Scholarship Extravaganza

Being Human in STEM - SCI 3900/HONOR 3990
Introductions

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Beth Penderghast (she/her/hers)
Introductions

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Project motivation
Our motivation

- Different GPA requirements for merit scholarships
- Access is limited
- Awareness of scholarships is low
- Departmental scholarships often are unawarded
● = 70% of college students nationally are stressed about finances
● Scholarships amount for 35% of tuition funding for students nationwide
● Over 20% of students lose scholarships at the U
● Hard to find applicable scholarships
Scope of the project
Meeting with Anthony Jones

Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships at the University of Utah

What we discussed:
- Issues we identified with the scholarship portal
- What the school is doing to address the issues
- Can students help?

What we concluded with him:
- Students can have roles in solutions
- Student feedback for new portal is needed
- Student advisory committee for the Central Financial Aid Office is needed
Old vs New Scholarship Portal

AcademicWorks (old)
- Prone to crashes
- Confusing, redundant, long filter

Scholarship Universe (new)
- Better user interface
- Doesn’t crash
Our event
What we did

Apr. 11, 2024:

- Held an event open to all students at the U
- Students tested the Scholarship Universe portal and then filled out a feedback form
- Students were incentivized with food and the possibility to win an Amazon gift card
- We had 33 people show to the event
Photos from the event
How the event worked

First set of survey questions
- How long did it take to fill out? Opinions on the filtering tool

Scholarship Universe filter
- Students fill out the filter until the first “Break point”

Look at first 10 matches
- Students look at the first 10 relevant scholarships

Second set of survey questions
- Are the scholarships relevant? Will you apply?

Donuts and gift cards
- Students enter the gift card drawing and eat donuts
Data Analysis/Discussion
Filtering: Efficiency

Avg time: 9 min 40 sec, Med. time: 8 min
3 outliers: 19, 26, and 30 minutes

Scholarship Universe filtering time was \( \frac{1}{3} \) that of Academic Works on average
About 74% of students agreed that the time to answer the questions was appropriate.
Filtering: User Interface Experience

80% of students felt that the user interface was easy to navigate.

The user interface was easy to navigate.

- Strongly Disagree: 0 (0%)
- Strongly Agree: 19 (50%)
- Strongly Agree: 11 (28.9%)

Number of Students
Filtering: Clarity of Questions

95% of students felt that the questions they were asked were clear.

The questions were clear.

- 1 (2.6%) Strongly Disagree
- 0 (0%) Strongly Disagree
- 1 (2.6%) Strongly Disagree
- 14 (36.8%) Strongly Agree
- 22 (57.9%) Strongly Agree
71% of students were eligible for at least 7 of the 10 “most relevant” scholarships they matched with.

Of the first 10 scholarships shown, how many are you eligible for?
About 74% of students agreed that the time to answer the questions was appropriate.

53% of students were either likely or extremely likely to apply to the scholarships recommended to them.

I am likely to apply for some of these scholarships.
Matched Scholarships

- Students with more matches were more likely to apply
- 35% of students with 10 eligible scholarships did not feel likely to apply for them
Conclusion and Suggestions
How is Scholarship Universe Doing?

We found that it is **more effective** than the current portal for connecting students to scholarship opportunities.

Improvements from the previous portal:
- Less time to filter
- Easier to use
- Questions more relevant
Suggested Improvements from the Survey

- **Eliminate repetitive questions**
  - Residency questions in particular

- **Add more scholarship information**
  - Add scholarship descriptions so students don’t have to go to another site

- **Shorten long lists**
  - Alphabetized lists for religious organizations, professional groups, etc

- **Non-listed information**
  - Allow students to add information that may not be in a list

- **Cater to international students**
  - Many international students are asked unclear questions
### Our Recommendations

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<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<tr>
<td>Go to professors’ office hours</td>
<td>Look for sources of funding both internally and externally - U of U FWC</td>
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<th>Have professors promote departmental scholarships in their classes</th>
<th>dates, application processes, application questions between departments or colleges</th>
<th>Line of communication between students, admin via a student advisory committee</th>
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<td><strong>Dashboard</strong></td>
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<td>Questions</td>
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Special thanks to Anthony Jones for meeting with us during the FAFSA fiasco

And special thanks to the Financial Wellness Center for advertising our event!