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

September 13, 2018

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- Strategic Vision
- Imperatives for Success
- User Testing
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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

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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

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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.



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

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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)

• Parents

Teachers

Counselors

- Internal • Faculty
- Staff
 - Media

External

• Employers

Donors

- Nonprofit organizations
- Public servants

Civilian and SDICCCA

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

Build a reputation as a trusted source for:

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

Prioritize student success by:

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Internal

Faculty

Staff

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Community

- Parents
- Teachers

Counselors

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



Imperatives for Success

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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

- 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-toend 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

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Why Test Our Sitemap?

TO GAIN INSIGHTS

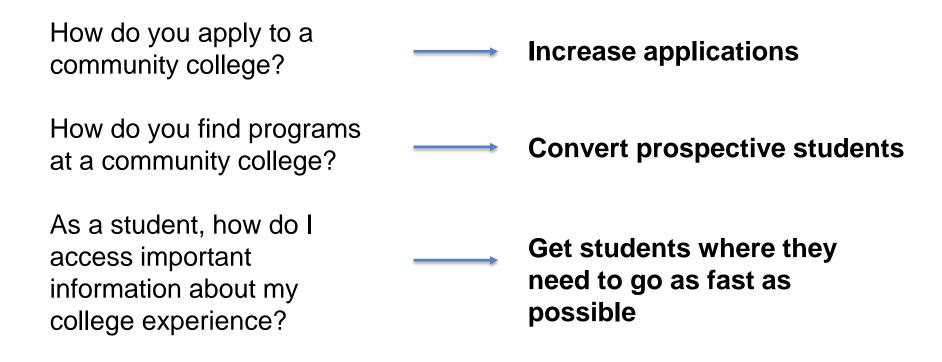
- Determine how easily users can find information, and exactly where they get lost
- Confirm the nomenclature makes sense, or how to improve it based on common student language

TO VALIDATE OUR THINKING

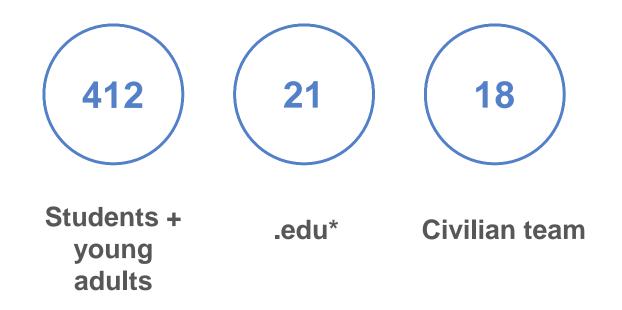
- Understand if content is grouped logically, or how to improve it
- Validate the proposed Information Architecture structure and nomenclature

User Testing Objectives

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



User Testing Audience



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.

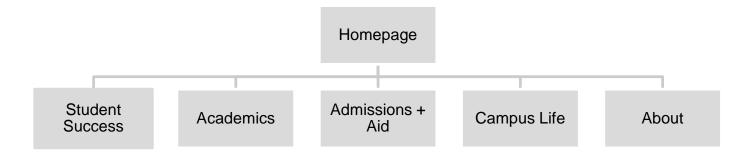
- Content clarity for prospective students vs current students
- Content organization within Student Success vs Academics
- Opportunity to push Career Planning content in strategic places
- Academics to include information about online/continuing education vs Admissions + Aid to include specific direction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

Recommended Sitemap

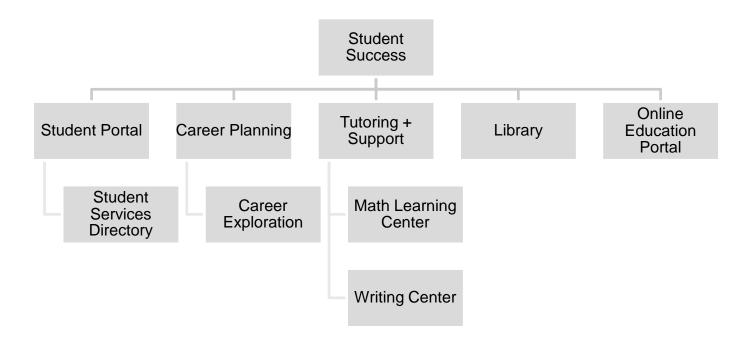
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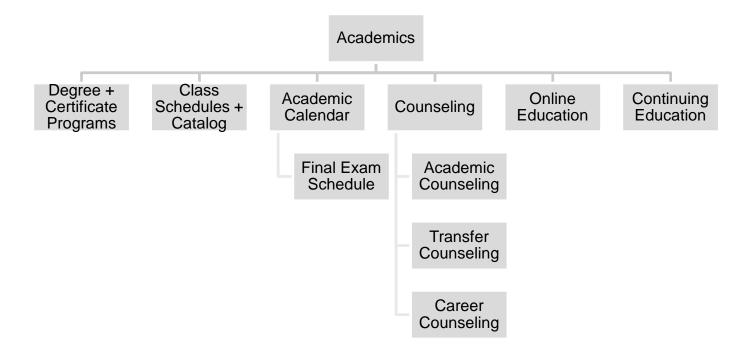
Global Primary Navigation



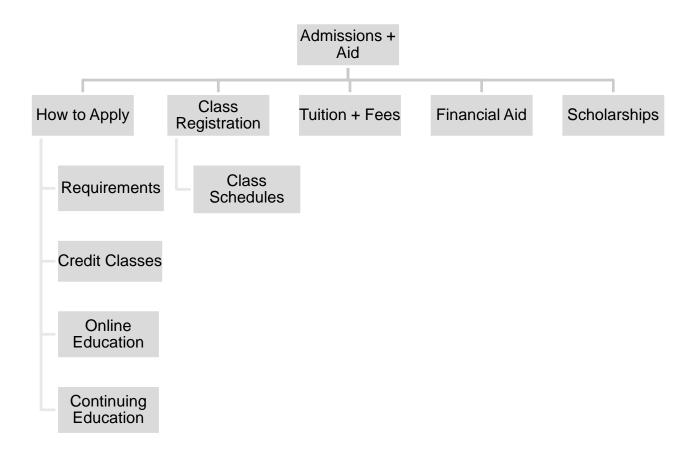
Global Secondary Navigation: Student Success



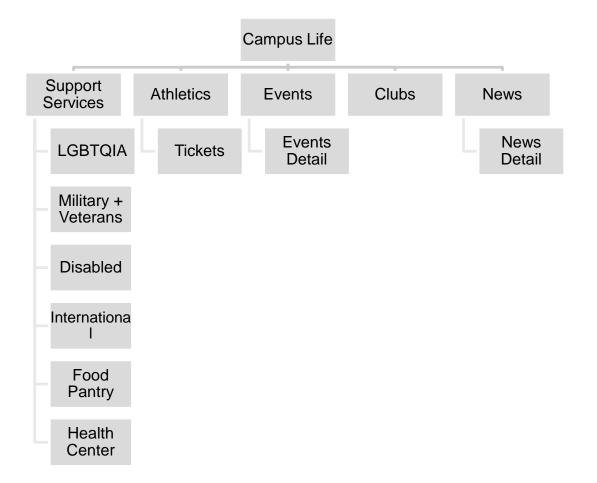
Global Secondary Navigation: Academics



Global Secondary Navigation: Admissions + Aid

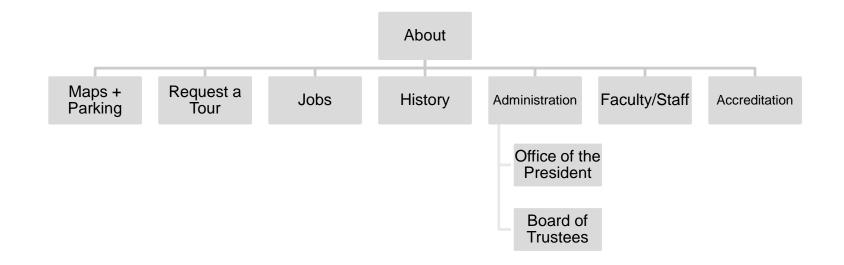


Global Secondary Navigation: Campus Life



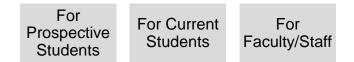
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Global Secondary Navigation: About



Global Sticky Auxiliary + Utility Navigations

Sticky auxiliary navigation



Sticky utility navigation



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Global Footer

For Alumni

- Alumni Association
- Contact Us
- For Compliance
 - Accessibility Accreditation
- Accredita
 - Brown Act
 - Equal Opportunity Policy
 - FERPA

- For Faculty/Staff
 - Employee Directory
 - Employee Portal
- Bookstore

Quick Links

- Collogo Dolig

Apply Now

- College Police
- Crisis Resources
- Maps + Parking
- Register for a Class
- Student Portal
- Contact Us

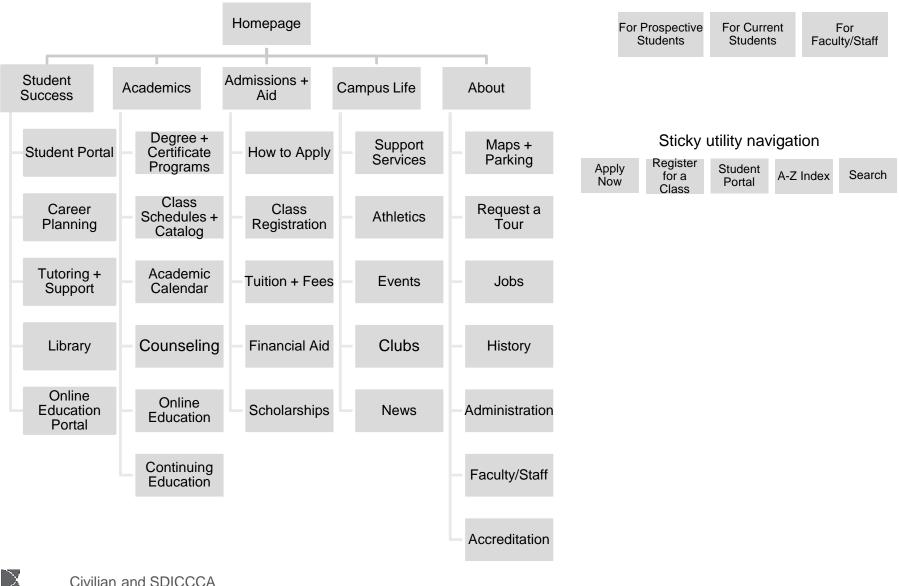
Follow Us

- \rightarrow Facebook
- \rightarrow Instagram
- ightarrow LinkedIn
- \rightarrow Twitter



Comprehensive Global Sitemap

Sticky auxiliary navigation



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Initial User Flows + Wireframes

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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

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•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



AppliesCompletes an online applicationExits site

User Flow 2: Rob



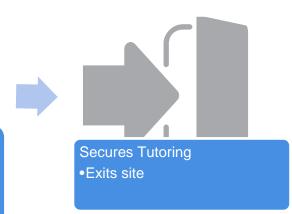
- 27 year old student at Southwest Community College
- Looking for a tutor to help him get through a chemistry program, and closer to his goal of becoming a Chemical Engineer
- Current Student



Visits Site •Arrives on "For Current Students" homepage

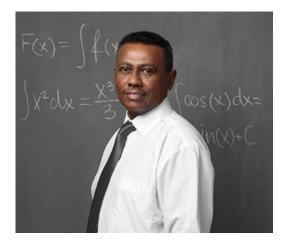


Reviews Tutoring Options
Follows homepage links to Tutoring + Support page
Reviews tutoring opportunities and the available contact options

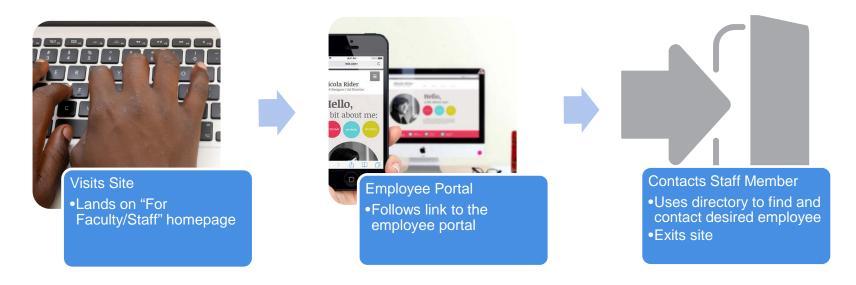


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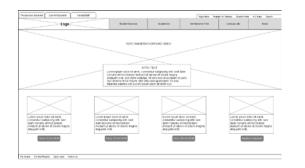
User Flow 3: Fletcher

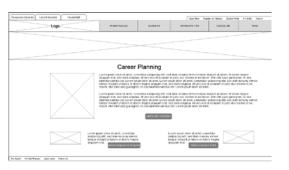


- 42 year old Mathematics professor at San Diego City College
- Wants to contact a fellow Mathematics professor to compare curriculum notes
- Faculty/Staff



Wireframes – Screen Flow







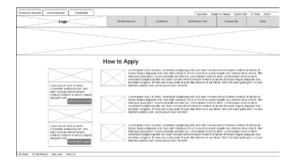
1. Home

2. Career Planning

3. Degree + Certificate Programs

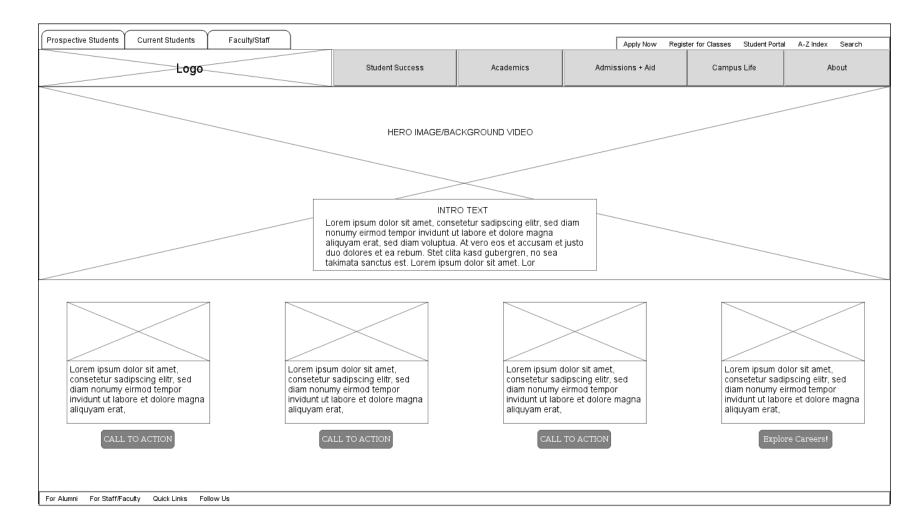
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4. Admission Requirements



5. How to Apply

Wireframes | Home



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Wireframes | Career Planning

Prospective Students	Current Students Faculty/Staff Apply Now Register for Classes Student Portal A-Z In											
	Logo			Student Success	Academics	Admissions + Aid	Campus Life	About				
	Career Planning											
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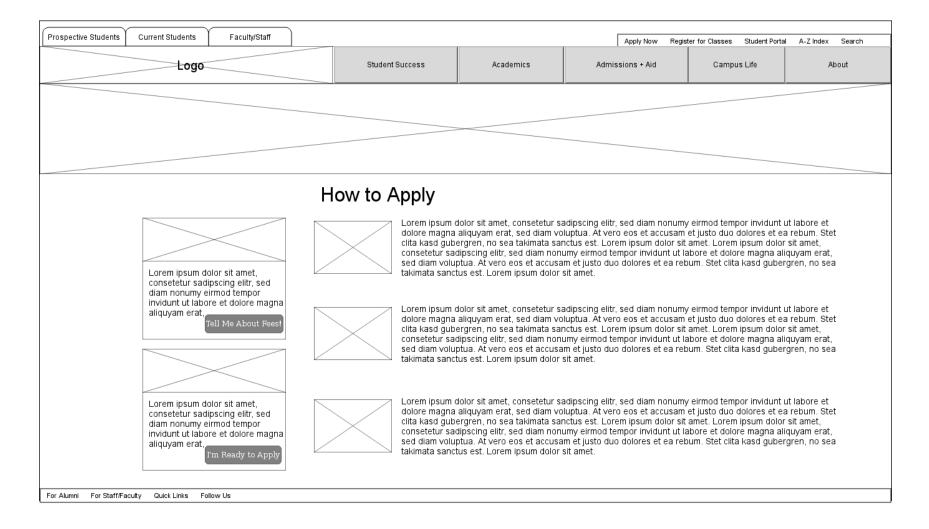
Wireframes | Degree + Certificate Programs

Prospective Students	Current Students	Faculty/Staff	Apply Now Regis	ter for Classes Student Porta	A-Zindex Search				
	Logo		Student Success	Academics	Admissions + Aid	Campus Life	About		
			Degree and Cer	tificate Prog	rams				
	Description of the program of the								
For Alumni For Staff/Fa	culty Quick Links Folk	low Us							

Wireframes | Admission Requirements

Prospective Students	Current Students	Faculty/Staff			Apply Now Reg	ster for Classes Student Porta	I A-Z Index Search
	Logo		Student Success	Academics	Admissions + Aid	Campus Life	About
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Wireframes | How to Apply



Technology Recommendation



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Technology Recommendation

During the phase 1 discovery, we learned of the need to implement a stable, scalable, easy-to-use Content Management System (CMS) platform that supports a new user experience and content approach across ~10 participating colleges within the SD/IMP region.

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

A huge benefit of this approach is the ability to use this platform as a tool to enable governance that will significantly improve and streamline the day-today operations of the college website – in this case, the website being the place the majority of users begin their college journey.

Technology Recommendation

We're exploring CMS models and technologies that provide the following benefits:

- **Increased efficiencies** Content should be published easily and efficiently as editing and revisions should not require visual design or coding knowledge
- Better SEO Increase search engine ranking
- **Repeatable process** Workflow is a core feature of any good CMS; irrespective of how basic a workflow needs might be, workflows will ensure you maintain control over content
- Security As a SaaS based service
- **Scalability** Automatically scale to add websites, digital assets and manage traffic fluctuations with unlimited platform users
- **Support** Pick up the phone and reach support for simple to complex requests
- **Future proof** Content flexibility across a variety of platforms not limited to the website: Amazon Alexa, Mobile Apps, Video Games, VR Experience...

Potential Timeline

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High-level Timeline

	Month 1				Month 2			Month 3			Month 4				Month 5					
					Oct 29-Nov 2	Nov 5-9	Nov 12-16	Nov 19-23					Dec 24-28	Dec 31-Jan 4	Jan 7-11	Jan 14-18				Feb 11-15
					Sprint 5	Sprint 6	Sprint 7	Sprint 8					Sprint 13	Sprint 14	Sprint 15	Sprint 16				Sprint 20
MIRACOSTA																				
Discovery + Content Strategy + IA																				
User Experience Wireframes + IT Structure																				
Visual Design Prototypes + Client Approvals																				
Development + QA																				
Final Handoff + Documentation/Training + Launch																				

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

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What Happens Next?

- Initiate MiraCosta website execution October 2018
- Onboard Grossmont, Cuyamaca, Imperial Valley January 2019
- Confirm scope of work for remaining institutions May 2019

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