

# **SD/IMP Regional Website Strategy Pilot Final UX Recommendation**

August 24, 2018



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- Themes + Observations
- Strategic Vision
- Imperatives for Success
- User Testing
- Recommended Sitemap
- Initial User Flows + Wireframes
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# Phase 1 Objectives

1. Create a system of consistent, user-centric, student-first experiences across multiple colleges in the SD/IMP region
2. Create a website strategy which the colleges can reference to their own sites to identify any optimizations to make to their own sites, both new and old
3. Organize and streamline a higher education website's content structure to best match a series of user flows
4. Foster consistency across multiple regional colleges for ease of multi-college students



# Themes + Observations



# Theme 1 | The Philosophy

**THEME:** A global, omnipresent student-first approach is priority number one.

**OBSERVATION:** A flat, unclear hierarchy directed to an internal audience (faculty/staff) creates a poor user experience for the primary audience (prospective and current students), leading to confusion and choice overload, making it difficult for users to make a decision when faced with so many options that do not apply to them.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Build a website navigation that meets the overarching student-first philosophy and specifically targets the primary audience (prospective and current students).



## Theme 2 | The Nuts and Bolts

**THEME:** Tightly bound with choice overload, content overload – sometimes dense, wordy, duplicate content, and other times disparate and sparse content – intimidates users.

**OBSERVATION:** Currently, faculty/staff have a significant level of input into the types and frequencies of content, often driven by status quo rather than data, and without adherence to guidelines and governance.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider these websites principally as marketing tools to include specific and relevant information for primary audiences (prospective and current students), and secondarily as an online library of resources to satisfy internal audience (faculty/staff) needs. Additionally, it's important to note that users won't consume content just because we put it out there; a main goal is to reduce redundancies and duplication and aim for in a nice balance that allows multiple entry points per audience.



## Theme 3 | The Structure

**THEME:** If the homepage is your digital storefront, consider the navigation your main menu – it's the most prime real estate that sets the tone for your website.

**OBSERVATION:** What is shown as the main navigation caters to internal audiences (faculty/staff) and its nomenclature is unclear; instead, what should be the main navigation is actually hidden within the collapsed hamburger menu. As internal audiences will know where to find things day after day, prospective students will not; and, as they are a primary audience, it's crucial that they have clear paths to relevant content and actions.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Create clear paths based on what is most relevant to each audience, which gets them where they need to go, chiefly: about the college, admissions and aid, academics, student services, resources, student portal.



## Theme 4 | The Maintenance

**THEME:** An easy-to-use CMS, coupled with consistent guidelines and governance, will significantly improve the day-to-day operations of the website.

**OBSERVATION:** The lack of a basic CMS with a templated/modular system makes it nearly impossible for content authors to update content or create net new pages in a timely manner, within the approved guidelines. This inevitably creates havoc, resulting in a patchwork of inconsistent architecture, content, tone and visuals.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Construct, implement, and maintain rock-solid governance, to include roles and responsibilities, user permissions, workflows, approval processes as well as clear guidelines for brand, content and CMS.



# Strategic Vision



What does *student-first* mean?

It's a steadfast philosophy, a foundational truth, a central theme that ties together the SD/IMP region of community colleges.

With this guiding light, we aim to build the ideal student experience.



Become a trusted source for student success by providing value for all audiences through a student-first, digital experience platform.



**Build a reputation as a trusted source for:**

- Education and resources
- Connected/integrated network
- Customized choices and programs



Become a **trusted source** for student success by providing value for all audiences through a student-first, digital experience platform.



**Prioritize student success by:**

- Guiding students to the right paths/careers
- Streamlining access to priority programs
- Providing resources to special audiences
- Sharing relevant, up-to-date information
- Enabling successful students to have successful careers



Become a trusted source for **student success** by providing value for all audiences through a student-first, digital experience platform.



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**Provide value to different types of audiences:**

**Prospective students**

- High school
- Returning
- Adult
- Continuing (non credit based)

**Current students**

- First-time
- Returning
- Adult
- Continuing (non credit based)

**Community**

- Parents
- Teachers
- Counselors

**Internal**

- Faculty
- Staff

**External**

- Employers
- Donors
- Media
- Nonprofit organizations
- Public servants



Become a trusted source for student success by providing value for all audiences through a student-first, **digital experience platform**.

**Enable a digital experience platform featuring:**

- Optimized prospective and current student experience
- Scalability with college and regional growth
- Cohesive connection to regional digital ecosystem
- All of the above, made possible by an easy-to-use Content Management System



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# Imperatives for Success



# Architecture

- Globally consistent navigation structure and nomenclature, consolidated into a focused hierarchy and utilized to organize content and get users to the right place
- A series of different templates and column structures in order to differentiate utility from content and give content authors much more to work with when adding new content to the website

*So, what exactly does this look like?*

- A sitemap structure for each college to use as a baseline to build from
- Consistent terminology/nomenclature guidelines
- A system of reusable UX/UI templates, driven by CMS structure



# User experience

- Responsive design, user experience and platform development
- User-centric approach with clear paths that create transparency in the end-to-end website experience
- Consistent, purposeful, high-contrast calls-to-action to direct the user to action
- Variety of hero options to drive users to action, utilizing loop videos or striking images with specific messaging

*So, what exactly does this look like?*

- Construction of user flows to illustrate detailed user experiences through the website
- Template wireframes built to show layout and functionality; copywriters/developers to reference for new page development
- Technical requirements document; developers to reference for development



# Content

- Reduction of redundant, duplicative content, in order to achieve a nice balance that allows multiple entry points per audience
- Regularly updated content for target audiences and themes, with a streamlined approach to real-time publishing
- Development of rich, evergreen content that can be repurposed on all channels, while also segmenting themes/topics (i.e., recruitment content is different from Guided Pathways content) and content types (i.e., headlines, CTAs, articles, blogs, images, infographics, illustrations) to drive organized, strategic development for distribution across other colleges and channels
- Published guidelines and governance to define appropriate usage, promote consistency and create great user experiences as well as consistent content author workflows

*So, what exactly does this look like?*

- A comprehensive content strategy to identify needs and opportunities, a plan for building and customizing content types for different audiences, and a roadmap that outlines the sequence and timing of content initiatives
- An editorial calendar to outline relevant themes/topics, SEO keywords
- Consistent content guidelines



# Visual

- Typography and iconography are extensions of a brand's personality; use them in a consistent, relevant way that aid the navigation rather than clog up the user experience
- Implement consistent design styles to help users find a visual hierarchy
- Build a library of student-shot photography and assets styled to fit the college brand

*So, what exactly does this look like?*

- Digital style guide; developers to reference for website development
- Brand guidelines; all groups to reference for any design needs



# Technology

- Implement a fully supported/updated, stable, scalable, user-friendly Content Management System (CMS), that is universally easy-to-use
- Utilize a strong global search functionality
- Create a cohesive connection to the rest of the SD/IMP digital ecosystem (third party vendors, tools, social media)

*So, what exactly does this look like?*

- Fully configured CMS infrastructure and front-facing website



# User Testing



# Why Test Our Sitemap?

## TO GAIN INSIGHTS

- Determine how easily users can find information, and exactly where they get lost
- Confirm the nomenclature makes sense, or how to improve it based on common student language

## TO VALIDATE OUR THINKING

- Understand if content is grouped logically, or how to improve it
- Validate the proposed Information Architecture structure and nomenclature



# User Testing Objectives

We developed 10 questions focused on sitemap topics that aligned with key website objectives:

How do you apply to a community college?



**Increase applications**

How do you find programs at a community college?



**Convert prospective students**

As a student, how do I access important information about my college experience?



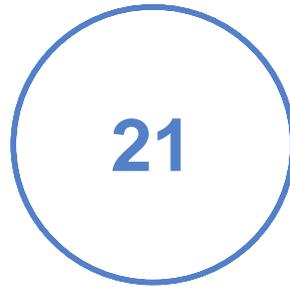
**Get students where they need to go as fast as possible**



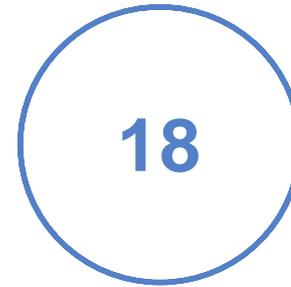
# User Testing Audience



**Students +  
young  
adults**



**.edu\***



**Civilian team**

Of the 512 people surveyed, we received **453** total completions.  
At an 88% completion rate, our tree test results provide  
an incredible wealth of data.

*\*Represented by: MiraCosta, SDSU, SDCCD, CSU Chico, GCCCD, SWCCD*



# Key Takeaways

Based on an individual success rate of over 75%, there are only a few topics that we should keep an eye on. These are perfect topics to test and iterate once the website is live.

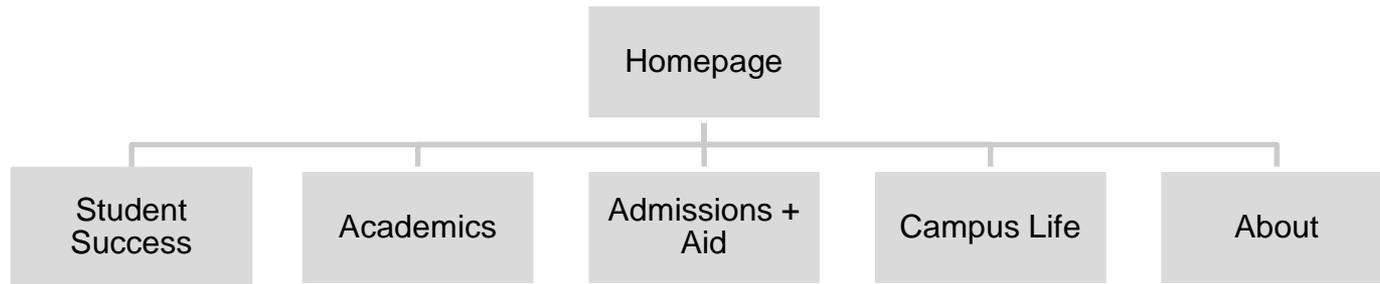
- Content clarity for prospective students vs current students
- Content organization within Student Success vs Academics
- Opportunity to push Career Planning content in strategic places
- Academics to include information about online/continuing education vs Admissions + Aid to include specific direction for enrollment



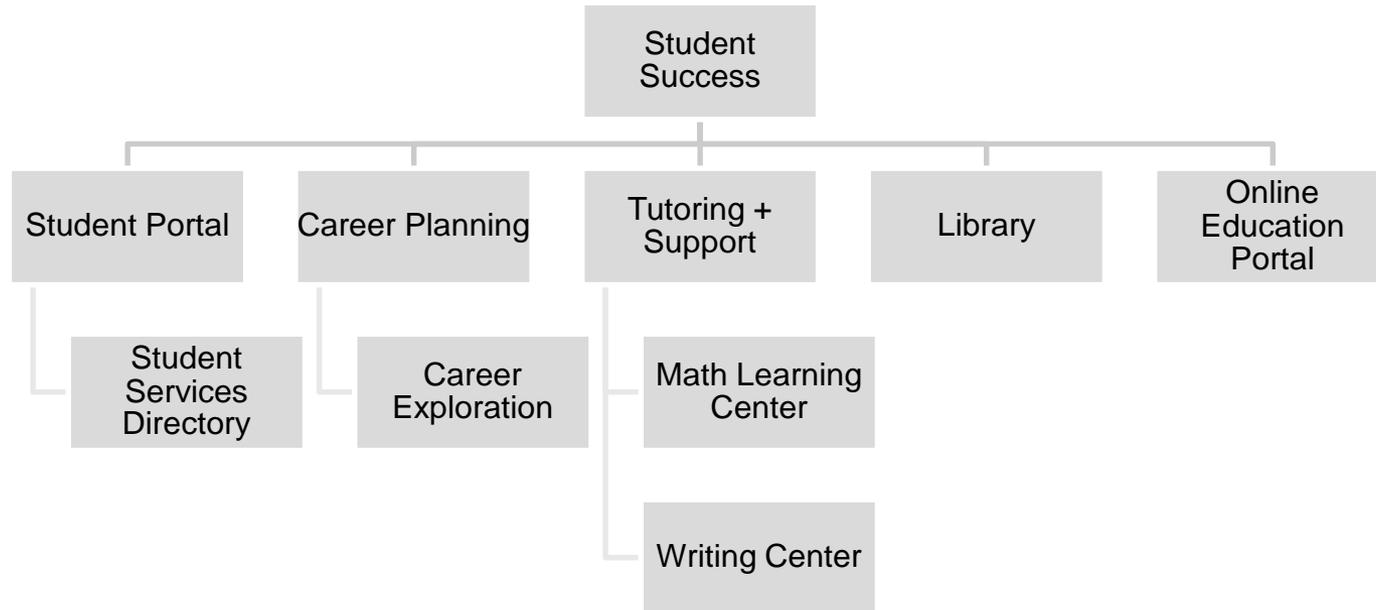
# Recommended Sitemap



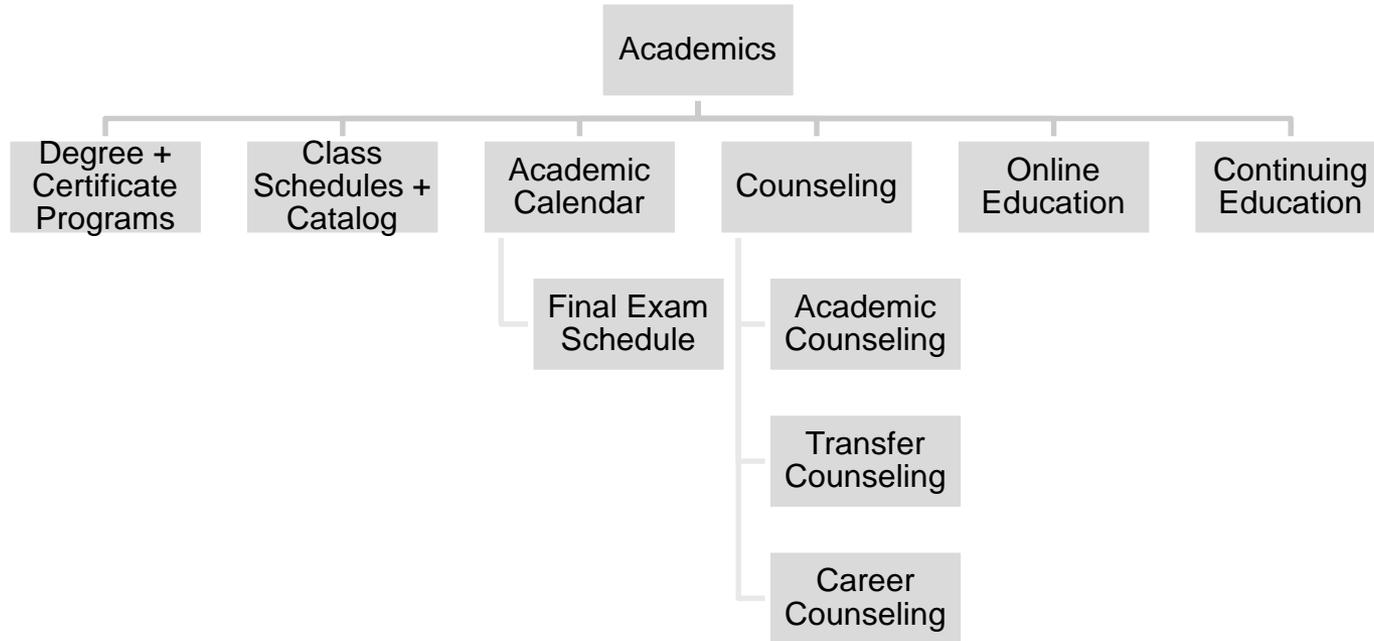
# Global Primary Navigation



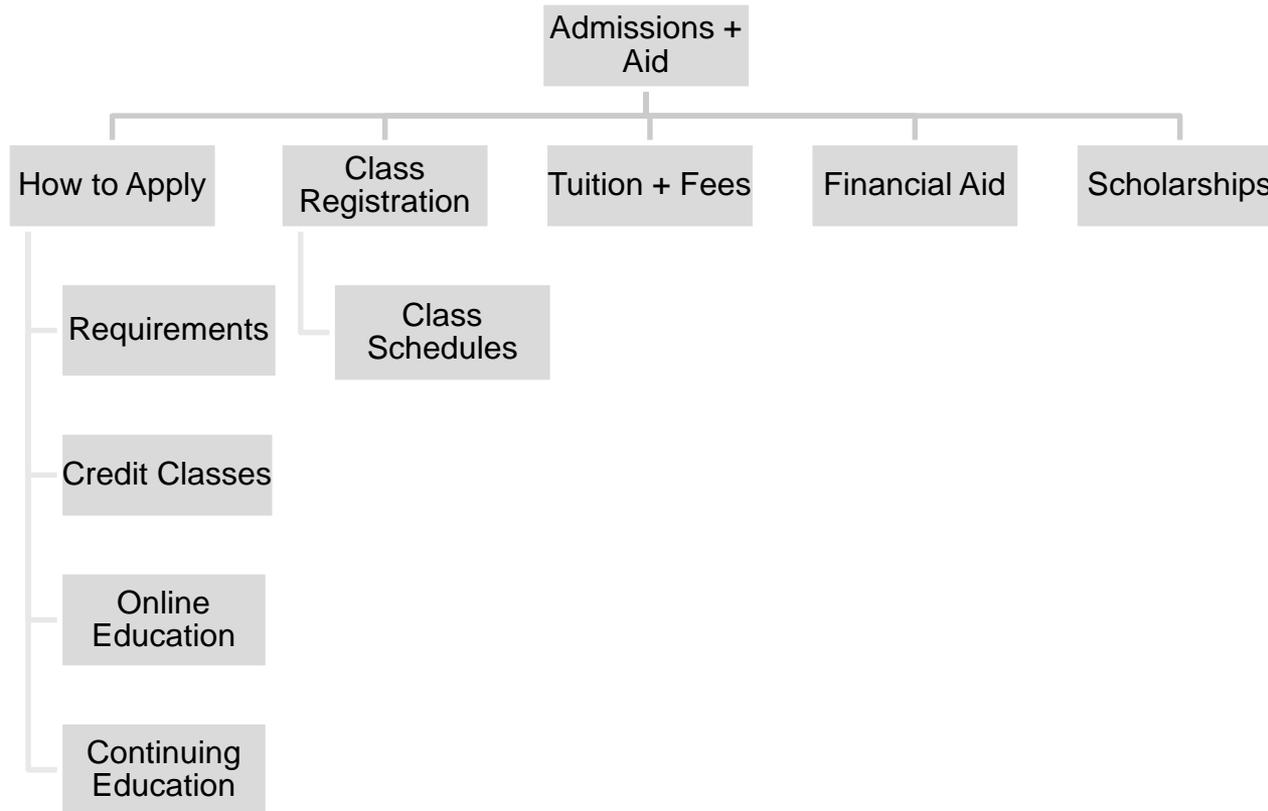
# Global Secondary Navigation: Student Success



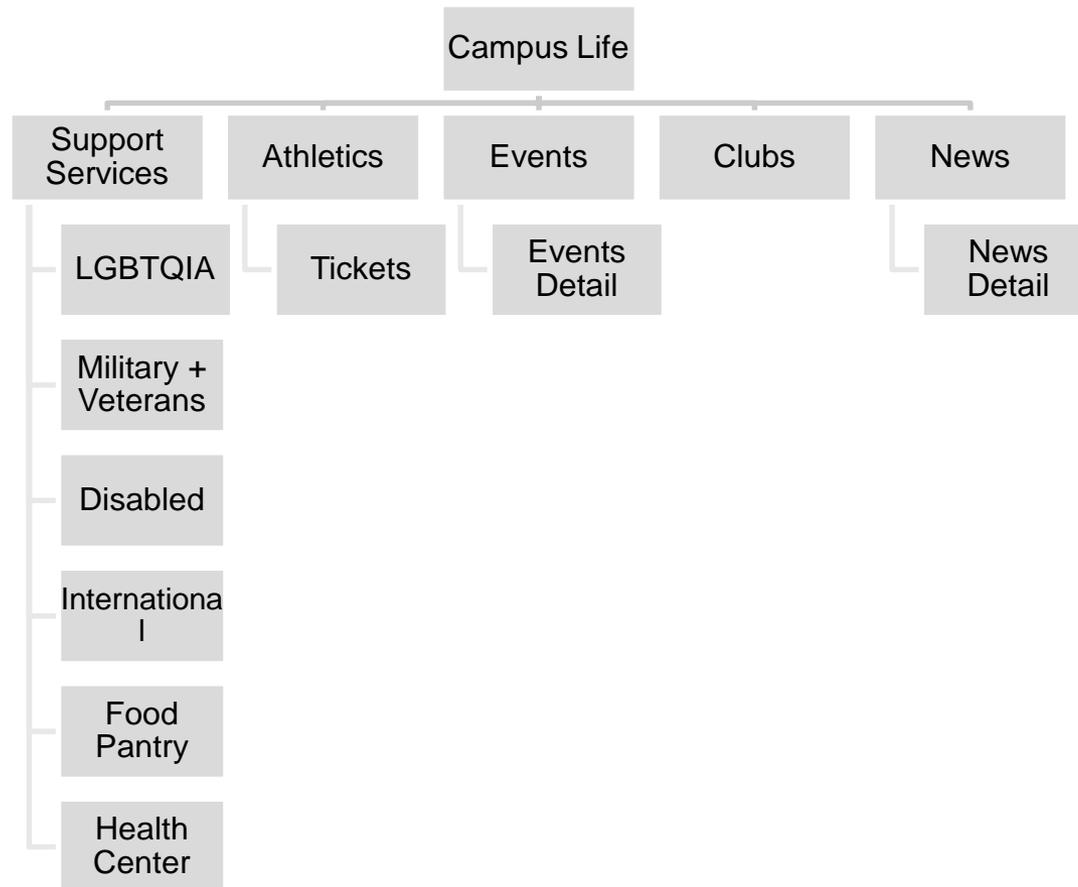
# Global Secondary Navigation: Academics



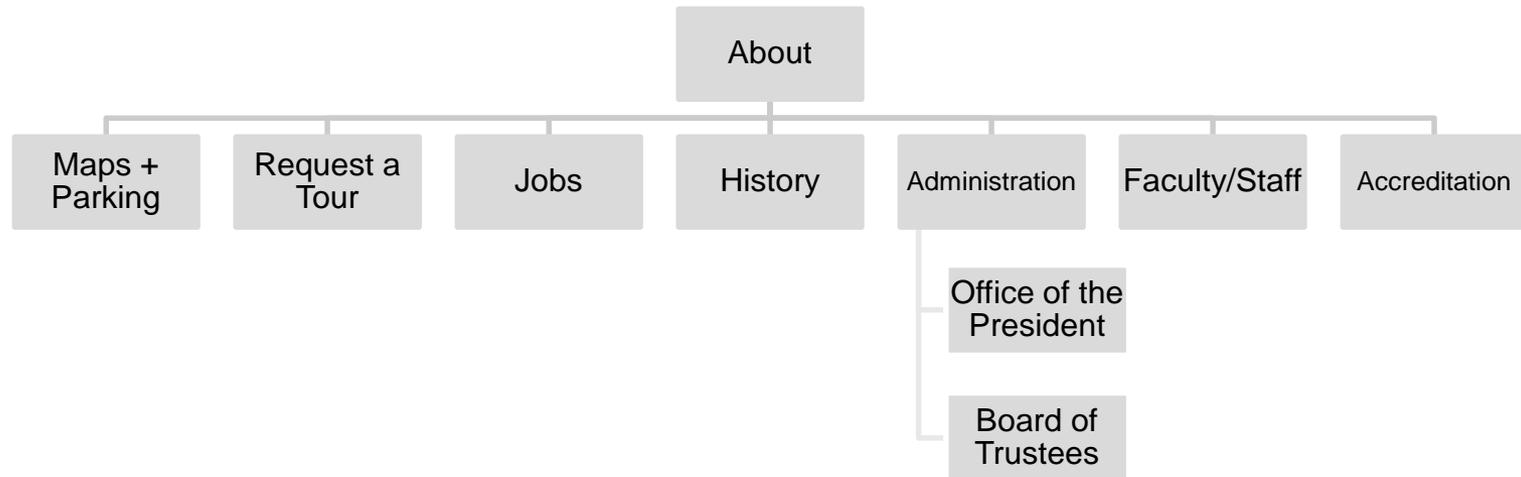
# Global Secondary Navigation: Admissions + Aid



# Global Secondary Navigation: Campus Life



# Global Secondary Navigation: About



# Global Sticky Auxiliary + Utility Navigations

## Sticky auxiliary navigation

For  
Prospective  
Students

For Current  
Students

For  
Faculty/Staff

## Sticky utility navigation

Apply Now

Register for  
a Class

Student  
Portal

A-Z Index

Search



# Global Footer

## For Alumni

- [Alumni Association](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## For Compliance

- [Accessibility](#)
- [Accreditation](#)
- [Brown Act](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Policy](#)
- [FERPA](#)

## For Faculty/Staff

- [Employee Directory](#)
- [Employee Portal](#)

## Quick Links

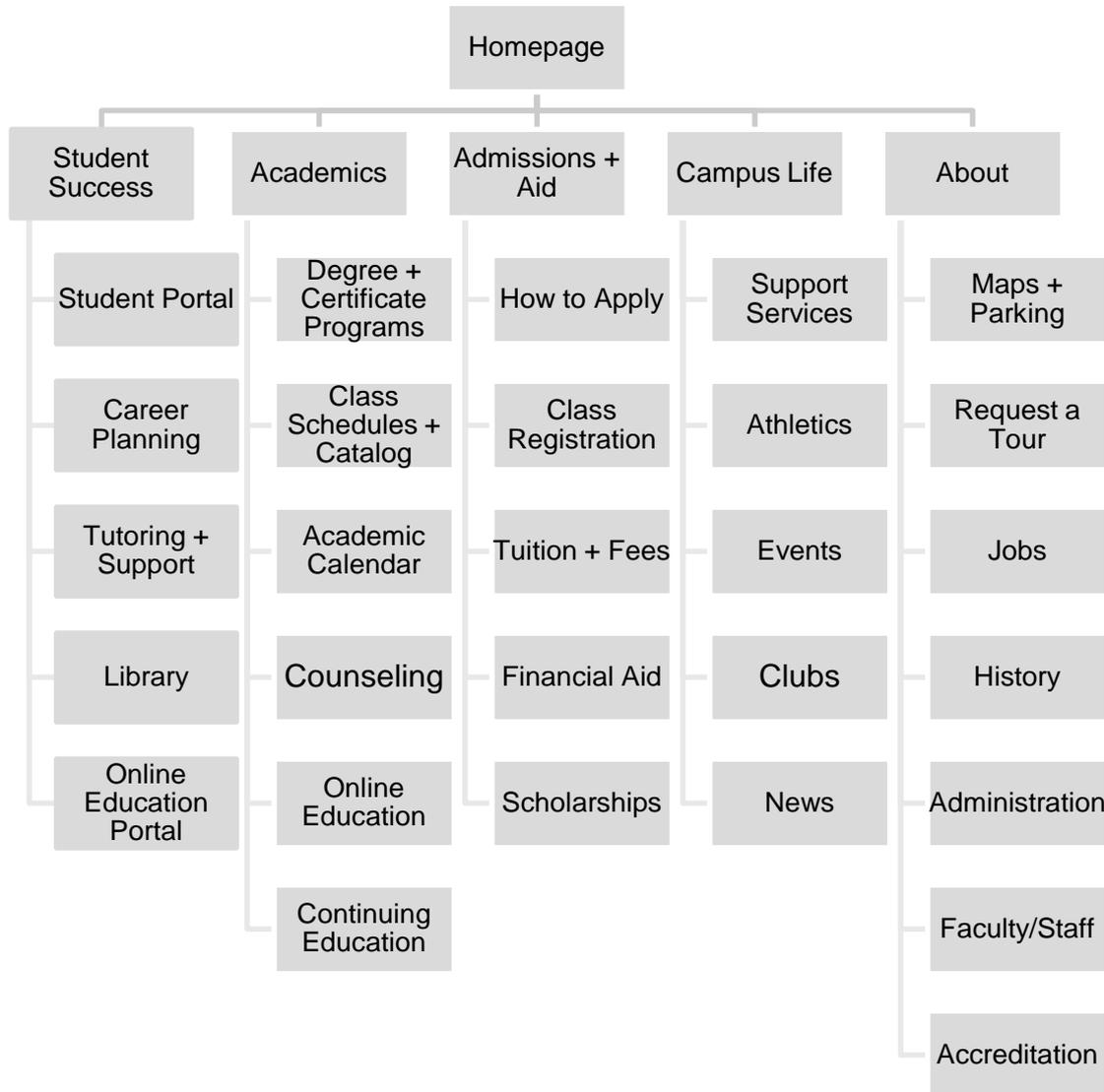
- [Apply Now](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [College Police](#)
- [Crisis Resources](#)
- [Maps + Parking](#)
- [Register for a Class](#)
- [Student Portal](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Follow Us

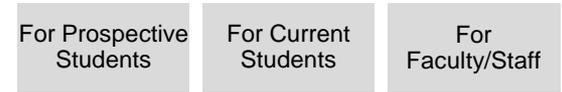
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Twitter](#)



# Comprehensive Global Sitemap



## Sticky auxiliary navigation



## Sticky utility navigation



# Initial User Flows + Wireframes



# User Flow 1: Rebecca



- 18 year old high school senior, looking forward to graduating this spring
- Exploring her options for colleges, programs and future careers, as she has not yet defined a clear path
- *Potential Student*



## Visits Site

- Via Google Search, lands on default "For Prospective Students" homepage



## Career Planning

- Follows link from homepage
- Reviews potential career paths and plans



## Investigates Programs

- Learns about the specific programs and classes available to her



## Explores Admissions

- Reviews admission process and requirements
- Learns about fees



## Applies

- Completes an online application
- Exits site



# User Flow 2: Rob

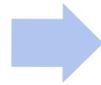


- 27 year old student at Southwest Community College
- Looking for a tutor to help him get through a chemistry program, and closer to his goal of becoming a Chemical Engineer
- *Current Student*



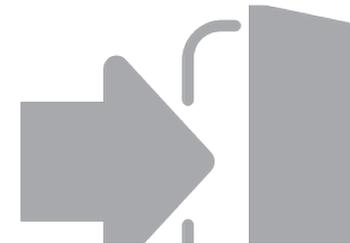
## Visits Site

- Arrives on “For Current Students” homepage



## Reviews Tutoring Options

- Follows homepage links to Tutoring + Support page
- Reviews tutoring opportunities and the available contact options

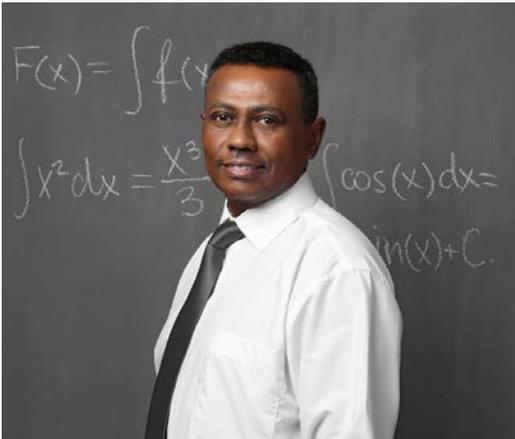


## Secures Tutoring

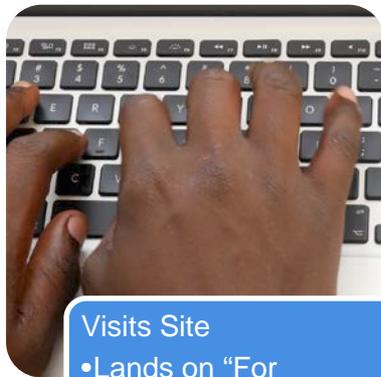
- Exits site



# User Flow 3: Fletcher



- 42 year old Mathematics professor at San Diego City College
- Wants to contact a fellow Mathematics professor to compare curriculum notes
- *Faculty/Staff*



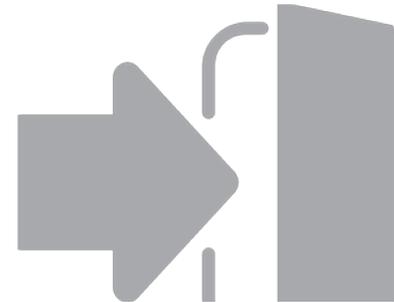
Visits Site

- Lands on "For Faculty/Staff" homepage



Employee Portal

- Follows link to the employee portal



Contacts Staff Member

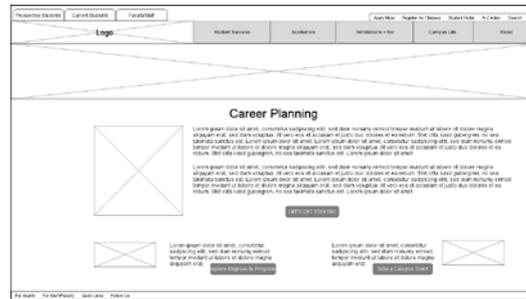
- Uses directory to find and contact desired employee
- Exits site



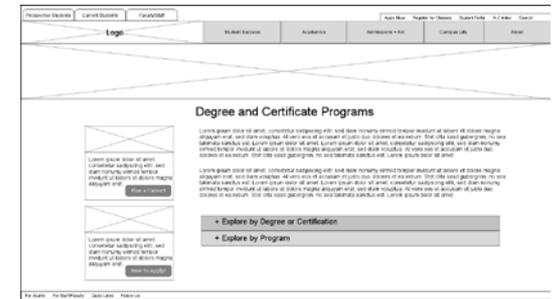
# Wireframes – Screen Flow



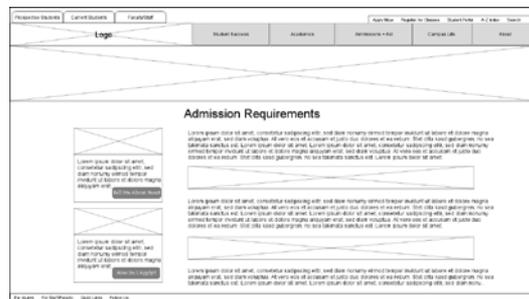
1. Home



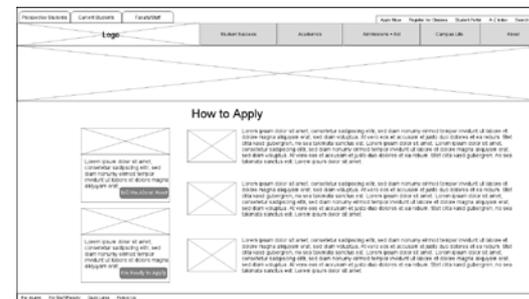
2. Career Planning



3. Degree + Certificate Programs



4. Admission Requirements



5. How to Apply



# Wireframes | Home

Prospective Students   Current Students   Faculty/Staff

Apply Now   Register for Classes   Student Portal   A-Z Index   Search

Logo

Student Success   Academics   Admissions + Aid   Campus Life   About

HERO IMAGE/BACKGROUND VIDEO

INTRO TEXT

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CALL TO ACTION   CALL TO ACTION   CALL TO ACTION   Explore Careers!

For Alumni   For Staff/Faculty   Quick Links   Follow Us



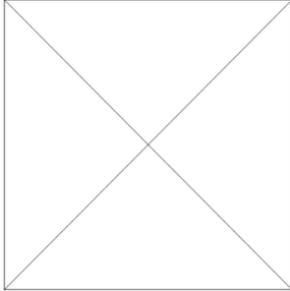
# Wireframes | Career Planning

Prospective Students   Current Students   Faculty/Staff

Apply Now   Register for Classes   Student Portal   A-Z Index   Search

Logo   Student Success   Academics   Admissions + Aid   Campus Life   About

## Career Planning



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LET'S GET STARTED



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Explore Degrees & Program

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Take a Campus Tour!



For Alumni   For Staff/Faculty   Quick Links   Follow Us



# Wireframes | Degree + Certificate Programs

[Prospective Students](#) [Current Students](#) [Faculty/Staff](#)

[Apply Now](#) [Register for Classes](#) [Student Portal](#) [A-Z Index](#) [Search](#)

 [Student Success](#) [Academics](#) [Admissions + Aid](#) [Campus Life](#) [About](#)

## Degree and Certificate Programs



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[Plan a Career!](#)



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[How To Apply!](#)

[+ Explore by Degree or Certification](#)

[+ Explore by Program](#)

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# Wireframes | Admission Requirements

Prospective Students   Current Students   Faculty/Staff

Apply Now   Register for Classes   Student Portal   A-Z Index   Search

Logo   Student Success   Academics   Admissions + Aid   Campus Life   About

## Admission Requirements

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[Tell Me About Fees!](#)

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[How Do I Apply?](#)

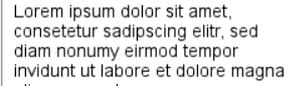
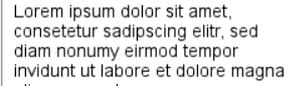
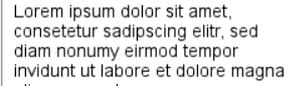
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Prospective Students	Current Students	Faculty/Staff	Apply Now	Register for Classes	Student Portal	A-Z Index	Search						
Logo			Student Success	Academics	Admissions + Aid	Campus Life	About						
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# Technology Thought-Starters



# Technology

During phase 1 discovery, we learned about the need to implement a stable, scalable, easy-to-use Content Management System (CMS) platform. A huge benefit is the ability to use this platform as a tool to enable governance that will significantly **improve and streamline** the day-to-day operations of the college website – in this case, the website being the place the majority of users begin their college journey.

While each college website may have their own specific needs or heritage CMS, it's **critical** to maintain a student-first approach and develop an architecture, content strategy and look/feel that create seamless consistency across the region.

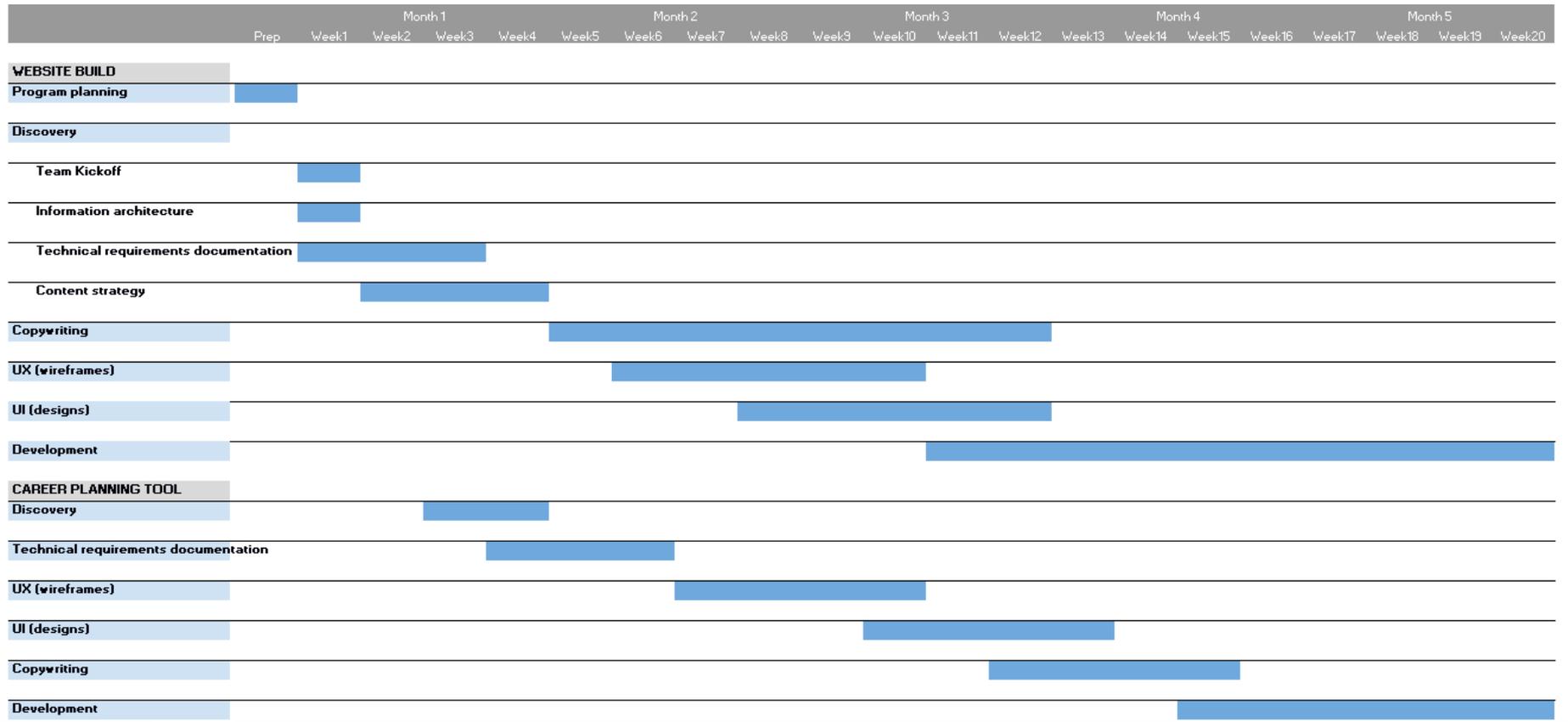
As we move into Phase 2 discussions with each participating college, we will undergo a proper assessment and technology recommendation which will allow for legacy content to be transferred to the new website while creating efficiencies not only in developing the series of sites, but also in how we train key personnel to manage each site moving forward.



# Potential Timeline



# Potential 20 Week Timeline



# How We'll Work Together

In order to execute a quality program and meet intended timelines, we'll collaborate via:

- Participation in frequent review meetings and brainstorms
- Commitment to two rounds of reviews
- Commitment to provide feedback within 2 business days
- A single point of contact for each college website program, focused on:
  - Day to day program coordination and decision making
  - Consolidation and prioritization of stakeholder feedback
  - Arranging calls and meetings to review work-in-progress
  - Maintaining a sense of urgency to keep a consistent cadence



# Next Steps



# What Happens Next?

- SDICCCA to socialize to colleges
- Civilian and SDICCCA to secure technology partner
- Begin program planning and kick off Phase 2

