

Introduction

The Career Services Center at UCSD is an on-campus resource providing expertise in the area of job and career searching. The Center provides on-campus interviews, job listings, resume help, career counseling, and a large variety of services aimed at students, faculty, recruiters and even parents. Most of the business that the Career Services Center takes care of occurs in their offices located in the center of campus.

As we move further into the age of the internet, more and more business is being conducted on the world wide web. The internet is becoming not just a source of information, but a place of business and interactivity. The Career Services Center, in attempting to keep up with the lightning-quick changes of an internet society, has developed a website which aims to inform people about the center and all it has to offer, as well as provide links, and to a small degree allow users to interact with the site.

Background

For our study, we are looking at the Career Services Center website. The website as it stands right now is full of useful information, however it is difficult to get to this information without a considerable struggle. This conclusion rests partially on the research conducted last quarter on this very same website. Most notably, the research done by Courtney Grant [1] supports the notion that the Career Services Center website is severely lacking in functionality, partly due to poor design and layout. Grant interviewed students and watched them navigate through the site. She observed the problems they had and which tasks they could and could not complete. She found that one of the key factors contributing to the condition of the website was the fact that it lacked any sort of consistency, an absolute necessity if you want to keep your users aware of where they are and what they're doing. Also, she found that a lot of the useful information within the site is buried deep behind links that are not clear to the unskilled user. The Career Services Center has record of over 13,000 students registered to look up job listings. Out of 19,000 students at UCSD, this makes up a considerable portion. It was alarming for us to learn how difficult the site was to use, considering the number of people that the Career Services Center influences.

Using this research as a background, and coupled with our own knowledge as users of the website, this quarter we are taking a deeper look at the usability of the website and, using the methods of Contextual Design [2] developing a more user-friendly design for the site. Our focus for this project will be limited to the website's homepage and the section labeled "UC Students and Alumni", which purports to contain links specifically tailored for such persons. The reason we decided to focus on these aspects of the site are as follows. First, the Career Services Center has

data that suggests over 85% of people that use their website are students. This clearly makes sense considering not only that most of the people at UCSD are students but also that the center itself has a substantially greater number of services aimed at students. Since we do not have the time nor the personnel to consider the entire website, this sub-section seemed the most worthy candidate. We're also focusing on the site's homepage, since this page is the front door to the rest of the site. We feel that creating an easily usable and informative front page will draw users in further as well as help them get to what they want quicker.

The Website

The Career Services Center's (CSC's) Website is divided into four main sections. **[Diagram 1]** From the homepage the user can immediately jump to "UC Students and Alumni", "UCSD Faculty and Staff", "Recruiters", or "Parents". Additional links for "Opportunity Alliance", "Professional Associations", "About the Career Services Center", and "Disclaimer" are just links to single pages with information. All of the four main sections contain information specific to that user type. The "UC Students and Alumni" section is the only section with interactivity. The other sections simply contain information, with a few personnel contacts and links to outside resources. The interactivity within the students section is through an off-campus independent company called Jobtrak.com. This company provides nationwide job listings and is partnered with many universities including UCSD to provide students with up-to-date job listings. Jobtrak.com takes the work out of the hands of Career Centers, who in many cases might only be able to show job listings for jobs in that area. The CSC's website provides a link by which students can login to JobTrak and perform their job search. This action is completely independent from UCSD with regards to network servers and domains.

Our Focus

In order to successfully redesign the user interface of a website, it is necessary to first figure out at whom the website is targeted. In obtaining this information, we first surveyed the site itself and looked at each of the four sections to get an idea of the goals intended by the CSC staff. In talking with members of the website committee, we discovered that the site is designed after the Job Search Handbook that is printed once per academic year [3]. It soon became clear to us that the focus of the handbook was on information for current students. There is very little, if any information targeted towards recruiters, faculty, staff, or parents. Browsing the website we came to the same conclusion, noting that the students section is about ten times larger than all the other sections combined. In doing so, we noticed various inconsistencies and navigational faux pas which corroborated our notion that this would be a good candidate to study further. One of the most glaring problems was the use of a "back arrow" as a link to send email to the webmaster

[Diagram 2]. This image was also used as its name implies; as a link to return to the previous page.

Additionally, we obtained records from the CSC detailing which areas of the site are hit most often **[Diagram 3]**. It became clear that the student section was overwhelmingly the most popular section of the site, with more hits than even the homepage itself. This led us to believe that the vast majority of users of this site were students, and so we decided to focus on this portion of the site for our study.

We also chose to consider the user interface of the site's homepage. Our decision rests on the finding that the first page a user sees when he arrives at a website will often make or break his opinion of the site **[4]**. We looked at the homepage and thought there was enormous potential for improvement, and so included this in our area of study. We specifically chose not to focus on the other user groups as defined by the CSC because we did not feel there was enough traffic on these pages to support an adequate number of real users for us to study.

Methods

Once we had a clear definition of who our users were going to be, we made contact with a number of them to find out exactly what their tasks are when interacting with this site. In choosing our subjects, we decided to begin with 6 students, 4 faculty members, 2 recruiters and 2 parents. We felt this distribution was appropriate given our data on usage of the site, and also given our manpower. Even though most of our subjects are students, the faculty, recruiter and parent data are important in determining the prototype content for the homepage, which is used by everyone.

With each subject we conducted a contextual inquiry **[2]** aimed at discovering what the real tasks are that these people engage in. The contextual inquiry is similar to an interview, except the experimenter in this case seeks to be taught by the subject as a master teaches an apprentice. Our subjects were briefed on what they would be asked to do before the interview began. During each interview, the subject was asked to recall a specific time they used the website. In as much detail as possible, the subject relived that experience in front of our eyes. In addition to past experiences, subjects were given various tasks, such as "find current job listings" which required they navigate through the site with this goal in mind. Finally, subjects were also queried about their thoughts of the current website and any ways they would like to see the site improved.

Once this data was collected, we separated the interview reports into piles for students, faculty and staff, recruiters, and parents. Recognizing that each user type has different needs and goals, we did not want to obscure this important information by consolidating the data into one large group. Instead, we created models to represent the work done by each user and grouped them

by type. As outlined in Contextual Design [2], we created Flow Models and Sequence Models for each subject.

The Flow Model

The Flow Model is designed to capture the different responsibilities of the task and how they are broken up or distributed among those people or artifacts involved. The model usually takes the form of a cluster diagram, with different bubbles representing different parts of the task, and connections between bubbles representing how these parts are related [Diagram 4]. In creating our Flow Models, we chose to divide up the task among different pages of the CSC website, as well as other, external sites. This seemed like a very natural division, since the tasks we observed were solely concerned with one person's interaction with a computer terminal. Furthermore, because the world wide web is merely a conglomerate of individual pages, our diagrams preserved the architectural style of the medium we are concerned with. Each bubble represents a page the subject visited, and the lines between bubbles represent how the subject arrived at each page.

The Sequence Model

The Sequence Model is designed to capture each event in chronological order. This model is more detailed than the Flow Model, because it contains information on when the "back" button was pressed and the exact order that each page was referenced. Our Sequence Models take the form of large lists [Diagram 5]. The first thing we identified was the intent, or goal when the subject began the task. This is depicted on the left and all the events that occur with this goal in mind are indented. After establishing the intent we looked at the cause, or trigger, that set the action in motion. We found that in each case, the trigger was simply a desire for the subject to accomplish her intent. Since there were no external influences and each trigger was essentially the same, we discounted this in our models. Continuing along the sequence of events, new intents were noted in the left margin, and the following events were indented.

We also considered the use of other models, specifically artifact, cultural, and physical models. However, in each case we determined these would not offer any significant data. The artifact used by the subjects in all cases was a computer, and although each page can be considered an individual artifact, this information was already captured through our sequence and flow models. There was one subject who mentioned using printed texts in addition to a computer, but this information was also captured by our flow model, not to mention she did not have these texts with her during the interview. The cultural background of our subjects we felt would not have any significant effect on their tasks. All the students interviewed are UCSD students and for our purposes we assumed this to be one singular culture. The physical model also would not have been

beneficial to us, since the space in which the interviews took place was for the most part controlled by us.

Our completed models for each subject became the basis for the next iteration of our analysis. The models (one Sequence and one Flow Model per subject) were consolidated by subject type. To do this, we put all the student Flow Models side by side and extracted the similarities into one Flow Model to represent our students. **[Diagram 6]** We did the same thing with the Sequence Models for our students, and continued in the same manner for our Faculty, Recruiter, and Parent subjects. This consolidation gave us a clear view of the tasks that our subjects were engaging in, and how they engaged in these tasks.

Before creating a testable prototype, we first did some internet research on other career center websites to get an idea of what other people with the same types of issues are doing. We looked at a number of other websites from various other campuses including MIT, San Diego State University, Colorado State University and UCLA.

The information we gathered through our contextual interviews, consolidated sequence and flow models, website hit statistics, and other career websites came together in creating our prototype. The object of the prototype is to provide an alternate interface for the website's front page and the homepage of the "UC Students and Alumni" section. In considering the front page, we looked at data from all subjects, since it is visited by almost everyone going to the site, even though students presumably make up a vast majority. For the students section, we only looked at data from students, since the information on this site should represent their needs, regardless of the number of non-students who may actually use this page.

The Prototype

Our first prototype began as a list. We created a list of all the features we felt should be in each page we were designing, based on all the data we had collected. Once we knew what we wanted to have on the home page, we formulated our list into a sketch of how the website might look. We played around with this a little, moving text and changing the layout. We came away with a paper version that can be easily manipulated. Our prototype pages represent the website front page, as well as the homepage for the student section. We initially considered looking at the entire student section, but soon realized that the workload would increase exponentially with each new page, and as well the complexity of the information would be too great for us to handle.

In preparing our prototype for testing, we printed out the pages from the current CSC website that one can get to from our redesign. This provided us with a low-fidelity prototype with which subjects can interact much the same as they would with a typical website. We interviewed 7 subjects and had them navigate our prototype pretending it was a website. Three of the subjects we ran had also been subjects for our contextual inquiries. In doing so, we gave them 5 different

scenarios to guide their navigation. The scenarios were the same for everyone so the data would be normalized across all subjects. The scenarios were:

1. You are just beginning your job search and need help preparing your resume. What do you do?
2. You are an off-campus recruiter planning a presentation at the Career Services Center and you need directions to get there. What do you do?
3. You are a student looking for information about the Spring Quarter Job fair. What do you do?
4. You are a student looking for a full-time job listings. What do you do?
5. You are an undeclared freshman looking for information to help you choose a major. What do you do?

We also asked the subjects their personal opinions of the prototype, and what specific problems they encountered. We concluded the interview by asking them to compare our prototype to the current Career Services Center website.

The data from these interviews was then consolidated to provide us with an idea of the performance of our prototype. We made a list of breakdowns, a list of successes, and a list of suggestions. These lists went into the next iteration of our prototype, which due to time constraints could not be tested further. Our new prototype was created using Adobe Photoshop, which provided a true aesthetic pleasure and communicated more clearly the look and feel of our design.

Results

The user data we collected was very supportive of our early notions about the current state of the CSC website. This data also supported Grant's research last quarter which found the website to be inconsistent and difficult to use. One particularly interesting find was that many people had trouble finding the CSC website. When presented with this task, most of them began at the UCSD InfoPath [**Diagram 7**]. Most people found the site on their second or third attempt, but one parent still got lost and had to be guided there by one of us. We thought finding the site itself would be a rather trivial matter, but we saw how difficult it can be for some people, and it's certainly not easy for everyone. Some of our subjects felt that the Career Services Center should have a link directly from the UCSD InfoPath, others thought it should at least be in the "Quick Links" portion of the UCSD homepage.

Students

By far the most common task among our observed users was to find job listings. Every student we talked to mentioned this as either a primary or secondary reason for using the site. Many of our students also had a difficult time getting to the job listings from the CSC homepage. More than one time the student just typed “www.jobtrak.com” right into the web browser and completely bypassed the CSC site altogether. Their reason for doing this was simple; they found the site too difficult and not worth their time. They reasoned that they can get the same job listings by just typing in “jobtrak.com” and they don’t have to click on a bunch of links to get there. This was a very interesting find. Some of our users were not even aware that JobTrak is a separate entity from the CSC, and others chose the most direct method of getting what they want, a path which completely bypasses the CSC.

Finding resume help was another very prominent concern. Students want to receive tips on how to write an effective resume, some “do’s and don’ts” as well as some sample resumes for them to look at. The Job Search Handbook does provide all of these things, but the website does not. The people we talked to found it frustrating since they felt this should be a fundamental element of the site. They were further bothered by the need to login if they wanted to find out how to put their resume online. They felt this was something they could do outside of the CSC website, and they could not find any resources to support that.

Another very popular task by student users is finding job listings and career information by major. For instance, one user wanted to find out what kinds of jobs she could get with her major, and tried to find a listing on the site. All she found was a listing of jobs people have gotten, but the information was organized by topic, not by major [**Diagram 8**]. This presented a problem to her as she did not quite know where to categorize her major. She hesitated on the site, confused, and went back looking for a listing by majors before choosing a topic and continuing.

Aside from these extremely popular tasks, student users had a difficult time in general finding information on the site. They often times found discrepancies between what they were looking for when clicking on a link and what they actually found. One subject clicked on “Part-time Jobs for Students”, “Parent/Student Career Conference”, and “Career Development Tips” before giving up on looking for job listings. Another subject clicked on “Opportunity Alliance” because the word ‘opportunity’ led her to believe she would find job listings. This incompatibility poses an enormous problem, since information is not helpful unless it is accessible. Students told us that they grew impatient very quickly, and if they did not find one or two things on the site, they would probably not look for anything further. As a result, some students don’t use the site at all unless they know of specific information that would only be contained on the website (or at the CSC in person), for example the date of the next Job Fair.

This data suggests that the CSC website does not provide adequate services to its student users. We found that novice users have a difficult time understanding the meaning of links and most of them just want to see the job listings. Those who might be dubbed expert users don't like using the site very much because the information is not easy to get to. Additionally, we found it interesting that most of the students who do use the site on a regular or semi-regular basis are not aware that the site has information such as salary information for recent (as of 1997) graduates or a listing of recent graduates in various fields who have agreed to talk to current students about their jobs. One novice user had to click on "About the Career Services Center" because he had no idea what the Center was or what it was for.

In looking at what students want to see on the site the overwhelming cry was for job listings to be more accessible. Some even explicitly mentioned having a JobTrak login right on the CSC homepage so they could go right there. Online resumes that they could look at as well as an updated calendar of events were also mentioned. One student wanted to see links of all the companies planning to come to the next Job Fair with no idea that this information is actually on the site. It became very clear to us that students were having problems using this website. There were only one or two users who knew how to find the job listings from the CSC homepage and who routinely followed that path to get there. A few students told us that the site was visually unappealing, and this was something that turned them off to the site when they saw it. They commented on the misalignment of the links on the front page, the trivial stained glass-like dividing bar, and the very misleading "back arrow" that brought up an email window to send feedback to the Webmaster.

Faculty and Staff

We interviewed 2 university staff members and 2 faculty members. For three of them, this was their first visit to the site. They poked around methodically, scanning the information contained in the "UCSD Faculty and Staff" section. Most came to the quick conclusion that the site did not really offer them any useful information. One subject remarked that he found it hard to believe that other faculty members would need help writing a letter of recommendation, while another subject wanted to see examples and found none. They all got bored with the faculty section very quickly and went on to the other sections to see if the information might be of more use. One subject remarked that the website was more a resource for students, and he would not use the site himself but would refer students to the site.

When asked about what things they wanted to see on the site, a very popular remark was a need for a current listing of jobs that recent graduates have gone into, as well as more integrated links back to department websites. One subject did not have faith that The Center was accurately

advertising his department, and thought it would be a good idea for departments to submit their own descriptions to be published on the web.

Recruiters

We interviewed 2 recruiters and asked them to navigate through the CSC website in search of information relevant to their job. Both recruiters had an interest in posting jobs to the site. They did not understand that jobs are posted via JobTrak, a separate entity, which meant the CSC had no control over those listings. It is quite possible however to post on-campus job listings on JobTrak, but this information was not available to them. One subject wanted to be able to set up an on-campus interview. After following quite a few links, she finally got to the information she was looking for, only to find she had to call the center to actually set up the interview. Both users expressed an interest in finding information about job fair schedules, and both found this information relatively quickly. Finally, one subject wanted to promote her company on the CSC website, and could not find any online resources or contacts regarding this.

We found that recruiters are interested in promoting their company, posting job openings, setting up on-campus interviews and looking for job fairs. Of course, these are only a few tasks that recruiters may be engaged in, but it is interesting that only one of these features is currently supported by the site, that being the job fair information. Recruiters seem to require a very interactive site, where they can find things out quickly and do some real business right there on the site.

Parents

To finish out our pool of users, we met with 2 parents and observed their navigation through the site. They both went into the “Parents” section to see what was offered. Both parents wanted to see job listings for their son or daughter. One parent clicked on “part time jobs for students” which did not give her the information she wanted. She thought the link would send her to actual job listings, instead she got a few paragraphs about the advantages and disadvantages of holding a part-time job while in school. She ended up going down 3 dead ends before realizing that there weren’t any job listings from the parents section. The other parent presumably came to this conclusion more quickly, and she went right into the students section and found the JobTrak login with relatively no problem. One parent was curious about the tips on how parents can help students, but felt that most of the tips were actually for the students.

It seems that parents are concerned about the job market their children are entering. Looking for job listings was a popular task, and one that cannot be accomplished without a login and password. To get a login and password, you must be a current student. Parents are also interested

in knowing what things are going on at the CSC during the year. The CSC has a quarterly calendar (online) which sufficiently supports this need.

Other websites

We also looked at several other career services websites from universities around the country to create a better idea of what we wanted to include in our redesign. We found that most other career center websites have different sections for different user types. The most common classifications were Students, Alumni, and Recruiters/Employers. Beyond this distinction, every site we looked at provided a list of available resources in outline form. In most cases, these links were annotated to make it clear exactly what was contained behind the link [Diagram 9]. Information containing the centers' goals, hours of operation, and location were also very prevalent in the sites we looked at. Overall, we found the content to be quite similar to that of the CSC at UCSD, though it was often clearer where things were located or how to get to them via the home page.

Our Prototype

In creating our prototype, we used the results from our contextual inquiries, information from other universities' career services websites, web page hit data from the UCSD Career Services Center, as well as our own professional intuition as users of the site [Diagram 10].

The Main Page

Our prototype of the front page consists of two main sections; the perimeter navigation bars and the main page content. Across the top of the page we included a header displaying the title of the current page. On the home page, we included the Center's address, phone number and hours of operation, as well as a link to directions to the center. We felt this was important enough to be displayed on the front page since it gives information about the center that people need if they want to visit in person. In the upper left corner we put a picture of the Center itself, which will allow users familiar with the building to make the association between that and the website. Along the left side we created a navigation bar (navbar) that will be displayed on every page, making it easier to jump from one section to another.

On the navbar we started with a link back to the home page, followed by a link to the JobTrak Login page. This page is the portal to all the job listings provided by the CSC, in conjunction with Jobtrak.com. Followed on the navbar are links to the 3 main sections of the site itself: UC Students and Alumni, Faculty/Staff, and Employers. These links go to sections with information designed specifically with these types of users in mind.

Currently the site has the three sections mentioned above, and also a section for parents. In our research we found that parents visiting the site really have 2 goals. They're either interested in jobs for their children, or they have questions about the services offered by the center. The subjects we interviewed said they found the student section more helpful than the parent section, citing that the information they wanted could be found there. Taking this into consideration, we chose to eliminate the Parents section from the site altogether. The information currently under the Parents section is important, but it's the same information one would find under a FAQ, which is where we chose to move that information.

We included a link to a calendar of events which displays all the events going on at the CSC for the current quarter. Below the calendar we included a link to information about the center. This page also contains the center's hours and directions, as well as information on the people who work at the center and a concise description of the services it provides. Rounding out the navbar are links to a complete website map and FAQ. Neither of these currently exist on the site. We chose to add them to help users who are lost and don't know where to turn. The ordering of the links on the navbar was of particular importance to us. We began with what most users come to the site looking for: job listings. Following that are the three main sections of content, followed by links to pages answering quick questions or helping users find specific information elsewhere on the site.

The main page content begins with the Center's Mission Statement. This provides users with a clear description right up front of the Center's goals and purpose. Following this are links to the 3 main content sections. These are the same links as the ones on the navbar, and we felt they needed to be repeated since we noticed people sometimes missed that they are autonomous sections. Below that we inserted a list of the upcoming events, which included things happening in the next 7-10 days. That list was followed by a "more" link which goes to the quarter-long calendar of events as depicted on the navbar. Below that we decided to keep the link to the Opportunity Alliance because we feel it is an important component of the Center. However, since the vast majority of students are confused by this term, we included a description of the link. Our first instinct was to change the term altogether, but we soon realized that "Opportunity Alliance" is a special term used by the CSC to denote this special agreement, and changing the name would be like changing a company's brand name. Finally, at the bottom of the page we kept the "Official Web Page of the University of California San Diego" graphic but made it into a link to the UCSD InfoPath. We also kept the link to email the webmaster and moved the disclaimer to the bottom.

The Students Page

Our redesign of the students page did not involve changing much of the content. The students we interviewed told us and demonstrated that they were primarily interested in job listings.

The other information they were interested in, aside from finding fields by major, was already located on the site, they just had a difficult time finding it.

The header across the top of the students page is similar to the one atop the front page. We shrunk the text reading “UCSD Career Services Center” and added “Resources for Students and Alumni” to let the user know where they are. The navbar on the left remains unchanged, as its purpose is to be identical on every page of the site.

In the main body of the page, the links are presented as a bulleted list, all neatly aligned down the page. We chose this particular alignment of the links (the same alignment appears on our front page prototype) because it makes it very easy to see exactly what the links are. Under each link there is a short description of what can be found at each page. One of the most notable problems we encountered with the current site was that subjects would click on a link and not know what to expect. We aimed to reduce this ambiguity as much as possible. As on the front page, some of the links appear in the body of the page as well as on the navbar. We did this for heavily trafficked sections and to catch those who may simply miss the link on the navbar or in the body of the page. We recognize that different users focus on different parts of the site; and that users rarely read all the content on any single website. [5] For this reason, the links to job listings and the calendar of events are listed in both places. The other links on the page are ordered according to their general frequency of use as defined by our subjects and hit statistics [Diagram 3]. We also added resources for viewing sample resumes online and for viewing information listed by major. Neither of these sections we felt should appear on the Student front page, but our data reveals that they should be available resources, and for that reason they are included in our prototype. Once again, at the bottom of the page are links to the UCSD InfoPath, disclaimer, and email to the webmaster.

Reaction to our Prototype

After creating the prototype, we ran it by our subjects to get their feedback on its use. We found a dramatic improvement in the subjects’ ability to find the information we asked. On our question about finding information on writing a resume, all but one of the subjects found it quickly under the “Students and Alumni” section. The other subject checked the “FAQ” first before finding it. When asked to find directions to the center, 2 subjects clicked on “site map” before seeing the link at the top of the page. The other subjects saw the link immediately and pointed right to it. When asked to find job listings and Job Fair info., every subject we interviewed found the information instantly without problem or hesitation. Finally, when asked to find information about choosing a major, all subjects found it on their first try. One or two of them took a few seconds to completely understand the question, but once they did they knew exactly where to go. Subjects commented to us that our redesign made it easy to find things. None of them got lost or had

trouble getting where they wanted to go. There were no comments on our aesthetic layout, however this was to be expected since our prototype was specifically devoid of all graphical considerations. Our goal for the prototype was to create a malleable version of our design. Also, we did not want to give our subjects the misconception that our prototype was a finished design.

These findings are in strict opposition to the problems we found with the current CSC website. Subjects found things quickly and easily and without hesitation. They knew what to expect when they clicked on a link, and they were able to quickly return to the previous page or jump to another section without any problems. Therefore, when we went back to refine our prototype, we found there was very little that needed to change.

Our Final Prototype

The final version of our prototype is only considered as such because of our time limitations. For this version we added a specific look and feel and addressed aesthetic concerns people had with the current site [**Diagram 11**]. It should be noted that adding the aesthetic considerations would likely change the experience of navigating the site, and that while the textual and layout problems we addressed were tested by subjects, the aesthetics were not.

In the header of our final prototype of the front page we changed the wording from “directions” to “directions to the center”. We did this to avoid any and all confusion about the term ‘directions’ and whether it referred to the site or to the center itself. We chose the blue UCSD logo to correspond with our school colors, and the cream color provided a contrasting yet pleasant background. On the left navbar we kept everything the same except for adding the word “for” on the buttons corresponding to the Student, Faculty, and Recruiter sections. We did this to make it clearer that these are specific sections of substantial content. We also changed “Recruiters” to “Off-Campus Recruiters” since once of our subjects was hesitant to click on “Recruiters” as she saw herself as a staff member first and foremost. We also highlighted the “Career Services Center Home” button in yellow to give users another indication of where they are. In the main body, we did not change any content save the switch from “Recruiters” to “Off-Campus Recruiters” as we did in the navbar.

On the Students section the navbar and header remained exactly the same. As on the front page, the “Students and Alumni” button is highlighted in yellow. In the main body of the Students section we changed the layout of the first link for graduate students and alumni. We felt that it was inconsistent to have a link just for alumni when this entire page is supposed to be for all students and alumni. We changed the text to “UCSD Alumni Services”, a name that more explicitly describes what lies beyond the link. Also, we changed the graduate student link to “UCSD Grad Students” for the same reason. The only other change we made was the link from “Exploring Careers” to “What Career is Right for Me?” Our subjects suggested that even though we

explained what information the link contained, the words “exploring careers” were ambiguous and confusing.

Conclusion and Further Research

Our initial interest in the UCSD Career Services Center’s website as a topic of study was dependent on a number of assumptions about the quality of the site. After extensive research into the site itself and what it contained, we completed a thorough investigation into the site’s usability and practicality. Our intent was to create an alternative user interface that more efficiently and pleasantly supported the real tasks of a majority of the users. We observed subjects having difficulty getting to the CSC website, understanding what the site had to offer, and where to go for help. Our reliance on this data as well as information from other career services websites led us to a prototype that successfully eradicates most of the problems we observed. Of course, there are still other problems out there that we did not observe, and this would be the focus if our project were to continue.

Future considerations for this project would include testing our second prototype against our first one. Following that would be a working HTML model of our prototype which would also be tested. Ultimately, we would extend our focus out to the entire CSC website.

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[<http://career.ucsd.edu>]
7. The *UCLA Career Center Website*
[<http://career.ucla.edu>]
8. The *MIT Office of Career Services and Preprofessional Advising Website*
[<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/>]
9. The *San Diego State University Career Services Website*
[<http://career.sdsu.edu>]
10. The *Colorado State University Career Center Website*
[<http://career.sc.colostate.edu>]
11. The *Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Career Services Website*
[<http://careerservices.calpoly.edu>]

