

A Usability Test Plan
for
The San Antonio College Website
(2012)

Prepared for
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San Antonio, Texas

by
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Comment [LI1]: Very nice cover page.

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Purpose

The purpose of this document will outline a plan for conducting a usability test of the San Antonio College website. The test plan covers problems/objectives, a user profile, methods, test environment, monitor roles, and evaluation measures.

The purpose of this usability test is to evaluate the usability for non-traditional students on the site. When the SAC website was designed no usability test was conducted and therefore there are certain issues with the navigation of the site and its content. In order to have a successful product, there should be a good understanding of the user and what they might be searching. Without a proper usability test there is no accurate measurement of how effective the SAC website is for users, this should be considered a limiting factor in the overall success of San Antonio College. Performing a usability test and collecting the data from the subjects will help figure out if the site is effective. The website for Blast Analytics and Marketing (BAM) suggests, "if you don't have solid data about how users experience your site, a usability study provides qualitative feedback and helps improve your interactive experience."

Comment [LI2]: You are getting in to the problem here.

The reason for performing a usability test is we as the facilitators want a better understand what problems the SAC website may have that potentially needs adjusting. All the links should lead to useful tools and information that will benefit the students in some way. Many times instead of the website helping students it becomes more of a frustration. According to Jakob Nielsen's Usability 101, "usability is a quality attribute that assesses how easy user interfaces are to use". BAM also incorporates the idea of testing a site because it "measures behavior, not preference." The user may not know exactly what they want but with this method of testing and observing it would help to "understand what best supports their goals and motivations." Students need the proper information and tools in order to succeed in their student careers aiding them with their future ambitions.

This report will provide a problem statement about the background on the issue/problem our product was designed to address as well as test objectives focusing on the objectives we hope to achieve. A user profile is also part of this report that gives a detailed description of our user. This usability test plan has a testing methodology section that includes a general description and a script for our test. Also included is the test environment/equipment describing where the test will be conducted and any equipment needed. Another section of the plan will describe the roles of each "test monitor". Finally, the evaluation measures which will include actual data gathered from the usability test.

Comment [LI3]: I think this list could have been handled more sharply and clearly.

Problem Statement/Test Objectives

A current poll of students has indicated San Antonio College website content is typically difficult to navigate, usually referred to at the beginning of a semester, used for registration, financial aid, or to reference the academic calendar. This means the majority of site content is not being utilized; students are not being encouraged to visit the site, or are simply not interested in doing so. This leads us to infer students have been able to find only the minimum

of what they need from the website but are often unaware of what the website has to offer.

In an interview, Public Information Officer Julie Cooper and Webmaster Mark Goodspeed, both contributors to the website, acknowledged that no testing for usability by SAC staff or students was conducted on the website. Without a proper usability test there is no accurate measurement of how effective the SAC website is for users.

Comment [LI4]: Good section!

Test objectives will identify where non-traditional students may encounter difficulties when using the SAC website. Specifically, the test will evaluate the registration or payment processes and enrollment in appropriate classes according to degree plan. Test objectives will evaluate how well a non-traditional student is able to find links to on-campus resources such as library, campus book store, or campus map that will help the student locate a classroom or office. Test objectives will also evaluate how easily non-traditional students are able to access instructor contact information, academic calendar, information about appropriate student organizations and how to join.

Deleted: in

User Profile

The target user is a non-traditional student. In a study conducted by the Institute of Educational Sciences, a non-traditional student meets one or more of the following criteria.

- Delays enrollment (does not enter postsecondary education in the same calendar year that he or she finished high school);
- Attends part time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others);
- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated and has dependents); or
- Does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED or other high school completion certificate or did not finish high school).

Non-traditional students are likely to have greater time constraints than traditional students and may rely more heavily on off-campus or internet based resources and school websites than traditional students. They need links that will quickly lead to precise instruction for registration, transcript transfers, and tuition. Valid information for degree or certificate plans, financial aid and academic calendars should be easily accessible. Non-traditional students need to easily find links to student organizations and campus activities using off-campus sources.

Testing Methodology

Overview of the Test:

The test plan will be following the principles of Jakob Nielsen and the UT-Austin usability website. Our group will perform a usability test that will measure the user's ease of using the San Antonio College website. The Pre-test Activities will include greeting the participant and making sure they understand that we are not evaluating them, but are looking for the usability of the SAC website. We will also introduce them to a set of entrance questions to get some general information, so we can later understand better who the user is and their circumstances. Next, the facilitator will be providing the user with ten scenarios for each question. The user will be informed to talk-aloud, thus giving us the chance to note their behavior. According to Jakob Nielsen, "zero users give zero insights", a single test user will provide "almost a third of all there is to know about the usability of the design." Previous studies found in our research, demonstrated that five subjects have been proven sufficient for outlining common problems. Nielsen states why five users are "good enough", after the fifth user the observations are the "same findings repeatedly but not learning much new" information.

Comment [LI5]: Maybe use format to highlight the differences in the part of the plan.

Comment [LI6]: Nice use of Nielsen!!!

We will have a set of tasks for each student to perform and ask each student to access information that is useful to students. We will be noting any errors made, if the student can repeat the task without errors and their overall satisfaction of the experience. Nielsen wrote in his book *Usability Engineering*, 'In a thinking aloud test, you ask test participants to use the system while continuously thinking out loud — that is, simply verbalizing their thoughts as they move through the user interface.' After the user is done with the test, the facilitator will then ask a set of exit questions about how they felt after the tasks, what the user was tested on and any feedback or complaints of their experience with the site. With the information collected from the usability test, we will indicate problems areas for the college to improve. The school will have information from a student level of the way in which the SAC website affects their experience as a SAC student. This information will also show the links and design in which are most effective.

Pre-Test Script given by first facilitator:

-Welcome and thank you for your time and participation in our usability test for the San Antonio College website. We would like to make clear this is a test of the website and not your personal abilities. There is no right or wrong answer to any questions asked. Please do not be nervous and let us know if there is anything we can do to make you feel more comfortable.

Comment [LI7]: I like this section.

-First we will ask you some basic demographic information. These are simple questions about yourself and your back ground.

-Second we will give you ten scenarios; we encourage you to speak out loud about any

thoughts while performing each task. We are looking for thoughts on frustration, ease of use, surprise or confusion. While we will not be responding to anything said we are interested in any and all thoughts about the website during your use.

-Third we will ask you questions about how you felt after the tasks are completed. We are looking for your feedback of your overall experience.

Do you have any questions before we begin? We will have you fill out an entrance questions form then (facilitator's name) will be giving you the scenarios for this test.

Entrance Questions: (to be filled out by participant)

1. Are you female or male?
2. What is your age?
3. Are you a returning student or online student or both?
4. Before returning to school what was the most education completed? (Circle One)

-Some High School- -High school Diploma- -Some college- -Certificate- -Associates-
-Bachelors- -Masters-

5. How often do you use the SAC website? (Circle One)

-Everyday- -Every other day- -Once a week- -Once every two weeks- -Once a month-
-At beginning of term-

6. What do you use the SAC website for?

Task Questions:

1. The spring semester is starting in a few months and you would like to see what courses are available for spring. There is still one class on your degree plan you need to take, GOVT 2305-004. Find a class to fit your morning schedule before 11:00 am.
2. You have just registered as a student at SAC. You need to apply for financial aid before the deadline to get priority processing. Find the page on where to apply for financial aid and any information on forms to fill out.
3. Classes start next week. You are new to the school and need to find out where all your classrooms are located. Find a map of the campus so you won't be lost.
4. You have just registered for classes and are now eager to get your books before there are

Comment [LI8]: I already posted comments on the Write Place on draft. These are tough questions.

none left. Find the bookstore website and the necessary books for your GOVT 2305-004 class. Make sure to note how much your books will cost.

5. You are a newly registered student. This is your first semester and you are looking forward to getting your Associate of Applied Science in International Business. Find your degree plan so you know what classes to take and are not wasting money on unnecessary classes.

6. Congratulations. You have been very successful in your college career with a GPA of 3.8. You now qualify for Phi Theta Kappa. This will be amazing for your resume. Find the information for whom to contact about joining.

7. Thanksgiving is coming up and this means a break from classes. You are unsure if it is the whole week or only a couple days off. Find the correct dates so you do not miss any classes.

8. You are register in Dr.Lennie Irvin's Technical writing course. You have a family emergency and will not be able to make it to class next week. You need to find Dr. Irvin's contact information to tell him and get any necessary homework you will miss. Find his office telephone number and e-mail address.

9. You are in an American Sign Language (ASL) course this semester. The requirements for the class include attending 2 Deaf events. You need to find out what events are available to go to. Use the SAC website to find two events to attend in the month of November.

10. You need to write a research paper about Hurricanes, what causes them and the destruction they leave behind. Since you have a busy schedule you need to use the library resources to find your first source of information. Find an e-book that contains the content you need.

Now (facilitator's name) will be asking you some exit questions.

Exit Questions:

1. How do you feel after using the site? On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 feeling good about your experience and 5 feeling frustrated.
2. Which task did you find the most difficult?
3. Was there any point in which you felt more frustrated?
4. Which task did you find to be easy?
5. Was there anything about the site you liked?
6. Was there anything about the site you disliked?
7. Do you have any suggestion for the website?

Thank you again for your time and participation.

Test Environment/Equipment

Testing will take place at San Antonio College in the Gonzales Hall; in room 216. We will be performing our test in the computer lab. The computers that will be tested on have Internet Explorer, which is the browser we will use. The operating system of the computers we are using for our usability test is Windows. This test will be under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Irvin. The testing will take place on 11/20-11/27 and will begin at 10:50 AM through 12:05 PM; testers will not need to bring any supplies. Anything needed for testing will be provided by the facilitator.

Comment [LI9]: A bit more detailed on the computers and applications used.

Test Monitor Roles

Four people will be involved in rotating through the role as facilitator. The first person will facilitate the entrance dialogue and questions to the participant. A second person will then facilitate for the task scenarios, taking care not to lead the participant in any way towards or away from the correct path of the tasks. After the tasks are complete a third person will facilitate the exit questions to the participant. During the entirety of the test there will be three core roles for test monitoring; the facilitator, the data logger and the observers.

- The facilitator's role:

The first facilitator will greet and explain how the usability process works. They will address any question or concerns the participants might have.

The second facilitator will set the scene for the various scenarios without leading the tester's actions. They will encourage the tester to vocalize their thoughts about the website as they are performing each task and ask questions to solicit participant's thoughts if needed.

The third facilitator will ask the participant exit questions about how they felt while using the website.

Comment [LI10]: 3 facilitators? Wow.

- The data logger will sit next to the participant and record any reactions the tester has to each task. They will keep watch and record how many clicks it takes the participant to arrive at the desired location in the website. They will also be recording any comments made by the participants.
- The test observers will stand or sit at a distance away in order to keep from crowding the participant. They too will be looking for and noting any behaviors, reactions or comments from the participant during the performance of each task.

Evaluation Measures

Before beginning the test we will use an entrance questionnaire to obtain data about our test subjects. We will let the tester know that we will be asking them to perform certain task. As well, let the tester know they should not be nervous about making mistakes. Informing the

subjects that this test is to observe how easily the website is navigated, not their personal mistakes. As the tester we will ask that they vocalize any thoughts about the website out loud. Ex: observations about link locations, frustration, confusion, feelings of triumph over a task. We will have a recorder to refer to and then mark any of the following: comments made by the tester, their facial expression in reaction to tasks, how many mistakes are made, how many clicks it takes to fulfill the task and how long it takes the tester to complete the task.

We will use quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the testing results.
One data sheet for each specific task will have a grade scale from zero to fourWe will use quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the testing results.

Comment [LI11]: Good.

One data sheet for each specific task will have a grade scale from zero to four. (Insert sample data sheet here) Each subject can qualitatively rate their experience using the website using a zero to four scale. A rating of zero will indicate the subject had zero problems executing a specific task; a rating of four will indicate the subject experiences most difficulties. The breakdown of how we will measure the website efficiency will be as followed, the tasks will be assessed following a zero to four scaling system; zero will indicate all participants were able to successfully complete the task with no errors or extra clicks. A score of one will be given to tasks at which participants were able to complete the task making one error and or two extra clicks. A task receiving a score of one will be considered a minor problem. A score of two will be given to a task at which participants were able to complete the task making two errors and or three extra clicks. A task receiving a score of two will be considered a serious problem. A score of three will be given to a task at which participants were able to complete the task making three or more errors and or four extra clicks. Tasks receiving a score of three will be considered a critical problem. A score of four will be given to a task at which participants were able to complete making four or more errors and five or more extra clicks. A task receiving a score of four will be considered unsuccessful. An average of the scores will be taken for each task and these averages will be the final score for each task. Using these qualitative parameters we can measure difficulty each subject experienced completing specific tasks. Test subjects will be observed while they take the test, data loggers will record qualitative data such as the subject's reactions while testing, facial expressions, level of frustration or ease and specific problems encountered.

Comment [LI12]: Again, can you use document design to help you here? Can you redesign the flow of information? Formatting?

Conclusion

With the usability testing and the collected data, it will prove to us if the San Antonio College website is successful and easy to use. Our data will provide answers to what may need to be modified within the website to make it more user friendly. We are performing the test because a usability test has never been performed. This is crucial to the website because without it being tested, the school does not know how successful the website is. The effect causes a delay in financial aid offices, registration, and all around loses possible students from attending San Antonio College. The results from our testing will not only improve the websites usability, but will also help us write our analytical report in the near future.

Comment [LI13]: OK conclusion. I would not mention the analytic report here.

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[--alphabetic order!](#)

[Comments---](#)

[Very good work on this proposal overall. I probably would have tried to simplify your task-based questions, but you all plowed ahead with the questions as designed. I think consistency has its own benefit, so good decision. I believe you have some discussion about the problem and even the benefits that are out of order in the plan. Good job.](#)

[LI](#)