University Life and Services
Student Services Gateway Site

Business Plan – Web Content Initiative - Spring 2016

# Where We’ve Been

In 2015, University Life and Services (ULS) went through the DCT-CMS discovery process. During this time, we drew on our early work with web consultants, reviewed current research, collected feedback from key stakeholders, and undertook web benchmarking vs. peer institutions (including AAU peers).

Through this process, we came to the conclusion that there was a need to make changes and improvements to our online presence. The result was the development and launch of the ULS administrative “bridge site” (<http://www.buffalo.edu/uls.html>), which offers:

* An overview of University Life and Services, our leadership, and our impact (both on campus and in our community)
* Information about the services we offer (grouped by “buckets” of services: Campus Life, Get Involved, Health and Safety, and Personal Development), with links to unit-level websites
* Upcoming event listings
* Targeted pages for prospective students, family and UB staff
* A comprehensive listing of all departments that report to ULS

The bridge site marked a significant improvement over our previous online presence, positioning the depth and breadth of ULS services.

# Where We’re Going

Now, our goal is to build upon the foundation of the bridge site, along with lessons learned from the Administrative Services Gateway (<https://www.buffalo.edu/administrative-services.html>) and VPRED (Research) site (<http://www.buffalo.edu/research.html>), and create a new site: the ULS-facilitated UB Student Services Gateway.

Here’s our hypothesis: current and prospective students (and their families) will use the Student Services Gateway to quickly and easily get information about everything related to student life at UB. This includes tasks that students have to complete, expectations that students should meet, and opportunities for students to grow.

For example:

* Tasks – sign up for a meal plan, register for an event, find out where an office is
* Expectations – be a good neighbor, respect others, know how to be safe
* Opportunities – build leadership skills, join a club, attend an event

Ultimately, the Student Services Gateway will likely be a “sell and tell” website, similar to the Research model (<http://www.buffalo.edu/research.html>). The website will “sell” students by showcasing everything that ULS has to offer, and allow the flexibility to include non-ULS content that benefits students. And the website will “tell” students exactly how to complete their tasks, meet the expectations and take advantage of the countless opportunities.

Following is our blueprint for building the Student Services Gateway. Keen observers will note that many of our goals and needs are identical to those identified during the development of the bridge site. This is neither an accident nor an attempt to recycle work; rather, we recognize the thoughtfulness and insight that went into the original planning, and we realize that our goals and needs remain focused on the ULS mission of helping to “Lead the UB Experience.”

# Overall Business Goals

From safety and sustainability to health, housing and beyond, ULS plays a crucial role at UB. Our impact is found in nearly every aspect of student life outside the classroom. In filling this role, we:

* Promote student engagement and success
* Provide opportunities, support and critical services to create great students who will become tomorrow’s leaders.
* Inspire and empower current and future students as well as the university community through our vitality, diversity, and uniqueness
* Create a broader view of what it means to be part of the UB community, by breathing life into the human experience on campus
* Support UB in achieving its mission
	+ Give students the full university experience
	+ Build student affinity
	+ Enhance campus recruiting and retention efforts
* Break down barriers that prevent students from achieving their goals
* Collaborate more effectively both within ULS and with campus partners
* Ensure that ULS retains control over content and messaging related to our specialties

With all this in mind, we’ve developed a business plan that outlines our goals, our audience and key message objectives to move us forward in our new web CMS presence.

# Website Needs – Primary

* ***Sell the exceptional breadth and depth of the resources and opportunities available to students***
	+ Serve as a showcase for the “flavor” of student life at UB through engaging copy, eye-catching photos and “wow” videos
	+ Highlight the range of services available to students, *regardless of which unit is offering them*
	+ Provide up-to-date highlights of student life at UB – show that our programming is driven by current events; even “evergreen” content should feel fresh and current
	+ Increase awareness of our services while cross-promoting related opportunities and services (both within ULS and from campus partners)
* ***Provide both prospective and current UB students with an engaging, easy-to-use site that contains all of the information they need regarding student-focused services***
	+ Improve customer perception/understanding of where and how to complete tasks, gather information and discover opportunities
	+ Organize content by customer needs, not by the unit that offers each service
	+ Provide content in student-friendly language
	+ Add value to content secondary to students’ key needs (cross-promote services)
	+ Allow for efficient access to essential campus services
	+ Ensure prominent access to student engagement opportunities and key initiatives
	+ Present content in a consistent manner, regardless of the unit source
	+ Create one source for forms, policies, contacts and procedures
* ***Provide a continuous, well-branded experience***
	+ Take full advantage of the university content management system (CMS)
	+ Better leverage shared content, both internally (within ULS) and among university partners (admissions, etc.)
	+ Promote distribution of accurate content
* ***Define our role in supporting UB***
	+ Reflect and amplify the new “Here is how” brand positioning
* ***Appeal to the primary audiences***
	+ Organized and written for students
	+ Visitor-centric design
	+ Strong “experience/involvement” messaging
	+ Support access to key audience tasks and informational needs
	+ Consider/utilize visual aesthetics to support identity, messaging, and service appeal
	+ Usability

## Website Needs - Secondary

* Create a “critical mass” of student-related information that attracts both audiences and collaborators
* Provide a welcoming, desirable environment for collaboration within ULS and among campus partners
* Establish a structure that allows for a phased approach in terms of bringing ULS units into the new site
* Accommodate units that will be fully integrated, as well as those that may retain standalone sites but still have a strong presence within the Student Services Gateway
* Streamline stewardship needs
* Create a sustainable community of subject matter experts (SME’s) throughout ULS
* Tell our story through multiple media
* Ensure task support and availability of information for non-student users, including the campus community, parents and visitors; this will be accomplished using shared content strategies (i.e. Administrative Services Gateway publishing) and other means
* Consider seasonal and/or audience-based opportunities for development/philanthropy

# Audience

**Solution Seekers**

Those looking for answers, requesting service and seeking opportunities

* UB students (current)
* UB community (faculty, staff)

**Match Seekers**

Those who are trying to determine whether UB is the right fit

* Prospective students
* Prospective parents and family

**Active Supporters**

Those internally and externally engaged in direct support of UB students

* ULS staff
* Campus partners

**Prideful Belongers**

Those who identify with and promote ULS

* Students
* Alumni
* Parents and family
* Friends
* UB community (faculty, staff)

**Pulse Takers**

Those internally and externally looking for information about current and upcoming priorities and charting progress over time

* UB leadership
* Peer institutions
* Media

# Key Messages

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* ***You have easy access to all of the services we offer***
	+ Student-focused services are offered in a coordinated, cooperative manner
	+ We provide the infrastructure and services that enable you to be personally and academically successful
	+ It doesn’t matter where you start; we are here to help you find what you need
* ***You are supported at UB (radical empathy)***
	+ We are highly experienced in meeting the diverse needs of our student body
	+ As a member of the UB community, you are safe and supported
	+ Students make greater progress through collegiality and a strong sense of belonging
	+ As responsive, caring advocates of students, we are here for you 24/7
	+ Our job is to help ensure your well-being
	+ We are professionals committed to the safety and success of our students and community
* ***You have opportunities for personal development at UB (purposeful ambition)***
	+ Engaged students are successful students
	+ At UB, students are empowered to define their own path and achieve personal transformation
	+ We offer programs and activities specifically designed to develop student leaders and enrich your experience at UB – and beyond
	+ Students are highly encouraged to utilize programs that aid in learning/personal development
* ***You will have exceptional experiences at UB (bold participation / global perspective)***
	+ Our campus life is a reflection of our student body: vibrant, diverse and extraordinary
	+ UB offers unique, immersive, high-quality opportunities for student engagement, including countless activities, events and clubs designed around the ever-changing needs of our student population
	+ Students at UB demonstrate a readiness to work together to achieve major impact on campus and beyond
	+ Our programming is inclusive; we embrace diversity in all forms, including welcoming international students
	+ Students gain leadership skills through an understanding of all perspectives and ideas
	+ Tradition and campus pride are embedded throughout campus life, and foster the development of life-long connections to UB
	+ We prepare students for success in the workplace, in their personal lives, and as citizens of the world
* ***Additional key messages TBD***
	+ As we work closely with our 20+ operational units, we will likely identify additional key messages that will be shared throughout the Student Services Gateway

# Desired Outcomes/Perceptions

* Provide a clear path for students to quickly and easily complete tasks
* Offer timely and relevant information provided directly by the SME’s
* Make sure students understand all of the resources available to them
* Inspire participation and support through featured content, unit gems and cross-promoted content
* Offer genuine and appealing insight to UB campus life
* Connect to university-wide messaging and branding
* Build respect and confidence in our services as professionals
* Connect ULS units and related student services under one umbrella; become the “gateway”
* Identify and cultivate stewards, stakeholders and collaborators within ULS