contact information in the footer of each page instead of on a page
- Remove “Annual Reports” and “Student Learning Outcomes” from the site (if not necessary for accreditation purposes)
- Place “Auburn Aesthetics Forum” in an appropriate grouping (such as “Clubs & Activities” or “News & Events” or completely remove from the site if it is no longer relevant)
- Remove the “Give Online” main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar renamed as “Donate”
- Create an “AUAccess” link in the global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link in the global navigation bar
- Reassess all links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Philosophy’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Philosophy (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at: jd0023@auburn.edu or bj0011@auburn.edu

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MAIN NAVIGATION BAR – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPT. OF POLITICAL SCIENCE BASED ON A COMPARABLE WEBSITE STUDY

The College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing has recently concluded open card sorting studies for 10 of the college's departmental pages. As part of this process, participants were asked to categorize and organize main navigation links and explain their methodology. With findings from these studies (both qualitative and quantitative) it is our goal to design a more standardized navigation menu that better meets our audience's needs.

Because the Department of Political Science was not included in this study (as there were too few navigation links to work with), this memo provides an overview of the findings gathered for the Department of Psychology which, like Political Science, exists under the Social Sciences discipline. Following this overview, the memo concludes with several recommendations for the Department of Political Science's navigation bar.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Like Political Science, the Department of Psychology currently divides most of their website's information between undergraduate and graduate students. During our card sorting study for the Department of Psychology, a majority of participants substantiated this configuration by creating a main navigation link specifically for graduate students, or by creating navigation links for both graduates and undergraduates.

Though this finding was deemed significant, the same pattern (of dividing information between undergraduate and graduate students) did not emerge during studies with any other departments. In fact, overall, participants were more likely to sort information between prospective and current students with undergraduate and graduate student subsets for each. Thus, the high frequency of graduate and undergraduate groupings for the Department of Psychology likely resulted from the prevalence of cards/links with "Undergraduate" or "Graduate" in their title.

Regardless of how participants chose to divide information, our findings reveal that CLA site visitors view department pages as multi-faceted, or intended for a variety of audiences. Thus, it is important to create clear divisions between information so that site visitors can better navigate and use the website to meet their needs.

Additionally, our study revealed that participants are generally uninformed about faculty distinctions (e.g. Instructor vs. Lecturer vs. Adjunct vs. Emeritus). In fact, a majority of participants for the Department of

Psychology did not understand the meaning of “Emeritus.” Through interviews, participants furthered this point by explaining that they would only know how to search for professors by name and not by their official title.

[Please see attached the full memo of findings for the Department of Psychology].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the general findings for the Department of Psychology discussed above, the following recommendations are offered for the Department of Political Science:

- Rename and reorganize all four current main navigation titles
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, and Faculty Directory
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, Faculty Resources, News and Events, and Donations
- Create an “About Us” main navigation link to provide new site visitors an overview of the department
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - This tab would contain information for both undergraduate and graduate students
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to make site navigation easier for enrolled students
 - This tab would contain information for both undergraduate and graduate students
- Change the main navigation link “Directory” to “Faculty Directory” to offer more clarity and house all faculty and staff on one page with the ability to filter by name and type
- Relocate the “Give Online” main navigation link to a global navigation bar, and rename it “Donate” for greater clarity
- Create an “AUAccess” link in a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link in a global navigation bar
- Create a “News and Events” link in a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Political Science’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating more appropriate divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

On the next page is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Political Science (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not, by any means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jd0023@auburn.edu
or bj0011@auburn.edu

MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF PSYCHOLOGY OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Psychology. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of Psychology's homepage contains 7 main navigation links: "Undergraduate," "Graduate," "Faculty & Staff," "Research," "News & Events," "Clinic" and "Give." Nested under these main headings are 32 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.7 main navigation links for the same 32 additional links (1.3 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 6.8 main navigation links, which is 0.1 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- At present, the Department divides student information between graduates and undergraduates. In support of this, 7 out of 15 participants created main navigation links for both graduates and undergraduates, while an additional 3 created a main navigation link for just graduate students. Because this pattern did not emerge for any other tested department, such findings can likely be attributed to the presence of cards/links with "undergraduate student" and "graduate student" in their name.
- Similarly, 9 out of 15 participants drew no distinction between undergraduate and graduate degree offerings (i.e. "Psychology, B.A." was placed alongside "Cognitive and Behavioral Sciences, Ph.D." in these instances). This finding, coupled with the prevalence of graduate- and undergraduate-specific groups, suggests that a majority of site visitors are either unsure of how to differentiate between degree types or would rather group these items together under a main navigation link specifically for programs.

- Psychology’s current directory is titled “Faculty & Staff” and contains the links “Faculty Directory,” “Emeritus Faculty Directory,” “Staff Directory,” and “Room Reservations.” Of the 15 participants, 10 created a main navigation link specifically for faculty and staff, but with varying titles: “Directory,” “Faculty & Staff,” “Faculty/Staff,” “Faculty/Staff Info,” etc. Though this data is likely influenced by the presence of several directory cards/links, it still suggests that site visitors expect a main navigation link for faculty and staff listings.
- Of the 15 participants, 5 created a main navigation link titled “Resources,” or “Additional Resources.” This finding is significant as many users (across all tested departments) view “resource” groupings as “dump piles,” or “catch-alls.” This suggests that links placed under such titles may be viewed as extraneous by users. For the Department of Psychology, “Get Involved,” “Room Reservations,” and “Facilities” were among the links most frequently placed under “Resources.”
- Regarding confusion about individual links, 3 out of 15 participants placed the “Room Reservations” link in the ‘not sure’ pile, not because they did not understand the meaning of the words, but because they weren’t sure of the link’s intended audience. This suggests that the link’s title should better reflect its purpose (e.g. “Faculty Room Reservations”) and/or should be moved to a more appropriate location (e.g. under a “Faculty Resources” main navigation link).

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 19) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 20) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 21) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Psychology, a significant portion of participants explained that they operated with undergraduate and graduate students in mind (as corroborated by card sorting data). Though some participants based their decisions on what they’ve seen from comparable departmental webpages, others admitted that their sort was influenced by the presence of so many degree-related cards/links. In fact, several participants explained how they began by sorting the degree cards and then made further divisions from there.

In addition to sorting by undergraduate and graduate students, at least 3 participants created divisions between prospective and current students. In these instances, participants were also likely to further divide between students and faculty members. In fact, one participant felt that employees should have their own section, separate from student-focused information, to access resources.

Regardless of their methodology, participants clearly view the Department of Psychology website as multi-faceted or intended for a variety of audience types.

When asked to identify groupings that were difficult to create, a majority of participants pointed to main navigation links for degree offerings. These participants explained that they either weren’t familiar with all of the degree types or didn’t understand how they went together (i.e. unable to distinguish between

undergraduate and graduate options). For example, the “Industrial and Organizational Psychology ABM” link was consistently misidentified as a graduate offering. Additionally, the presence of “Psychology Minor,” while understood to be an undergraduate offering, threw some participants off as it was different from the other degree cards/links.

In terms of individual cards that were difficult to sort, participants most frequently pointed to “Room Reservations” and “Emeritus Faculty Directory.” While participants were unclear about the intended audience of “Room Reservations,” for “Emeritus Faculty Directory” issues centered more around the meaning of the word “emeritus.” Though participants almost unanimously placed this link alongside the “Faculty Directory” and “Staff Directory” links, it is likely only because of the consistent usage of “directory” (for the Department of History, 10 out of 15 participants placed “Emeritus” in the ‘not sure’ pile).

Additionally, 11 out of 15 participants paired “Psychology Department Research Participation” with “Research Participation” (though these are not currently grouped together on the site). Through interviews, it was revealed that participants generally struggled to differentiate between these two cards/links.

Overall, participants felt that the amount of links to be somewhat overwhelming. Some, specifically, pointed out cards such as “Registration / Wait List,” and “Course Information” and explained how they would not expect to find these on the department homepage. Rather, participants felt that these items, and several others, are better suited for sites like AUAccess.

RECOMMENDATIONS

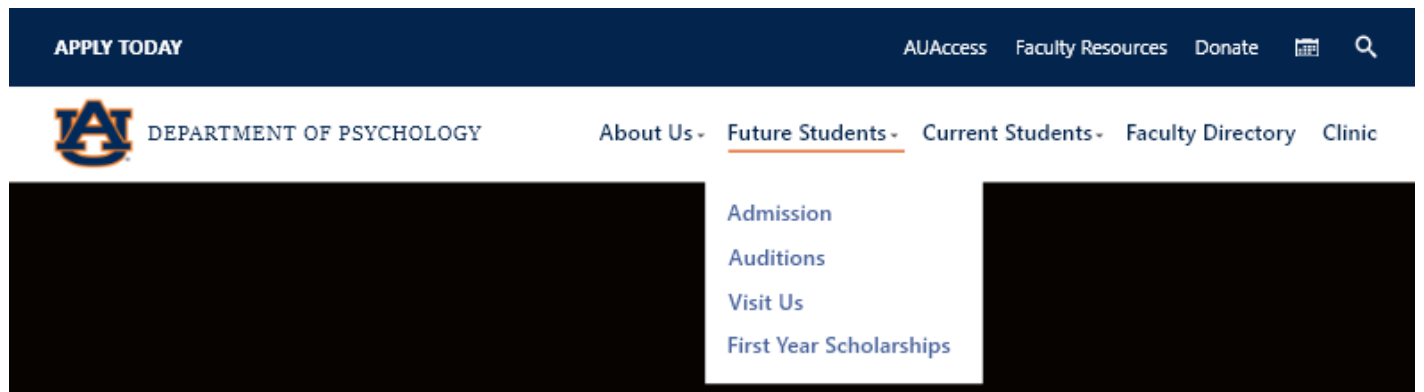
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Psychology’s homepage from 7 to 5
 - The new main navigation links would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Faculty Directory, and Clinic (a global navigation bar would contain links for donations, calendar and events, and resources for faculty)
- Create an “About Us” main navigation link to provide new site visitors an overview of the department
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - This tab may contain links relating to admissions, visiting information, and first year scholarship opportunities and may be divided between undergraduates and graduates
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link that combines and condenses information from the “Undergraduate” and “Graduate” main navigation links
 - We further recommend housing all program offerings on a single page (one for undergraduate degrees and one for graduate degrees) to reduce menu clutter
- Change the main navigation link “Faculty & Staff” to “Faculty Directory” and house all faculty and staff on one page with the ability to filter by type
- Remove the “Research” main navigation link and redistribute its contents to more appropriate locations
 - For example, “Facilities” might better fit under “About Us”
- Relocate the “News & Events” main navigation link to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)

- Relocate the “Give” main navigation link to a global navigation bar, and rename it “Donate” for greater clarity
- Create an “AUAccess” link in the global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link in the global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

At present, the Department of Psychology’s homepage is in discordance with its primary audience; it favors faculty members and graduate students even though the site is predominantly accessed by prospective undergraduates. By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Philosophy (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jd0023@auburn.edu or bj0011@auburn.edu

MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND SOCIAL WORK CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work homepage contains 5 main navigation links: "People," "Sociology," "Anthropology," "Social Work," and "Give Online." Nested under these main headings are 24 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5 main navigation links for the same 24 additional links (which is the same number of main navigation links on the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.4 main navigation links, which is 1.5 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- The study showed that 7/15 participants created groupings that divided "undergraduate students" and "graduate students" into separate categories on the home page, which is relevant for Sociology and Social Work because they offer graduate programs.
- Participants paired "Braveheart Center for Place and Purpose" and "Expressions of a Braveheart" together on the homepage 12/15 times; however, there seemed to be confusion regarding what these terms meant and where they belong on the website. During the study, 4/15 participants created a grouping titled "Braveheart" or "Braveheart Center," while the rest of the participants sorted these terms under "Resources" or "Additional Resources" or an "Extra Information" tab. This

finding suggests that while students understand that these terms are related in nature, they are not sure what these terms mean in relation to the program.

- During the activity, 4/15 participants placed "Expressions of a Braveheart" in the "Not Sure" pile, stating they were confused as to what the card meant and where it belonged.
- It was observed during testing and the post-test survey that many students would prefer a clear distinction between the three departments; when completing the card sorting activity, many students were confused regarding what items belonged to each department.
- "Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes" and "Resources" were paired together 7/15 times. This finding suggests that students do not expect this information to be found on the homepage, and instead organized into another section, such as "Resources."
- "Program News" and "Newsletters" were paired together 12/15 times, and were typically organized under a "News" or "Updates" tab by participants. Note: One participant did express concern that these pages should be updated regularly or removed completely (Participant 007).
- During the study, 10/15 participants paired "Phi Alpha" and "Social Work Club" together, suggesting that students are looking for organization-information in one area of the website.
- 5/15 participants placed "International Journal of Contemporary Sociology" in an "Extra" or "Additional Resources" related grouping, suggesting they felt that it was not relevant as a primary button on the Department's homepage.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 22) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 23) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 24) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, several participants explained that they operated with undergraduate students and graduate students in mind (further supported by the fact that 7 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link specifically for graduate students).

Participant 016:

Began the sort of overarching theme of graduate and undergraduate in mind and then divided the information within those two categories.

Participant 015:

Sorted cards with undergraduates and graduates in mind.

When asked about the overall pattern of their groups, many participants agreed that simplicity was best and that items should be clearly organized by audience type, such as "Current Students," "Prospective

Students,” and “Faculty & Staff” within the three departments. Many students expressed a desire for a division between undergraduate and graduate students within each program, such as Participant 069, who stated “they were thinking in terms of graduate versus undergraduate” during their entire exercise. In terms of groupings that were difficult to create, many participants agreed that “Resources” is a tricky grouping because it tends to contain items that did not always have a clear meaning to the audience. Participant 007 stated that resource-type groupings were the most difficult to create because they saw it as “a dump pile for extra stuff.”

Many students expressed difficulty grouping cards relating to the “Braveheart” organization. When asked if there were any particular cards that were difficult to sort, Participant 064 stated “all of the Braveheart stuff.” Many participants were confused by the Braveheart-related buttons that currently exist on the website and were unsure of the meaning and purpose of the buttons.

Participants 002 stated that “it [Braveheart-related cards] needed to be its own separate category and not placed under another group so that people [the audience] could find it with ease.”

Participant 002:

The participant explained that they have “no idea what the Braveheart center is.”

Participant 090:

They were confused by the meaning of “Expressions of a Braveheart.”

Participant 082:

The participant had trouble placing the “Braveheart” cards because they didn’t know the meaning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Rename and reorganize the main navigation links on the Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work homepage
 - Repurpose the current department homepage as a “landing page” and create separate websites for each of the three programs
 - The new main navigation links for the department landing page would read as follows:
Home, Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
- Change the main navigation link “Program Home,” to “About Us” on all three program pages to offer more clarity and to put forth a more personal tone
- Add a main navigation link titled “Future Students” on all three program pages and make it the second main navigation link from the left to offer more clarity and to greater emphasize its importance
- Add a main navigation link titled “Current Students” on all three program pages and make it the third main navigation link from the left to house all information for that audience
- For the Sociology and Social Work’s homepage navigation panes, we recommend the possibility of two sub-categories underneath the “Future Students” and “Current Students” pages titled “Undergraduate Students” and “Graduate Students” to offer more information within each page for the audience

- Change the main navigation link “Faculty” to “Faculty Directory” on all three program pages to better define the contents listed underneath
- On the Social Work page, remove the buttons titled “Expressions of a Braveheart” and “Braveheart Center for Place and Purpose” from under the current dropdown and create a main navigation button titled “Braveheart” to house all information related to the topic
- On the Social Work page, create a page under “Current Students” titled “Organizations and Clubs” to house all information related to these topics, such as "Phi Alpha" and "Social Work Club
- On the Sociology page, reorganize the “International Journal of Contemporary Sociology” button under a section relevant for its audience, as participants felt that it was not relevant as a main tab on the program’s homepage.
- Change the main navigation link “Give” to “Donate” on all three program pages to offer greater clarity and house this link in a global main navigation
- Reassess all links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating


By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that, overall, brevity is preferred and that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions between programs (by giving them each their own website) and having clearer divisions for audience-type (e.g., current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what the new navigation bars might look like for each website. These mockups include both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work- Main Landing Page Navigation Bar

Sociology- Navigation Bar



Anthropology- Navigation Bar


APPLY TODAY [AUAccess](#) [Faculty Resources](#) [Donate](#)  

 ANTHROPOLOGY [About Us -](#) [Future Students -](#) [Current Students -](#) [Faculty Directory](#)

[Undergraduate](#)
[Graduate](#)

Social Work- Navigation Bar

APPLY TODAY [AUAccess](#) [Faculty Resources](#) [Donate](#)  

 SOCIAL WORK [About Us -](#) [Future Students -](#) [Current Students -](#) [Faculty Directory](#) [Braveheart](#)

[Undergraduate](#)
[Graduate](#)

Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu

MEMO

OCTOBER 23, 2019

TO: [INSERT DEPARTMENT CHAIR NAME HERE]

FROM: JONATHAN NIXON, BRANDI JONES

SUBJECT: DEPT. OF THEATRE OPEN CARD SORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of Theatre. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

At present, the Department of Theatre homepage contains 7 main navigation links: About Us, Academics, People, Productions, Buy Tickets, Galleries, and Ensembles. Nested under these main headings are 35 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 5.8 main navigation links for the same 35 additional links (1.2 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for Theatre, 7 created a main navigation link with the word "About" in its title. Of those who did not use the word "About," 4 still created a main navigation link intended to provide an overview of the department (e.g. "General Information," "Welcome/General Info"). We consider this significant as it aligns with findings from other departments and suggests that students expect overview links on department home pages.
- At present, the Department of Theatre's "About Us" main navigation link contains 10 additional links. In examining the similarity between these links, it was found that only 3 out of 15 participants paired "Mission" with "Contact Us," that only 3 out of 15 participants paired "History" with "Directions & Parking," and that only 5 out of 15 participants paired "Events" with "Facilities." These statistics, and similar findings from the "About Us" tab, suggest that the information under "About Us" may be too varied or unfocused.

- Notably, 5 out of 15 participants misidentified the “BFA” links (“BFA Performance,” “BFA Theatre Management,” “BFA Design / Tech”) as physical locations, rather than program/degree offerings. This suggests that even common higher education terminology may not always be explicitly understood by students (especially prospective or new students).
- Similarly, while the Department currently groups “Special Opportunities and Resources” and “Student Handbook” with the degree options underneath the “Academics” main navigation link, participant data suggests that the link between specific degrees and general course-related options may not be as strong as anticipated. For example, 0 out of 15 participants paired “Special Opportunities and Resources” with “BA Theatre” and 1 out of 15 participants paired “Student Handbook” with “Minor in Dance.”
- Though the current Theatre navigation bar does not contain a main navigation link specifically geared towards prospective students, 5 out of 15 participants created a category with this group in mind (e.g. “Future Students,” “Prospective Students,” “Incoming Students”). This suggests that a portion of site visitors recognize prospective students as a primary audience.
- Theatre’s current directory is titled “People” and contains “Faculty & Staff” and “Alumni & Friends.” Of the 15 participants who completed a card sort for the department, only 1 created a main navigation link titled “People.” It is also worth noting that only 4 out of 15 participants created a main navigation title specifically for faculty and staff. This differs from most other tested departments in which the majority of participants explicitly created main navigation links for faculty.
- The Department’s main navigation bar currently houses a “Galleries” link with 8 additional links nested within. Our findings suggest that these 8 links may not intuitively go together, as reflected by participant data. For example, 1 out of 15 participants grouped “Mosaic Theatre” with “Video Spotlights” and 2 out of 15 participants grouped “AU Theatre Highlights” with “Facilities.”
- Regarding individual links, participants were most confused by “AU Players,” “Radio Flyer Theatre,” “Mosaic Theatre,” and “Mosaic Theatre” company, as seen by the frequency in which these links were placed in the ‘not sure’ pile. This suggests that newcomers to the site likely need clear indication of these links’ meaning (whether through clearer naming of the links themselves or of the main navigation links under which they appear).

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

- 25) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
- 26) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
- 27) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of Theatre, a significant portion of participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind (further supported by the fact that 5 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link specifically for prospective students). Even when participants did

not explicitly name main navigation links for prospective and current students, their decisions still reflect a similar line of thinking. For example, one participant specified how they viewed their “Degree Options” category as a source for prospective students and their “Auditions” category as a source for current students.

In some cases, participants furthered this division by factoring in faculty and general departmental information. Several participants also recognized Theatre’s unique need to market towards the general public (for performances) and kept this audience in mind while sorting. For example, one participant believed that the events offered by the department are likely just as important as the academics.

As already outlined earlier in this memo, a portion of participants expressed that they did not understand the meaning of “BFA” and “BA.” Though 5 out of 15 participants outright misplaced or mislabeled these links, several others admitted confusion during their interview. From an international standpoint, one participant explained that the naming system did not align with the one used by universities in their home country.

In addition to the “BFA” and “BA” links, participants also struggled to make sense of the various theatre cards. In most cases, participants were unsure as to whether these cards (e.g. “Radio Flyer Theatre” and “Mosaic Theatre Company”) were physical locations or on-campus organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

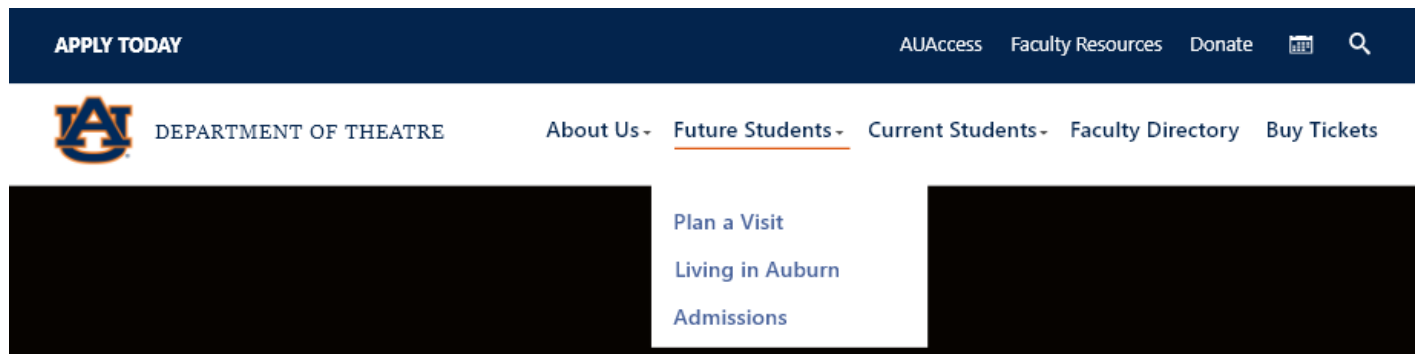
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Theatre’s homepage from 7 to 5
 - The new main navigation bar would read as follows: About Us, Future Students, Current Students, Faculty Directory, and Buy Tickets
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
 - This navigation pane would contain links for AUAccess, faculty resources, news and events, and donations
- Prune and redistribute the “About Us” links to more appropriate areas
 - e.g. “News” and “Events” moved to a global navigation bar, “Plan a Visit” moved to “Future Students” main navigation tab, “Contact Us” removed
- Create a “Future Students” main navigation link to attract prospective students
 - This tab may contain links such as “Plan a Visit,” “Living in Auburn,” and “Admissions”
- Create a “Current Students” main navigation link to offer greater clarity and better reach the intended audience
 - This tab may contain links such as “Scholarships and Awards,” “Special Opportunities and Resources,” and “Student Organizations”
- Change the main navigation link “People” to “Faculty Directory” to more clearly define its contents
 - We recommend housing all faculty on one page with the ability to filter by type
- Remove the “Galleries” and “Ensembles” main navigation links and redistribute their contents to more appropriate areas
 - e.g. a “Galleries” and “Facilities” link could be added underneath “About Us”

- Increase the prominence of the “Buy Tickets” main navigation link by positioning it at the right end of the navigation bar
- Create an “AUAccess” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “Faculty Resources” link and add to a global navigation bar
- Create a “News and Events” link and add to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Change the “Give” icon to a link titled “Donate” for greater clarity and relocate to a global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of Theatre’s homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students), we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of Theatre (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is, by no means, a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.



Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact us at jdn0023@auburn.edu or bjj0011@auburn.edu