The Art Institute of Houston Website Redesigned

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IMD230

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Introduction

The following packet demonstrates the step by step process for developing a user centered designed website. Inside, you will find research, analysis, charts, and the development of visual design. The topic of the website is The Art Institute of Houston. The attatched disk is a working beta site that redesigns aspects of the original site.

Project Scope

The purpose of the website is to provide user-friendly resources for all of the target audiences who would want to access the Art Institute website. The audiences are prospective students and their families, and current students and faculty. Prospective students and their families should be able to come to the website and easily find all of the information they need to learn about the school, programs offered, tuition and fees, and how to apply. Current students and staff should be able to navigate through the resources that are offered for them.

Although the current website contains much of the information needed for all audiences, the elements are presented in a way that makes finding things, navigation, and reading content difficult. I propose to reorganize the layout, create a hierarchy, and make a bigger easier-to- read font to improve usibilty.

The beta version of the website will addresses the needs of prospective students and their families by allowing them to navigate through a sample of web-pages that would be of interest to them. The pages will supply basic information to those who want to learn about the school before making any decisions about applying or not.

There will be five working pages for the beta version of the Art Institute Website. The pages will include a Home page, an About Us page, a Scholarships and Financial Aid page, a Media Arts page, and a Tuition page .

The basic color scheme for the website is red, black, grays, and whites. The bluish gray background should be neutral and calming to users so as not to take attention from the foreground content. I will incorporate some red to continue with the the AI logo, and to draw the user's attention to certain areas of the page, such as the main navigation. I will also use a black background in the footer and header to provide high contrast against the red logo and white text. The main content in the page will have a white background with dark gray text and black text for easy readability.

The main navigation will be at the top of the page right below the header. It will appear to be a single red bar with white links on top. When each main link is rolled over, a number of sub-section links will appear below in a drop-down menu. This is for quick and easy navigation so a user doesn't have to click through various links to find what they are looking for. The drop-down menu will be created using CSS and unordered lists. Whenever you click on a link and are directed to another page, a secondary navigation of the same links will appear on the left. This is primarily for users using a browser that doesn't support the CSS "hover " function. On the home page their will be a few buttons towards the bottom right that will open additional pages in a separate window.

Audience Analysis

Target Audience:

The primary target audiences of the Art Institute of Houston web site are prospective students and current students. Secondary target audiences would include faculty of the Art Institute and the families of prospective students.

Demographics of Primary Audience:

The demographics of current students and prospective students are quite similar. Out of 831 applicants to the Art Institute of Houston, 509 were female and 322 were male. Of those applicants, 386 were accepted, 232 of them being female, and 154 being male. For current students, 91% of them are from Texas. 59% are female while 41% are male. 51% of students are between 18 and 21 years old and 48% of students are older than 22. Out of known races reported, 116 were African American, 1 was Native American, 53 were Asian, 183 were Hispanic, and 313 were White. There are 652 part time students and 1,598 full time students. Some articles claim that the majority of students are from low income homes. Although I found no evidence supporting this, 93% of students do require financial aid. Students usually consider themselves artistic, creative, friendly, outgoing, goal oriented and smart.

Demographics of Secondary Audience:

Families of prospective students have the same demographics as the students.
Instructors at the Art Institute usually make about $40,000 a year, which is about 43% lower than average Texas faculty pay.   Some other faculty members such as the assistant director of admissions make up to $54,000 a year About 107 faculty members are minorities. There are 17 Asian faculty members, 51 African American, and 39 Hispanic. About 58% of instructors are male, 42% are female. About 50% of instructors are hired full time. Instructors are viewed as having good communication skills, show interest in students, are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, and many are from outside of Texas.

User Needs Analysis

Target Audience Needs:

The needs of prospective students include an easy way to explore and navigate through the site to learn more about the school. They may be interested in finding out about the various majors and programs offered, location of the school, class sizes, tuition and fees, housing, and application requirements. An attractive and simple site (less clutter and effective navigation) is likely to promote their interest.

Current students are less likely to "browse" the entire site and are probably more interested in quickly accessing specific information. They may use the website to view grades, preview the art institute calendar, use the online library, check their student email, access the student store, get or drop assignments through e-companion, access an e-book, or take an online class. Their needs are based on accessibility, accuracy of data, speed (load times), reliability, and consistency.

Faculty needs are similar to current students in that they are likely to use the Art Institute website to access information quickly and efficiently. They are likely to use the website to post grades, post information on e-companion, gather student assignments, and check their school e-mail. And just like students, their needs include reliability (as in server and site are working), consistency, and fast load times.

Prospective Student families are likely to use the website to examine the programs offered, tuition and fees, payment options and loans, before "approving" the school for their child or family member. Their needs include consistent and easy to use navigation to find what they are looking for, accurate updated information, and easy to view content.

How to address User Needs:

To address the needs of all audiences, the entire website should be redesigned. Changes in layout, color, and "clutter" should be considered when trying to attract new students and their families; after all it is an art school. There should be less content per page and instead spread it out upon multiple pages so not only will it be easier to find and read content, but load times should be quicker per page. The main navigation should be consistent with primary links at the top (text not graphics) drop down menus when rolled over for specific areas within the main link (i.e. "Associate Programs" under the "Academics" link).

Help for addressing those Issues:

First off, a new professional and experienced web designer should be hired to redesign the look of the website. Feedback from users of the site should be considered. This can be done through surveys or interviews or focus groups. There should be consideration of how to best and most effectively allow users to meet their personal objectives when going to the website.

Benefits to the User:

Prospective students will benefit from the website by getting a better understanding of the school. They will then be able to make a more informed decision whether to apply or not. They can easily fill out applications online, or print them out and mail them. They can easily find contact information for the school.

Current students will benefit from the site by being able to find any information they need quickly and easily. They can easily view grades and access email, the library database, and student store. E-companion will also be easier to access without random issues. They also might actually enjoy looking up events and news related to school.

User Personas

John

John is a single 33 year old nurse from Detroit. He and his family moved to Houston when he was in his teens. Money was tight growing up, but John always tried to keep a positive attitude. He has always been goal-oriented and works hard to achieve his goals. He went to nursing school at Houston Baptist University and graduated at the top of his class.

He has been working at Texas Children's Hospital for 10 years and recently finished paying off his student loans. Although his work has been been fullfilling up to this point, he is ready for a change. Working with sick children everyday has been emotionally draining and John feels he should change careers to something more up-lifting.

He has always had a passion for art, and is now considering going to school for graphic design. He was accepted to the Art Institute of Houston where he signed up for an online Art History class. He can't afford to work less hours at Texas Childrens right now, so an online class works great for his schedule.

Vivian

Vivian is a 46 year old woman, born and raised in Houston Texas where she still currently resides. When she was younger she attended the University of Houston where she met another student, a handsome and charming older boy named George. Two years later she graduated from The University of Houston with a degree in Communications. One year after that, she married George.

Vivian worked at a local television station for about three years until she and George had their first child, Billy. She later gave birth to two more boys and decided to become a stay at home mom. She always puts her children first and doesn't regret her decision at all.

She is still married to George, who is a hard working electrician making enough money for his family to live a modest but comfortable life. Her oldest son, Billy, is a 17 year-old senior in high school. He has always been a smart and creative child and has expressed a desire to pursue a career in video game design. Vivian wants to encourage and support him to the best of her ability.
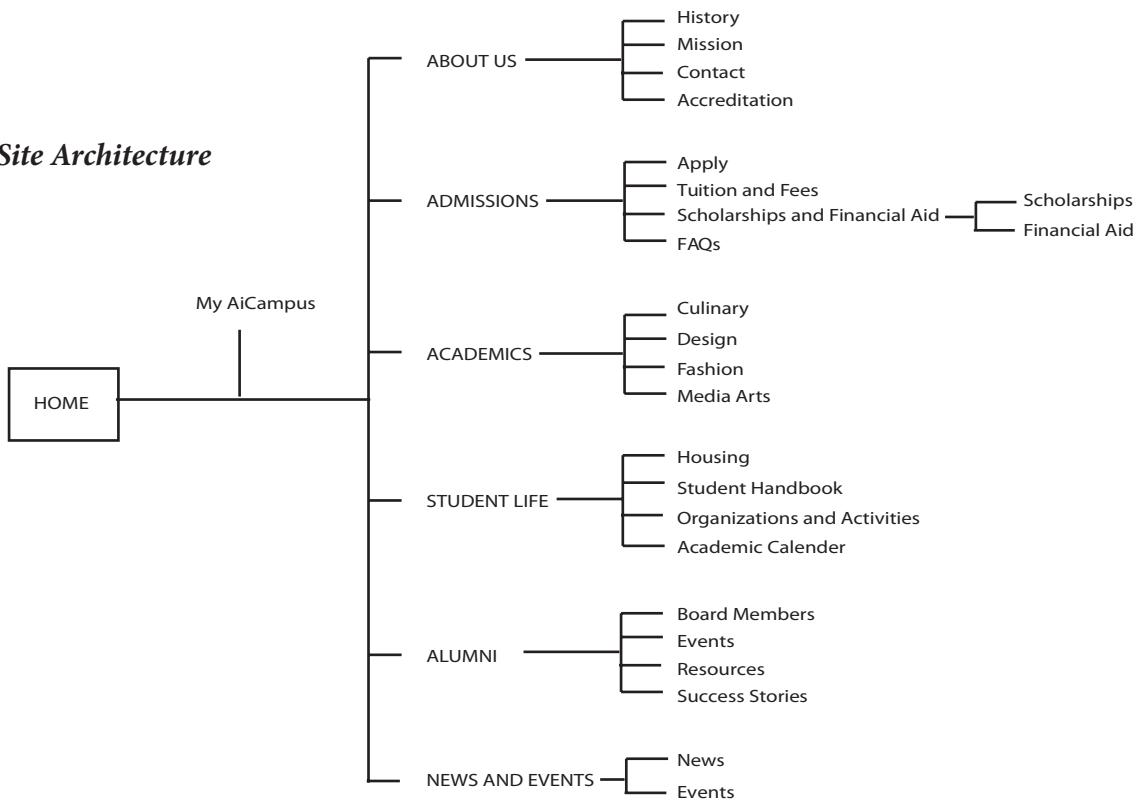
Task Analysis

Usability objective:

After Vivian learns that the Art Institute of Houston offers a Bachelor program in Game Art and Design, she decides to check out the Art Institute website to learn more about the school. She is interested in tuition and fees to see if she and her husband can afford to send Billy there. If the costs are on the pricy side, she may want to check if the school offers scholarships or grants.

- After finding the Art Institute of Houston website through Google, the user explores the home page.

- She clicks on the button labeled "Media Arts" and is redirected to the Media Arts overview which also lists the programs offered at the school.

- After seeing that the Art Institute of Houston does offer a Bachelor's degree in Game Art and Design, she clicks on the About link located at the top of the page.

- After reading about the school, the user decides to check out Tuition costs. She scrolls over the Admissions link and then clicks Tuition and Fees.

- She is shocked to read how much tuition is. Before dismissing the idea of sending Billy there, she clicks on the Scholarships and Financial Aid link on the left side of the screen.

- She clicks on the link in the middle of the page labelled "The Art Institute of Houston's 2012 Guide to Financial Aid". A PDF opens in a new window and the user prints it out.

- She then clicks a link on the side labelled Scholarships. Another PDF opens in a separate window. The user prints it out.

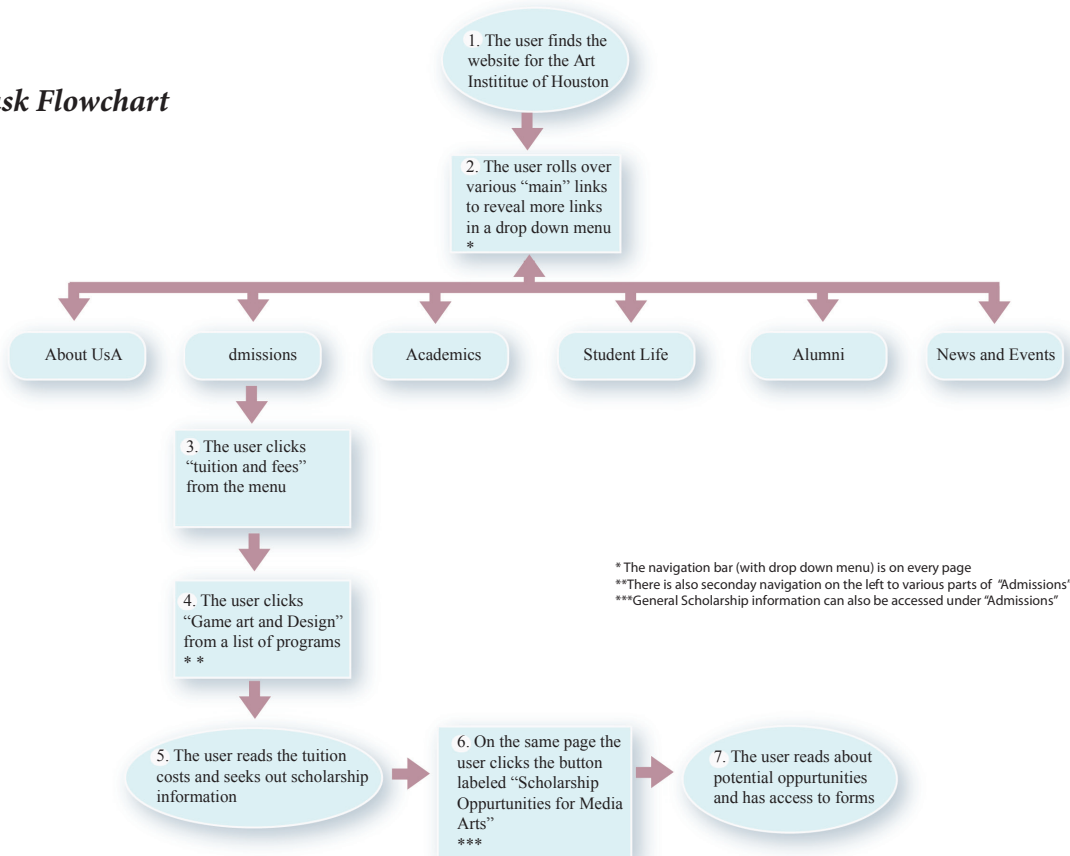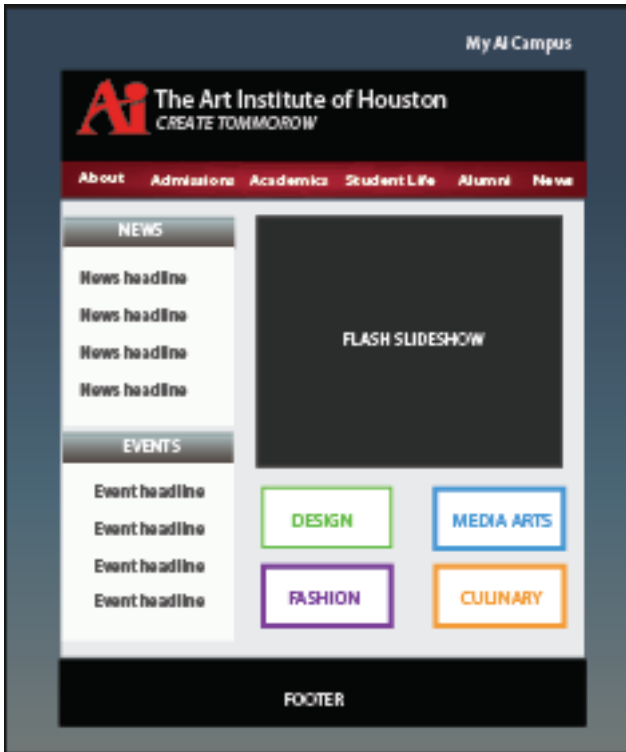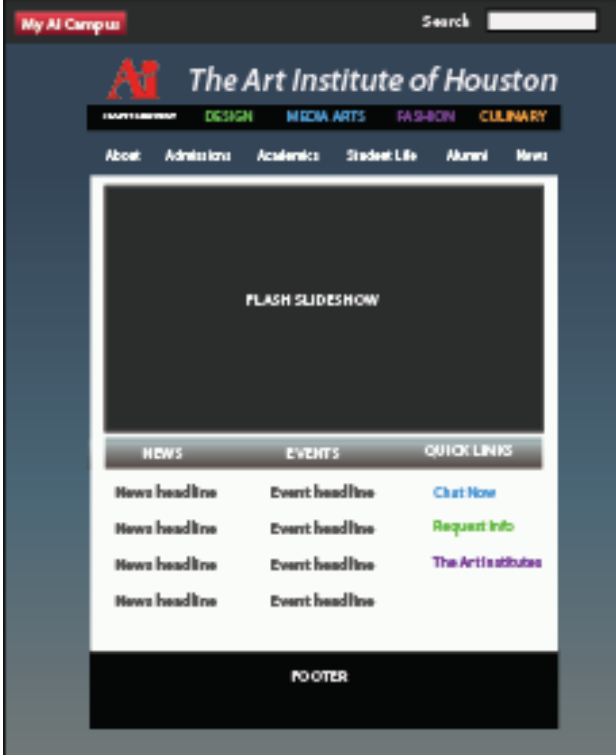- Vivian and Billy read the documents together.

Diagrams

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Site Architecture

ABOUT US
- History
- Mission
- Contact
- Accreditation

ADMISSIONS
- Apply
- Tuition and Fees
- Scholarships and Financial Aid
  - Scholarships
  - Financial Aid
- FAQs

My AiCampus

HOME

ACADEMICS
- Culinary
- Design
- Fashion
- Media Arts

STUDENT LIFE
- Housing
- Student Handbook
- Organizations and Activities
- Academic Calender

ALUMNI
- Board Members
- Events
- Resources
- Success Stories

NEWS AND EVENTS
- News
- Events

Task Flowchart

1. The user finds the website for the Art Instititue of Houston

2. The user rolls over various "main" links to reveal more links in a drop down menu *

About UsA | dmissions | Academics | Student Life | Alumni | News and Events

3. The user clicks "tuition and fees" from the menu

4. The user clicks "Game art and Design" from a list of programs **

* The navigation bar (with drop down menu) is on every page
**There is also seconday navigation on the left to various parts of "Admissions"
***General Scholarship information can also be accessed under "Admissions"

5. The user reads the tuition costs and seeks out scholarship information

6. On the same page the user clicks the button labeled "Scholarship Oppurtunities for Media Arts" ***

7. The user reads about potential oppurtunities and has access to forms
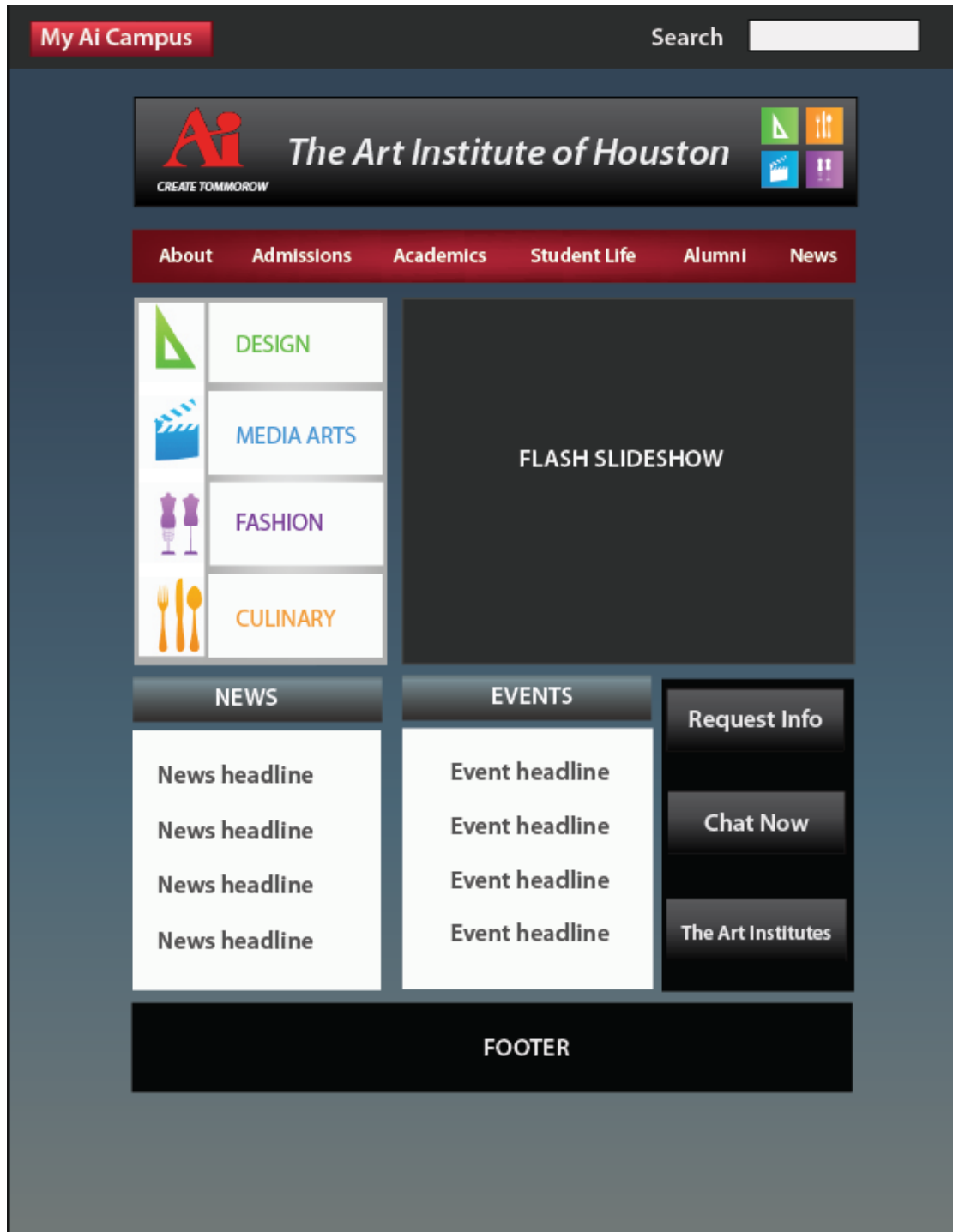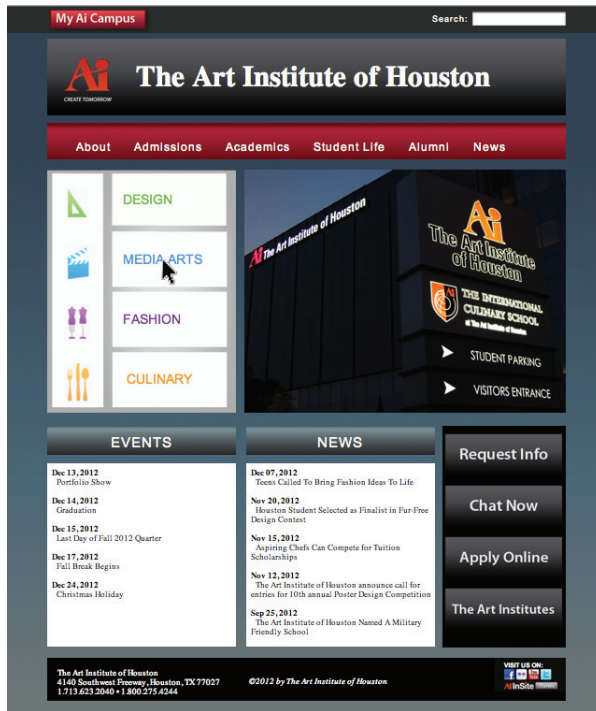
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Thumbnails

Mockup Designs

Design Prototype

Storyboard

HOME   index.html

After the user explores the home page, they click on the Media Arts button
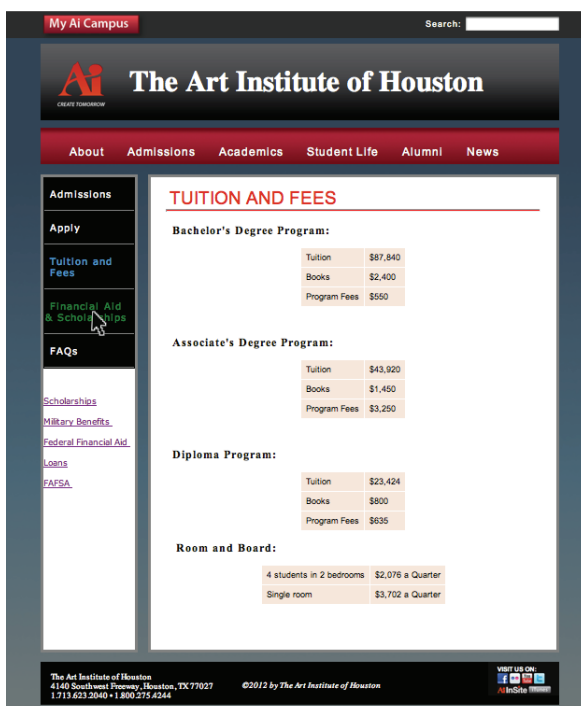

MEDIA ARTS   mediaArts.html

The user reads the description and spots the program that they are interested in. They then click on the About link in the top navigation bar.

Storyboard

ABOUT US   about.html

The user reads about the school and then moves their cursor over the Admissions link in the navigation bar. They then click on Tuition and Fees.
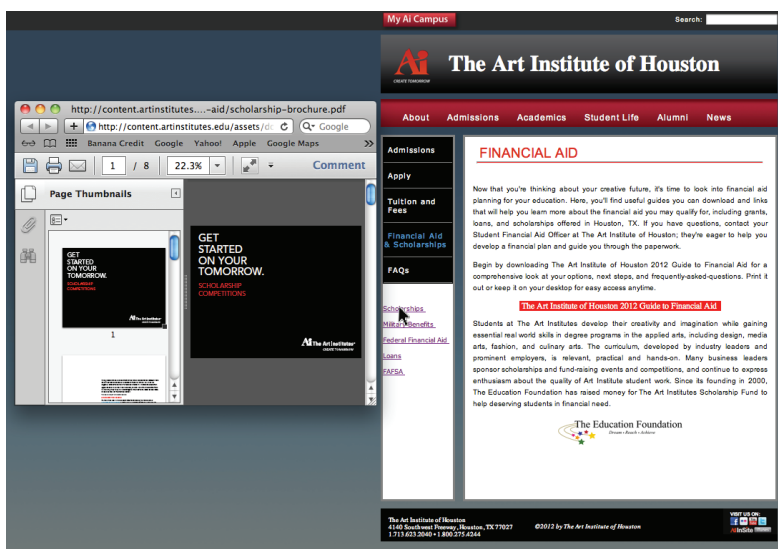

TUITION & FEES   tuition.html

The user sees the cost of tuition, and immediately clicks on the Financial Aid and Scholarships link in the sub-navigation menu to the left of the page.

Storyboard

FINANCIAL AID   finance.html

The user clicks the link in the center of the page. A PDF opens in a new window and the user prints it out.

FINANCIAL AID   finance.html

The user clicks the link right below the sub-navigation menu labeled Scholarships. A PDF opens in a new window and the user prints it out.