

MySHU Research Memorandum

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FROM: Sara Tinnick

SUBJECT: MySHU Portal Research Proposal

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VERSION: 1.0

This purpose of this memorandum is to initiate a research proposal to investigate the usage and possible revision of the MySHU portal and its related sites. This memo will introduce questions to prompt discussion about faculty, employee, and student usage of the portal, as well as their goals when accessing information. It will also discuss how research can be utilized to develop solutions to common user complaints and frustrations when accessing MySHU.

Introduction

MySHU is an online portal for students, faculty, and employees to locate pertinent information regarding classes, policies, schedules, and departments. As the online repository for all information, it is essential to everyday functionality within the university. MySHU was launched in early 2017, bringing together several older web portals used throughout Seton Hill. Currently, users must navigate between all three sites in order to locate information.

Although MySHU's function is necessary, the current interface is not delivering the information in a user-friendly fashion. Users are often directed to locations which do not exist and it is rife with page errors. Users are also taken to older sites with different names and visual layouts. The result is a confusing tangle of information which lacks consistency and frustrates the user.

The research proposed in this memo aims to solve these problems. By understanding the goals of different user groups, MySHU can be revised in a more coherent, user-friendly fashion. The research will aid in guiding revisions by revealing common use patterns, pain points, and user needs. It will also help eliminate redundant, out of date information while allowing prioritization of current the content.

Statement of Problem

MySHU is currently a combination of the MySHU landing page, Griffin's Lair, and GriffinGate. MySHU houses an overabundance of information, overwhelming the user. Once content is located, the user is typically taken off the MySHU page into Griffin's Lair. Griffin's Lair contains an equally overwhelming amount of information. Additional information is located on GriffinGate, adding a third website to the user's browsing history. The information scattered across these three sites is extremely important, however, retrieval is difficult.

The research proposed will:

- Clarify user groups and their very separate needs allowing for organization and elimination of information.
- Improve hierarchy, coherence, and consistency of the site per user group.
- Remove non-functional areas of the website.
- Aid the creation of discoverable, easy-to-use navigation and customization.
- Clarify communication used in reference to information housed within the three separate sites.

Research Question:

- How can MySHU better serve the university, both faculty and students alike?

Supporting Questions:

- Who are the users of MySHU, GriffinGate, and Griffin's Lair?
- What are their daily, weekly, monthly, and semester goals?
- How do user groups utilize the MySHU portal and its attached websites (GriffinGate and Griffin's Lair) to achieve their daily, weekly, monthly, and semester goals?
- What pain points do users experience with the MySHU portal?
- What information is redundant, out-of-date, irrelevant, or missing for each user group?

Justification of Research

Currently, the MySHU site acts as a one-size-fits-all solution. There is very little difference in information provided to the faculty interface versus the student interface. The research will allow for the university to identify the needs of various user groups, allowing for customization of the interface according to each group. Research will also clarify their goals across different points of the academic year and how those goals relate to their information retrieval habits. As the main information repository, users must be able to locate the necessary data quickly and consistently. Proper research will discover what information is accessed and how frequently. Research also will discover areas where users are experiencing frustration in locating information or completing specific tasks. By tracking portal usage, patterns can be discovered and the interface can be modified to support these common patterns. It will also determine areas of the site which receive the most traffic. These areas should be highlighted in the site's hierarchy.

Research will also determine what areas are non-functioning. There are several broken, out-of-date, or empty pages linked to the MySHU, GriffinGate, and Griffin's Lair web-pages. These pages cause frustration to the user, both faculty, and student alike. Research will locate these pages and provide a plan for updating or eliminating this information.

Finally, research into the user's overall opinion of the site will yield valuable information about its usefulness and its position in their work-flow. Each user group will have varying needs, and by tailoring MySHU to these needs, a stronger online platform can be developed.

Feasibility

User research can be completed within a two week time frame by utilizing the current MySHU portal. An online survey link can be included directly on the site, asking short poll questions to assess the opinion of the general user. More focused surveys can be emailed to faculty, employees, and students to determine their user group, their needs, and their opinions of the portal.

In-person focus groups can be arranged with several groups of students and faculty on-campus to discuss their usage of the site. These groups should be separated into student-only and faculty-only sessions to ensure confidentiality. Questions about work-flow, user frustrations, and user goals will be discussed in order to gauge the effectiveness of MySHU and the related sites.

One-on-one usability sessions and nano-testing can be utilized to see exactly how students and faculty are using the site. This will allow for targeted questioning as the user attempts to complete common tasks. Workarounds and short-cuts can be examined during these sessions.