

A Proposal  
for  
San Antonio College's Website  
(2012)

Prepared for  
Public Relations Staff  
San Antonio College  
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## A PROPOSAL FOR SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE'S WEBSITE

### Introduction

We are submitting this proposal to San Antonio College's Public Information Officer, Julie Cooper and Webmaster, Mark Goodspeed after a meeting we had with them on October 11, 2012. During our meeting, our class was informed that the previous San Antonio College website was part of an inconsistent family of websites that were not in collaboration with the Alamo District. To our understanding, San Antonio College's previous website was a separate entity from the Alamo District and had several links to individual department websites that had no real cohesion. These problems, along with the inconsistencies in usability and formatting, initiated the change that took place last year, when the Alamo Colleges District replaced all of the old websites with new web content software made by a company named Ektron. The web content software allows faculty, designers, and developers to work together while creating content for the new website (Ektron 2012). The decision to change the websites was made by a district committee to make all of the Alamo Colleges more accessible through one website, to improve the site's usability, and to create a user friendly webpage that makes it easier to obtain information about each individual college within the Alamo District.

During the course of the meeting we were also informed that no usability testing was done specifically on the San Antonio College (SAC) website. Neilson's Usability 101, a technical communication's expert guide, and Blast, an online marketing company, support the idea that usability testing is required during the implementation of new web pages. According to Blast, "Usability studies are proven to decrease support costs, increase user satisfaction, and save on development and redesign efforts" (Blast 2012).

Our proposal will highlight how performing usability testing will benefit SAC's website's features and usability. The content of our proposal will include:

- The statement of the problem will identify problems the SAC website experiences and how lack of usability testing is linked to those problems.
- The solution portion will discuss some of the benefits San Antonio College, and its website, will experience if our proposal is accepted.
- The scope portion of the proposal will elaborate on the limitations of our solution and who will be doing the testing.
- The methods portion will outline how we plan to execute our usability testing, and the focus of our usability testing.
- The schedule of work section will inform the audience of when testing will be done
- The conclusion will restate the solution along with the benefits our proposal offers.

### Statement of the Problem

No usability testing was done for the new San Antonio College website prior to its implementation. Though Julie Cooper and Mark Goodspeed mentioned that Ektron probably does its own usability testing before submitting its final product, usability testing should have been done for the SAC website. Usability testing on SAC's website would have shown user interface issues or compatibility issues with local users' mobile devices and computers. The results of usability testing would have given better information to the committees involved regarding whether the new website was mobile device friendly.

Mobile devices are being used more often to access the Internet because of their portability and convenience. Using cell devices while looking at the SAC website is possible, but difficult due to the lack of specific formatting for mobile devices. Our group collected anecdotal evidence regarding the use and compatibility of mobile devices with the SAC website through unofficial interviews with other students and the use of our own mobile devices. Some of the findings of our initial task analysis include:

1. The small screen size of many mobile devices make it impossible to read or see anything on the website without zooming in.
  - Some devices do not have the option to zoom in to see small pictures or print.
  - Once zoomed in, scrolling to view the words and pictures can become difficult
  - Devices that allow for one finger scrolling (use one's finger to push the images on screen from side to side) can cause the user to accidentally push a link and get re-directed to a new website.
2. Connectivity is slow between the SAC website and mobile devices.
  - Better Wi-Fi may help the issue of slow loading times, but a useable application created specifically for mobile devices will solve this problem completely.

## **Proposed Solution**

We propose performing usability testing on the San Antonio College website specific to mobile devices. Usability testing on mobile devices, specifically mobile devices, will benefit the SAC website because people commonly use their individual mobile devices in the absence of a computer. By tailoring the site to this format, the user base will expand, keeping more people informed about San Antonio College while keeping up with the technological standards of modern students. Though students will be the primary beneficiaries from any changes that occur due to usability testing, the families of students, prospective students, and SAC faculty will also benefit.

The benefits of usability testing include:

- Decrease in support costs (Blast 2012)
- Decrease in user frustration (Nielsen 2012)
- Prevention of web page re-design (Ektron, Blast 2012)
- Increase of user base (Blast 2012)
- Increases accessibility of information (Nielsen 2012)
- Our usability testing will be based on a volunteer basis, costing San Antonio College and the Alamo District nothing to perform.
- An overall benefit of usability testing is that it helps devise solutions to potential problems before they arise.

## Scope

Testing of the site's mobile compatibility will be conducted during class time (Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10 am and 12 pm) under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Irvin, the Professor of Technical Writing 2311-002 at San Antonio College. For our usability test, we will gather as many as five volunteers who use mobile devices to access the internet on a regular basis. By testing no more than five students, we will avoid important information being diluted due to the redundancy this type of testing tends to display (Nielson 2012).

The scope of our usability testing will revolve around the site's compatibility with mobile devices. We will not perform testing for the purpose of changing and enhancing the content or structure of the website, nor will our team delve into the other aspects of the site. The purpose of our testing will be to reveal the design flaws that affect the compatibility of the website with mobile devices.

The range of testing that we perform will fall within the limits of each tester's personal mobile device. Hardware varies among devices, so the data capabilities of each device will be different. Devices will have fluctuating load times due to these physical differences and the fact that users will rely on their mobile device's network to provide available data. The site's compatibility with mobile devices will ensure that the latency between the devices will be as small as possible considering hardware differences.

## Methods

The first step for usability testing is to gather no more than five people who frequently use their mobile devices to access the Internet. By testing no more than five students, we will avoid important information being obscured or buried due to the redundancy this type of testing tends to display (Nielson 2012). Once testers arrive at the test site for the usability testing, they will be asked to access the SAC website from their personal mobile devices.

Our team will observe and listen to each tester, allowing them to "Think Aloud", while keeping track of how long it takes them to find the requested information. The "Thinking Aloud" method of testing allows users to say what is on their mind as they use a website. This form of testing will enable us to understand what the users are experiencing during the testing (Nielson 2012). Our testing will primarily consist of simple observations followed by a recommendation regarding the SAC website in light of our findings. We may use what is called "Iterative Design" (Nielson's Usability 101) which requires us to perform two usability tests in order to refine our recommendation down to a final report to be submitted to the SAC Public Relations Office and Webmasters.

Before testing begins, we will ask some preliminary questions such as:

- How often do you frequent the SAC website throughout a semester?
- How well do you think the website is set up?
- Do you find it easy or difficult to navigate the website with your mobile device?

Once we have asked our questions, we will begin the usability testing which will consist of our team asking the students to find a useful piece of information on the SAC website, such as the Calendar of Events or information regarding the Financial Aid office. After the testing is complete, we will ask our testers to answer some exit questions, so that we may attempt to rate their experiences. The exit questions may consist of questions like:

- What task did you find the easiest to perform?
- Why do you think it was easy/hard? Did you like how the SAC website worked with your mobile

device?

- What problems did you experience while on the SAC website?
- What do you think can be done to make the SAC website easier to use on a mobile device?

## **Schedule of Work**

11/6 -- Usability Test Plan Draft

11/8 -- Draft Revision

11/13 -- Revised Usability Test Plan

11/15 -- Pilot Testing Usability Test

11/20 -- Usability Testing

11/22 & 23 -- Thanksgiving Break

11/27 -- Usability Testing

11/29 -- Report Writing

12/4 -- Report Writing

12/6 -- Final Draft Report

## **Conclusion**

The inability to successfully access the SAC website via mobile device is a problem because the SAC website is a treasure of information pertaining to deadlines, financial aid, clubs, and other vital information related to school. Ektron agrees with our assertion by saying, "Your website should be optimized for not only desktop web users, but also for mobile device users" (Ektron 2011).

We believe usability testing can provide a solution to the ever growing limitations that SAC's website has brought to mobile device users. As more users transition to mobile devices, the limitations will become more obvious. Usability testing will help ease that transition by providing valuable information about how mobile users accept the website as a utility.

Usability testing on the San Antonio College website provides many benefits. Our testing will supply information on the difficulties mobile device users experience on the website. This information will assist the San Antonio College's Public Information Office in fixing and updating the SAC website.

## References

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