Focus Group: housing.uark.edu

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Executive Summary

The Homepage and Navigation of the Site

All participants agreed the information on the homepage is too condensed and one participant noted that could be an accessibility issue.

One participant also noted that, because the information is so condensed, nothing on the homepage is given priority. This participant noted he/she had to look for housing rates and had to sort through several items to locate this information. The majority of participants liked the housing highlights on the right navigation of the homepage.

The content on the homepage, featuring ‘Move out 2016’ was unappealing to the participants and they did not think this helped prospective students or current students if they are researching residence halls. All participants liked the “Complete your Housing Contract” button on the homepage.

All participants wanted more uniformity from page to page. One participant noted the right navigation changed when he/she clicked a link from the homepage. Another participant noted that when he/she clicked on “Housing Rates” from the homepage he/she was taken to a left drop down navigation labeled “Campus Communities.”

Recommendations:

- Prioritize key items – the residence halls, housing rates and dining rates – and feature those items on the homepage. See Appendix A.
- Keep the housing highlights on the homepage.
- Keep the “Complete your Housing Contract” button on the homepage. See Appendix A.
- Create more uniformity from page to page so that navigation on every page is the same.

Residence Hall Presentation

All participants wanted to see a better presentation for each residence hall on the website.

The most common complaint about the presentation of each residence hall was the floor plan. The participants all agreed floor plans are important, and they stated that the floor plans were misleading. The participants expressed frustration that one floor plan is presented to represent all rooms when some rooms have obtrusive beams, a sloping wall or a study room where a kitchen was promised.
Participants also wanted to see more uniformity in the way the residence halls were presented and an addition of **images, video and a cable lineup**. Participants noted some residence halls have three to four photos and others have eight to ten photos. They did not think this provided a fair representation of the residence hall when fewer images were used. Four out of five Participants also stated that the lack of video pertaining to residence halls was a negative.

**Recommendations**

- Provide more transparent information about floor plans.
- Provide a note that not all floor plans are represented by the floor plan presented on the website.
- Color code and provide icons for the floor plans to show what rooms have beams or slanted walls.
- The information for each residence hall should be consistent.
- Provide more images and video for each residence hall.
  - Move images of the residence halls to the top of the page, because this was noted as the main product for all of the participants.
  - Provide the cable lineup for each residence hall. See Appendix B.

**Misleading Cost**

All participants agreed the cost of living on campus is misleading. Participants noted potential **hidden fees** and that this could be a big problem for students living on a budget. Participants also did not like they had to calculate two different items, the meal plan and the room cost, to reach a yearly total. One confusing aspect noted was that the cost of rooms is listed by academic year, but the meal plans are listed by semester. Four out of five participants did not like the large yearly number of the cost. **Finally, four out of five participants stated that cost very was important** and one participant stated that cost was moderately important when deciding whether to live on campus or off campus.

**Recommendations**

- Provide all costs up front
- Provide a calculator that combines room rates with meal rates
- Break down the cost of rooms and meals by semester
- Provide cost analysis of living on campus as opposed to living off campus
On Campus Dining

All participants placed a strong emphasis on meal trades and were only able to locate a small item in an FAQ section about meal trades. Meal count is mentioned on the website, but the participants agreed this language was confusing, because they are familiar with the term meal trade and not meal count. One participant noted that he/she was unaware meal trades existed until halfway through his/her first semester.

Recommendations

- Place a higher priority on meal trades and provide more information pertaining to meal trades
- Use consistent vocabulary when referring to meal trades

Navigating to the Housing Site

Three out of five participants attempted to use uark.edu to navigate to housing.uark.edu when they were prospective students and failed in doing so. Four out of the five participants agreed that not featuring housing.uark.edu on uark.edu was a problem.

Recommendations

- Provide a better funnel from uark.edu to housing.uark.edu. See Appendix C.

Detailed Findings

Action - Research where you would like to live on campus.

Questions - Using only what you researched from the site, how did you arrive at your decision? What did you feel was missing from your decision-making process?

Four out of five participants used Campus Communities to research where they wanted to live on campus: 9:30

- Participant one: I found information about housing rates by going to Housing Rates and then looking at the Hall Comparison chart. As a senior I am trying to pick the most affordable place to live.
• Participant two: I agree with the helpfulness of the chart especially if you are living on a budget.

More imagery and videos of the residence halls: 12:15
• Participant two: Pictures at the top would be good. You have to get past all of the information before you see the photos and the product itself is the room.”
• Four of five participants agreed using both videos and images of the rooms.
• Participant five: I would like an actual video and not a virtual tour.

More consistent and accurate floor plans: 19:25
• Participant five: The floor plans can be deceiving especially in Hotz. Not all of the rooms are exactly the same.
• Participant two: Some of the rooms have a big beam in them and it is not listed in the floor plan.
• Participant three: You can’t put your wardrobe against the sloping wall but didn’t find that out until move-in because it was not in the floor plan.
• Participant two: They took the kitchen off of the floor I am on in Holcomb Hall but the website says that kitchen is still there.

Action - Research how much would it cost to live on campus.

Questions - Using only what you researched from the site, did you feel you could answer how much it would cost to live on campus? What could University Housing provide that helps you determine the cost? How important is cost to you when deciding whether to live on campus or off campus? [Used a 3-point Likert scale here]

All participants agreed costs are misleading: 26:54
• Participant three: $200 advance payment for handbook cost is that reflected in room cost per year? $32 service fee and two instances for $200 advance payment. I’m not sure if these extra costs are reflected in the room rates by academic year. This is misleading especially for people living on a tight budget.

Cost requires additional work and is not straight forward: 30:15
• Participant five: You have to calculate two separate things to find out what it costs. First you have to find out the meal plan then calculate the room cost.
• Participant two: The housing checklist only helps current students, but if you are researching costs then you don’t have that.
• Participant one: Rooms are listed by academic years but the meal plans are listed by semester. A calculator listed by the same time period would be helpful.

**Difficulty of navigation: 33:10**

• Participant two: On the homepage, I have to look for the housing rates. Where do I go to find housing rates? I have to look at 6 to 10 things that lists the housing rates. You have to then jump to another place to find dining information. The navigation is difficult.
• Participant three: When you click on Housing Rates in the left navigation it leads to a drop down for Campus Communities, but when you click on Campus Communities it links to a different page. This is a difficulty of navigation.

**Lack of information regarding meal trades: 38:40**

• Participant two: There is nothing listed about meal trades but it is listed in the FAQs.
• Participant three: The table when you click on dining rates says ‘meal count’ but if they listed that as meal trade that would have been really helpful so you know what they are talking about.
• Participant one: [Meal trades are] really important because when I got here I didn’t know it existed until halfway through the semester and would have been helpful to know.
• Participant four: It mentions a meal trade but maybe have a link that takes you to more info like to the dining site that explains the different meal trades.

**Misleading information about residence hall availability: 43:00**

• Participant four: I think that the information is all there but it is a little confusing for trying to figure out what it would cost to live on campus and may be misleading. It has single rooms listed but actually is not an option.
• Participant two: Overflow seems to be an issue and if single rooms are an option then list it, but if it is actually not an option take it off the page.
• Participant four: I called Hotz about getting a single room because it was listed on the contract but when I called they said that was only an option for R.A.s, but it said nothing about that on the contract. It was very misleading.
Four out of five participants said cost was very important when deciding whether to live on campus or off campus and one said moderately important: 46:00
Break yearly costs down, more information about leaving and returning to housing, cost analysis of living off campus and living on campus: 46:00

- Participant one: If that added rate per semester that would be helpful. To break that big number down is kind of scary, but if listed by semester it’s easier to accept.
- Participant four: How much cash wise (like in campus shops) what people spend living on campus compared to off campus. All participants agreed.
- Participant five: It was a lot of trouble to find information to come back to campus to live for a semester for internships and study abroad. All participants agreed.

What is your impression of the housing website?
Aesthetic and content of homepage: 52:00

- Participant two: It is very condensed. So many things listed and there is an extra 2 inches on each side of white space, but the text is very small. Could be an accessibility issue.
- Participant two: Nothing stands out. ‘Move Out 2016’ is large but this doesn’t help the people who go here to see if they are going to live on campus or if they are researching dorms.

All participants liked the “Complete your Housing Contract” button on the homepage: 52:00
All participants wanted more uniformity from page to page: 52:00

- Participant two: The right navigation disappears as soon as you go inside the website a level.

What is the purpose of this website and does it fulfill those needs?
Navigating to the website was a challenge: 1:01:50

- Participant two: I think an issue is how people get to the website. When you go to uark.edu you can’t find it. The first place I looked was ‘Campus Life’ but it wasn’t listed there. Once you get to the website you can get the info you need but getting there is what is hard.
- Participant four: When I was researching schools I went to uark.edu first and when I couldn’t find it I Googled it.
• Three of five participants attempted to find housing.uark.edu through uark.edu, one was sent an email that linked to housing.uark.edu and one student used a search engine to locate housing.uark.edu.

• Four out of five participants agreed that not having housing featured prominently on uark.edu was a problem.

How often do you visit the housing.uark.edu and why do you or don’t you visit it?
All participants agreed they visited housing.uark.edu four to five times a year: 1:09:42
• Students visit the site to complete housing contracts, maintenance requests and use the residence link.

How can housing create a more positive experience?
Provide cable line up 1:13:00
• Participant two: A cable lineup for each dorm. Not a deal breaker but good to know.

Do you have any suggestions to improve the site?
Keep the highlights in the right navigation on the homepage: 1:19:34
• Participant three: Keep the highlights on the right. Uniformity.
• Participant three: I like the items on the right. They stand out.

Is there anything housing can do to bring you back to the site?
Four out of five participants agreed they might visit the website more often if a calendar, exclusive to housing events, was featured on the home page: 1:21:06
Handout One

Demographics

Housing.uark.edu Focus Group

Please answer the following questions.

1. Age: _____
2. Circle what classification you are:
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior
3. Hometown: __________________________
4. State: ________________________________
5. Gender: ______________________________
6. Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall (circle one):
   - Less than one
   - One
   - Two
   - Three
   - Four
Participant One
Age: 22
Classification: Senior
Hometown: Forrest City
State: Arkansas
Gender: Female
Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall: Four

Participant Two
Age: 19
Classification: Sophomore
Hometown: Harrison
State: Arkansas
Gender: Male
Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall: Two

Participant Three
Age: 21
Classification: Junior
Hometown: Carrollton
State: Texas
Gender: Male
Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall: Three

Participant Four
Age: 19
Classification: Freshman
Hometown: Flippin
State: Arkansas
Gender: Male
Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall: One

Participant Five
Age: 20
Classification: Sophomore
Hometown: Fort Smith
State: Arkansas
Gender: Female
Number of years living in a University of Arkansas Residence Hall: Two
Handout Two

How Important is Cost?

Using only what you researched from the site...

How important is cost to you when deciding whether to live on campus or off campus?

Very important  Moderately important  Not important

Four out of five participants said cost was “Very important” and one participant said “Moderately important.”
Research Methods

Research Goal:

To improve website usability for students.

Research Design:

We recruited participants by emailing nearly 800 students who currently live in the residence halls at the University of Arkansas. The focus group was 90 minutes in length. This focus group had five participants and the participants were given a $20 Wal-Mart gift card.

How the Information will be Used:

The research will be used to improve usability on the housing.uark.edu website. Reports from the findings will be sent to University Housing officials and be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.

How this project fits into our Department:

As a content strategist, one main focus of this job is to use qualitative and quantitative data to improve the usability of the University of Arkansas’ websites. Currently, this is accomplished primarily through Google Analytics, the Google Search Console and the Google Search Application. Focus groups are another piece to the usability puzzle that will create a better user experience. Focus groups allow us to interact directly and observe students to see how they use University of Arkansas websites and what they would like to see improved. From this information, changes can be implemented after cross-referencing the data from the focus groups with our existing sources of data.

Expected Results:

Based on data accumulated from the Google Search Console for external searches and the Google Search Application for internal search results, we expected the majority of participants will push for changes to be made on both landing and interior pages. Often, search queries collected from the Google Search Console and Google Search Application suggest users are not able to quickly locate information and instead will search for the information. We fully anticipated the difficulty in locating information to be one main issue.
Why this Method was Chosen:

The Digital Design and Development team uses Google Analytics, the Google Search Console and the Google Search Application that provide quantitative analysis. So, Digital Design and Development understands the “what?” question through the data already obtained, but the focus groups will explain the “why?” question. For instance, if a specific page has a high bounce rate, a focus group will essentially act as a real-time heat map that will provide answers as to why users choose to leave a page or continue on to internal pages.

Interview Questions:

Action Items

1. **Action** - Research where you would like to live on campus.
2. **Questions** - Using only what you researched from the site, how did you arrive at your decision? What did you feel was missing from your decision-making process?

1. **Action** - Research how much would it cost to live on campus.
2. **Questions** - Using only what you researched from the site, did you feel you could answer how much it would cost to live on campus? What could University Housing provide that helps you determine the cost? How important is cost to you when deciding whether to live on campus or off campus? [Use a 3-point Likert scale here]

Questions

1. What is your impression of this website?
2. After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website and does that purpose satisfy your needs or expectations?
3. Are you able to easily find information you are looking for? If not, is there too much, too little or missing information?
4. How often do you visit this website and why do you visit or not visit the site?
5. What are some positive experiences of this website and what made these experiences positive?
6. What are some negative experiences of this website and what made these experiences negative?
7. What suggestions do you have to improve this website?
8. Is there anything we have not discussed pertaining to this website that you think should be addressed?

**Strategy for Analysis**

After the focus group, the responses were gathered and transcribed from an audio and video capture. From there, comments from the participants were tracked to reveal common themes about the experience of housing.uark.edu. Once transcribed, the information was time stamped and grouped by question, theme and include direct quotes from the participants. A written report was then created after the common themes from all of the resources were compiled. The written report provides recommendations for change based on the findings from the focus groups and the other data tools. Quantitative data for the website is provided from Google Analytics, the Google Search Console and the Google Search Application in the appendix. The recommendations will be sent to the University Housing to implement the changes. The results of this analysis will also be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.

**Specifications for Time and Location**

The focus group took place in room A354 in the Arkansas Union. The room consisted of computers for the participants and the ability to project the website onto a larger screen.

**Who Fulfilled the Leadership Roles of the Focus Group?**

Chad Woodard and Kelly Bostick worked with housing officials to gather the participants. Christopher Spencer purchased $20 gift cards for the focus group. Chad Woodard led the focus group and interviewed the participants. Kelly Bostick took notes as a back up to the video recording of the participants during the focus groups. Chad Woodard and Kelly Bostick transcribed the responses from the participants and organized the information to form the focus group report.
### Appendix A

**Google Analytics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Pageviews</th>
<th>Unique Pageviews</th>
<th>Avg. Time on Page</th>
<th>Entrances</th>
<th>Bounce Rate</th>
<th>% Exit</th>
<th>Page Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <code>/Contracting/contracts.php</code></td>
<td>88,901 (12.3%)</td>
<td>50,970 (10.36%)</td>
<td>00:02:48</td>
<td>17,977</td>
<td>47.02%</td>
<td>36.95%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <code>/</code></td>
<td>81,198 (11.24%)</td>
<td>62,743 (12.76%)</td>
<td>00:00:48</td>
<td>50,149</td>
<td>17.90%</td>
<td>17.92%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <code>/campus_communities/housing_rates.php</code></td>
<td>42,414 (5.87%)</td>
<td>22,009 (4.48%)</td>
<td>00:00:57</td>
<td>5,383</td>
<td>33.27%</td>
<td>13.38%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <code>/Calendar.php</code></td>
<td>33,196 (4.59%)</td>
<td>25,901 (5.27%)</td>
<td>00:02:28</td>
<td>8,789</td>
<td>64.85%</td>
<td>46.26%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <code>/campus_communities/dining_rates.php</code></td>
<td>28,637 (3.98%)</td>
<td>19,458 (3.98%)</td>
<td>00:03:02</td>
<td>8,663</td>
<td>59.17%</td>
<td>43.54%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <code>/campus_communities/index.php</code></td>
<td>23,716 (3.28%)</td>
<td>11,970 (2.43%)</td>
<td>00:00:32</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>20.30%</td>
<td>7.18%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <code>housing.uark.edu/contracting/contracts.php</code></td>
<td>21,425 (2.96%)</td>
<td>13,049 (2.65%)</td>
<td>00:02:43</td>
<td>4,691</td>
<td>48.06%</td>
<td>39.72%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <code>housing.uark.edu/</code></td>
<td>18,218 (2.52%)</td>
<td>14,316 (2.91%)</td>
<td>00:00:45</td>
<td>13,437</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>16.77%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <code>/campus_communities/Founders/information.php</code></td>
<td>18,171 (2.44%)</td>
<td>10,852 (2.17%)</td>
<td>00:01:43</td>
<td>2,034</td>
<td>55.21%</td>
<td>20.43%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <code>/campus_communities/Northwest_Quad/information.php</code></td>
<td>15,820 (2.19%)</td>
<td>10,752 (2.19%)</td>
<td>00:02:14</td>
<td>3,231</td>
<td>61.10%</td>
<td>30.45%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <code>/campus_communities/Maple_Hill_East/information.php</code></td>
<td>13,418 (1.85%)</td>
<td>9,329 (1.90%)</td>
<td>00:01:53</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>59.22%</td>
<td>21.81%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. <code>/campus_communities/Yocum/information.php</code></td>
<td>13,279 (1.84%)</td>
<td>8,361 (1.79%)</td>
<td>00:01:42</td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>61.28%</td>
<td>23.13%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. <code>/campus_communities/Maple_Hill_South/information.php</code></td>
<td>12,230 (1.69%)</td>
<td>8,340 (1.73%)</td>
<td>00:02:03</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>53.44%</td>
<td>25.10%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <code>/campus_communities/Holtz_Honors/information.php</code></td>
<td>11,327 (1.57%)</td>
<td>7,716 (1.57%)</td>
<td>00:01:56</td>
<td>2,401</td>
<td>52.31%</td>
<td>27.51%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. <code>/campus_communities/Reid/information.php</code></td>
<td>10,783 (1.49%)</td>
<td>7,738 (1.57%)</td>
<td>00:01:39</td>
<td>2,066</td>
<td>61.83%</td>
<td>26.80%</td>
<td>$0.00 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This analytics report provides evidence to the recommendations in the executive summary to place a larger emphasis on the residence halls, housing rates and dining rates. Housing and dining rates are both in the top five for most unique page views on housing.uark.edu and seven residence halls are inside of the top fifteen for most unique page views.

Additionally, as noted in the executive summary, the housing contract button should stay on the home page with a continued emphasis, because this is the page with highest number of unique page views outside of the homepage.
### Appendix B

**Google Search Console**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range 4/12/2016 - 5/9/2016</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>CTR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>university of arkansas cable channels</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark tv channels</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing contract university of arkansas</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university of arkansas move in day 2015</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>94.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arkansas housing contract</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>94.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark cable channels</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark cable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.uark.edu">www.uark.edu</a> housing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark campus communities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u of a housing contract</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>93.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark channel guide</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>92.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark housing calendar</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>91.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meal plans uark</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uark housing</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>88</td>
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The Google Search Console provides what search queries a person used to reach housing.uark.edu. A search query is a search entered in a search engine, such as Google, that leads the user to the search engine results page.

Definition of categories in the report:

**Clicks**: The number of people who visited housing.uark.edu based on a specific query.

**Impressions**: The number of people who saw housing.uark.edu as an option based on a search query in the Google search engine results page.

**CTR (Click Through Rate)**: The number of clicks divided by the number of impressions.

The information in the report is filtered by queries that had at least fifteen impressions with the highest CTR.

As noted in the executive summary, participants wanted a cable lineup for each residence hall. The data from the Google Search Console provides evidence that this is a common interest, in the form of various search queries, for the audience of housing.uark.edu.
Appendix C

Google Search Application

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The Google Search Application tracks all search queries within uark.edu.

During the date range presented above, housing was the top search query on any University of Arkansas website. As noted earlier, providing a better portal to housing.uark.edu from uark.edu would provide more users with a clear path to the information they want.