

Collaborative Research Memo

To Dr. Jared Grogan
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Subject Collaborative Research Plan

Purpose

Student course registration is difficult and inefficient. As a group, we'd like to explore solutions for improving the course registration application. By providing students with a course registration application that is more intuitive and helpful we believe that we can reduce student frustration and free up advisors' schedules. With a feasibility report, we can present the benefits that improvements to the course registration application will provide and present them to key technical people at the university, such as the CIO. Although, we'd like to present this feasibility study to the student body and advisors as well, since they will be impacted by these changes and will be able to provide good feedback. Our feasibility study will also allow us to explore if our solutions are effective and if students will adopt or reject our ideas. Since the deployment of our application requires departmental involvement, we'll need to explore departmental adoption. We will also attempt to prototype the application to show its feasibility. Lastly, a feasibility report will allow us to explore the cost of developing an application like this and how it may impact students and the university financially and it will also allow us to explore how the application may possibly improve student retention, a key issue for universities.

Communication Goals

To produce our feasibility report we must keep in mind a variety of communication goals, to ensure that our audience for this report will understand it and find the information relevant. The first of these goals is our purpose. We need to provide a clear explanation of what we are writing. We are writing a feasibility report to show

how improvements to the course registration system will impact the university. We expect a positive outcome, where both the university and students benefit. The report will outline the current issues with the course registration system at the university as well as a variety of solutions for these issues. It will also provide insight into what students think about the current course registration application as well as the technical and financial feasibility of modifying or creating a new course registration application. The feasibility report will be targeted at key technical employees at the university, such as those who are currently in charge of the Class Schedule application at the university. It will also target the student body so that they can offer their input on the proposed changes and offer support if they approve of the improvements outlined in the report. The report should also target university advisors, since they will be impacted by the changes this course registration tool will make. Ideally, this feasibility study will lead to a discussion about the current state of the course registration application at the university and possibly, the incorporation of the suggested improvements in the current course registration application or a new application altogether.

Another important communication goal we have is to make our communication useful. To do this, we'll start with defining the task that our feasibility report will allow our reader to perform. Our feasibility report will allow the reader to understand the current issues with the course registration tool at the university, the changes we propose to make to the course registration tool and the technical and financial feasibility of making these changes. Next, we must look at the reader's perspective and understand which information will be most relevant to them. Since we know our audience, we will need to tailor the report to answer a variety of questions our audience may have. Some of the questions we have brainstormed include "What's wrong with the current course registration app?", "How will this app make scheduling my classes easier verses meeting with an advisor to schedule my classes?", "How will this application help streamline my job as an advisor?", "Who will create this application?", and "How much will it cost to make these changes to course registration tool?". If we can answer a wide variety of questions our readers will have in our feasibility report, then our readers

should have a solid understanding of our content. We will also need to establish how the reader will search for the information. We can expect our feasibility report to be quite large and we don't expect every single member in our audience to read the entire report, just the sections relevant to them. We will need to divide our report up into sections, which include the current problems with the course registration application, student feedback about the current application, our solutions to the problems, the impact on students and advisors, technical feasibility and cost and any other topics we may address.

We will also need to make our feasibility report persuasive to the readers. We can achieve this by first looking at the reader's attitude toward our subject. Student's will likely have a more positive attitude towards our report because this feasibility report will provide solutions to problems they've voiced for years. Departments, specifically departmental advisors, should also appreciate how we're trying to tie in solutions to make their jobs a little easier. For technical staff and other decision makers who may read our report, we will need to provide solid evidence that there is a problem with the course registration tool and how our solutions will improve student attitudes toward course registration and possibly improve student retention. As students of the university, this report will allow us to voice our concerns and since we are directly affected by the course registration application, we'd expect other students to feel the same way we do. For other readers of our report, such as university employees (advisors and technical staff), we should expect that they have our student interests in mind, and we hope that this feasibility report will allow the problems and solutions presented in our report to be taken seriously. Lastly, since every one of our readers has some stake in the university, they will be able to appreciate the positive impact our course registration tool changes could have on the university.

Our Audience

The audience that will be reading our study will vary and we will need to provide a variety of different perspectives in order to persuade most of our readers that the solutions presented in our feasibility report will impact the university positively. Our primary targets will be the technical team in charge of maintaining the current application, the CIO of the university, Dr. Grogan, the advisors at the various departments at the university, and the students. Our readers will need to understand the problems with the current application and not only be told but shown how some of these problems can be solved in the prototype we wish to put together. Throughout most of the report we will avoid very technical language, except in areas where we are targeting technical staff, and we will try to use language that everyone will understand and define terms that may be unclear to the reader. Since our readers are located in the same geographical region, although they may not have originated from this region, there is generally accepted cultural practice regarding communication at the university. This report will likely not have a significant cultural impact since course registration is quite consistent around the world.

Our readers will also have to understand the context in which this study is being written and conducted in. The context of our writing will present information that will be relevant to different people. Those that are and are not students of the university have the ability to decide whether or not the current scheduling system could use improvement, since they are either exposed to it or could be exposed to it in a usability study. In short, the context of this report can be applicable to all, although with varying levels of impact. Because of the universal nature of our report within the scope of the university, people will likely read our report as something important, since it will have some sort of impact on them. Many will likely provide feedback and many may also provide solutions to our problems, hence, we expect some discourse as to whether our proposed changes meet their expectations or if there are other problems we should be focusing on.

Finally we need to be sure that any and all stakeholders are taken into account, and that they are treated ethically. The stakeholders of our project are the students, the advisors and the technical staff at the university, who would be impacted by this report and who will either produce the solutions proposed or benefit from them. The changes to the application that we will be proposing will make registering for classes easier and more efficient, with more streamlined capabilities in creating a class schedule for future semesters. By proposing the changes to the application and then possibly having them executed, we believe we can benefit a variety of different stakeholders. The advisors will get some relief because we expect less students will have to make appointments to see them during scheduling time. The system will have the ability to do some of the advisor's jobs, such as sending override requests and letting students know what still needs to be taken to complete their major. The technical team might also see some relief if a new, better system is implemented because it could be built to meet modern expectations, and be built to handle a greater load of students on registration day, which consequently, will future proof the application. There is likely no person or group of people that will benefit negatively from this report because we're suggesting improvements to an already functional system that just needs to be improved.

Research

We have come up with a few primary research ideas that we believe will be most effective when we begin our feasibility testing. First off, we will look at other universities and colleges to see how they allow students to browse and schedule their classes. Each group member will have the responsibility of researching one or two schools and exploring the positive and negative aspects of their respective course registration application. This will allow us to explore what other universities are doing right or wrong with their course scheduling applications and allow us to compare theirs against ours. Our other primary research goal is to conduct a survey with the students of the university. The survey will give students the ability to voice their concerns, as well as provide their insight into what they believe will improve course registration. The results of the survey will allow us to better represent the students by making use of their

suggestions for improving the course registration tool in our report. The results will also likely reinforce current complaints about the course registration application.

Our secondary research will consist of exploring journals and articles which discuss course registration. These articles may include different theories on efficient registration or bring to light other concerns or solutions regarding course registration. Our secondary research will also consist of exploring subjective articles relating to course registration, such as complaints about course registration in the student newspaper. Additionally, we will be exploring social media to find blogs and tweets relating to course registration frustrations for students at Wayne State and other universities. This secondary research will also tie into some of our primary research, where we will also be exploring student opinion on course registration. Once we finish our primary research we will have a better understanding of what the students liked and disliked and what other universities are doing or not doing to improve course registration. We will then have various other secondary research sources that we expect to reinforce this research.

Team Plan

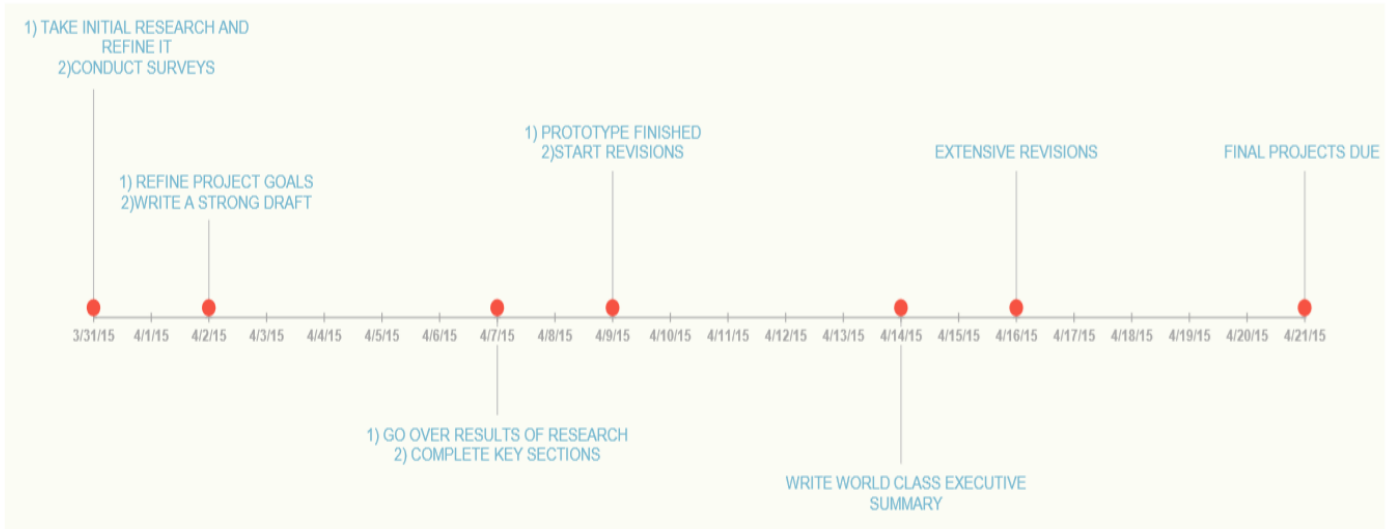
For the final section of this memo, we have created a team plan. As a team we decided that we will have Claudio be our team leader. Each member has been given a specific task to do based on their qualifications. Tasks will also be divided up in a way that gives every group member a roughly equal load and where possible. We will attempt to divide larger tasks into smaller subtasks so that every member can have some contribution. Members of the group will also have specific tasks they will be in charge of and focus on, based on their qualifications. Since Linzy and Mohamed have experience in communication, they will be focusing on creating and performing our user surveys. Linzy's organizational skills will also be utilized to keep group meetings organized and recorded. Mathew is a proficient researcher and he will be focusing on exploring the course registration tools at other universities. Ben, as a computer science student, has technical knowledge which will be used to help prototype a course

registration application, as well as explore the technical side of course registration tools. He will also provide a thorough overview of Wayne State's course registration application. Claudio has experience in technical application development at the university, and will conduct research and provide insight into the technical aspects of the course registration application as well as the business procedures relating to deploying an application like this at the university. He will also be prototyping the course registration application with Ben.

During our time as a group, each member will be held accountable for their actions and will need to actively participate in the group. If a member is continually late or absent, action will be taken. If they know that they are going to be late or absent, we expect a notification to inform us. If a member has a legitimate excuse for not being able to attend a meeting, they will need to read the meeting minutes and are still expected to have their contribution ready for the next meeting. If absence and tardiness become a continuous issue for a group member then further action will be taken, including discussing this issue with Dr. Grogan. If a member is not able to finish their work, then we will require that they communicate this issue to the group and we, as a group, will find a solution to complete the work. If the work that a member submits is decided to be poor in quality, then we will have another member (or members) do the work or have the same member redo it, with suggestions on how to improve the work's quality. If a member of the group does not understand their assigned task or another member's contribution to the group, then as a group, we hope that they bring this to our attention so that we can work together to clarify the the task or content. If a member continues to produce poor quality work then we will explore further consequences as a group.

Timeline

The timeline below outlines when we, as a group, wish to complete specific tasks that must be accomplished to produce our feasibility report.



Conclusion

By having a thorough understanding of our communication goals and our audience and by performing effective research, we as a team, believe that we can produce a convincing and relevant feasibility report regarding the improvement of the course registration tool at the university. Although, to do this, we will need to work effectively as a team, and understand our roles and responsibilities as well as keeping consequences of not producing work or producing poor quality work in mind. As a group, we'll work with one another to produce an effective feasibility report by the deadlines we have stated in our timeline.