Final Paper – 102C

Methods

To gain insight on the beginning state of the Student Events Insider page, we interviewed Lori at the Center for Student Involvement. Lori's job is to give the final say on which events get posted on the Student Events Insider page, which is done purely through email and at the whim of the student clubs and organizations that wish to use SEI. She shared several issues regarding her experience with SEI. The most prevalent issues that we discussed included the preference of many groups for Facebook over other "less social" websites, the lack of a centralized hub for all event posting at UCSD, and the desensitization of students to flyering and other common forms of advertising. Lori supported the idea of adding social features to the website, such as forums and image posting, in order to decrease student apathy and draw in a larger crowd of users. She also responded very positively to our idea of a tagging system to organize and personalize which events users see on the front page of the site, further suggesting that we could allow the website moderators to create new tags and add them to events that get posted.

Early on, we wanted to gain knowledge about the lives of students in specific organizations, including Greek. We were able to interview "HC," a sorority member, about her involvement and her attendance at events on campus and the way Greek events are planned. The biggest issue with organizing Greek events, according to HC, is working out dates so that they conflict with the fewest events hosted by other fraternities and sororities. The purpose for this is that many Greek events are philanthropies, and therefore try to get as much attendance as

possible to boost donations; this causes nearly every weekend to be packed with often-conflicting events. The primary source of attendance at Greek events seems to be (*gasp*) Greeks, as well as personal friends of Greeks. HC said further that the promotional members of the sorority will try to branch out invitations as far as possible, to try to gain the biggest possible presence. Parties and other small events, however, must be limited in their turnout so as to avoid becoming rowdy, packed, or otherwise unmanageable. When asked how the presence of alcohol would affect attendance, HC responded saying that she personally didn't mind, though she has friends who don't like to drink or be around alcohol in general. She didn't believe it was a problem that could be remedied in terms of Greek socials, due to the high presence of alcohol in general, and the fact that it wouldn't change as a result of opposition. HC liked the idea of a personalized app or webpage, which could help her find the clubs and events she doesn't hear about from Greek life. She isn't too involved in the planning of events within her sorority, which has a "social media chair" that handles all public relations, but she believed that Facebook integration with campus events would be a massive improvement.

We also interviewed "SA", the PR officer for a local a cappella group. SA had frequently used the Student Events Insider page to post and discover events on campus; she shared both her experience using SEI and the knowledge she's gained through her position as a PR officer. In terms of integrating social aspects into the site, she suggested giving accounts a first name only to add personalization but keep anonymity. In terms of advertising, SA was a fan of saturating social media with tons of reminders that a certain event is imminent, so as to assure maximum public awareness; posters, flyers, and Facebook posts are all valid techniques for promoting our redesigned website. SA also commented on the presence of alcohol at events; she pointed out

that she doesn't use it to decide whether to go to an event or not, but that she would like to know beforehand so as to mentally prepare for rowdy people. She also noted that many others who are more pro- or anti-alcohol will be more strongly affected by the awareness of it before an event. This led us to think up a notification that can be placed next to certain events which will include alcohol, to be added by the website's moderators.

To get a hands-on analysis of the website, we interviewed and video recorded "IG" while he went through Student Events Insider. His interaction with the site revealed that many of our own critiques were accurate, as they were told back to us by an unbiased observer. He concluded that many of the website's features needed improvement, removal, or were missing where they were needed. For one, IG pointed out the clutter of the main page, where there was an extra bar of buttons at the bottom – unnecessarily blocking part of the content that you're trying to scroll through – and the click-to-scroll (a terrible feature in and of itself) events shown on the right side, which took up even more space. He also pointed out the need for a search bar, or at least a filtering system for which events he could see. In particular he wanted to be able to sort the events by date, venue, or general theme (sports, music, etc.), as the categories given were both arbitrary and unrelated. While looking at them, he said very bluntly "I'm not going to search by these categories." One aspect he *did* like about the site, but wanted more of, was the integration of Facebook for a more social connection. Because we use Facebook as the standard for finding and RSVP-ing for events, it was convenient and realistic in terms of what the general public wanted.

Once our prototype was set up, we conducted several video recorded interviews. One of these was with "AR," who did the website walkthrough as an unbiased and relatively uninformed observer. His reaction was mostly positive, and he supported many of the changes we made to the original Student Events Insider site. He particularly enjoyed picking out tags for his interests and seeing their effects on the main page, as he had very little past experience with websites that allow for personalization. He also agreed with the setup of the main page and the ease with which he could choose an event and immediately visit its Facebook page to RSVP; he supported it by saying "Integrating existing media is a great idea, as opposed to trying to make the website itself social. Knowing I can use my Facebook makes me more invested in using the site." AR also liked the achievements page, and thought their names were funny and intriguing. He wanted, however, an option to view all achievements on a separate page rather than to have one page full of every possible achievement. The calendar was also subject to his critique, as he believed it should have a direct link to the "My Calendar" page, and that the clickable days with events should be better distinguished from the rest. On the My Calendar page, he also seemed to prefer a drop-down menu of the months, rather than forward and backward buttons; he asked at one point whether they were actually clickable or not, and suggested we don't make them clickable so as to streamline the page. The subject also had a few small issues with the tag system, which he said didn't make clear the option to choose multiple tags at once. He was hesitant to choose the "Alcohol" tag as well, sounding worried that it might make him seem like an alcoholic; this may be a personal issue rather than a design one, but it's worth noting.

Design Changes

<u>Tags System</u>

One goal of our project is to shape the Student Events Insider page into a much more personalized medium of event planning and tracking. To solve this issue, we decided to implement a "tags" system. This feature would allow students to filter what appears on their front page by subscribing to tags that carry specific interests (music, sports, entertainment, etc.). Events will be tagged with whichever apply by the website moderators when they post the events, and groups can request certain tags when they submit an event for posting.

When users sign in to Student Pulse, they will be shown a large page of tags from which they can pick their first few. This page can be revisited at any time for the purpose of adding or deleting tags, but will only be visited *automatically* the first time. As students return to the front page, they will find a more relatable list of events, and thereby feel more "at home" at Student Pulse. Tags can also be temporarily turned on and off; this would allow users to sort by a specific tag, such as "music," and be able to view only events with a music tag.

This idea was strongly supported by Lori at the Center for Student Involvement, who advocated for a more streamlined structure for event posting and viewing. She believed our model would provide personalization and free up the clutter caused by the haphazard arrangement of random events across the front page. Our polls and interviews also suggest that the events page needs streamlining and that some kind of search or filter function can help to accomplish this. The tags system is a simpler and more personalized replacement for a search bar that can make users feel more involved and in control.

Achievements System

Our goal for the achievements system was to become a feature by which users of Student Pulse can compete as well as try for personal goals. Its central idea was that students can complete challenges by attending specific events, certain numbers of events, and so on. We entertained the ideas of a ranking system and a material rewards one, neither of which we have yet put into action.

Students can earn achievements by attending campus or even off-campus events. Our initial idea for its implementation was through a location sharing app that tied in with the website, but this became too complicated of a challenge. As a way to create both a social and familiar atmosphere within the site, we decided on the idea of Facebook location sharing. This would allow students to use their Facebook accounts to post about the events they're attending as well as make a record that they did attend; this record would allow them to earn whichever achievements are tied in with joining that event. The achievements would appear in a page that users can access in the top bar of options on Student Pulse; this page would allow them to view their most recent unlocked achievements, as well as the most recently added ones that are associated with the tags they've chosen.

Interviews and polls alike show that students want to see a UCSD events page that has more ties with social media. The achievements system can help students work harder at attending campus events, and its link with Facebook will give Student Pulse a more "current" vibe that will increase popularity.