Title: MyEAP2 (M2)

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Names of project leader(s) and team members:
IT: Christina Brasfield, Thomas Bunnell (lead), Jason Dodd, Shaun Drong, Hollie Jambretz, Magdala Moser, Elda Schaffield, Emily Stewart, and John Witkowski. Marketing: Myla Edmond (lead), Serena Gonzales, Claire Hoch-Frohman, Andrea Huebner, Virginia O'Conner, Elisabeth Rockamore, and Ellen Tyson.

A simple short statement (even just one sentence) summarizing what the project does:
Development of an open-source student information system that integrates two websites for inbound and outbound exchange students across all UC undergraduate campuses.

UCEAP's student information system, MyEAP, is the primary enterprise system by which UC students apply for study abroad programs. It enables online document submission, course selection, and a mechanism for students to access policies and instructions. Staff across the UC system, international staff, and international partners also use MyEAP to manage student applications, create student budgets, approve student coursework, and document student grades.

MyEAP is linked to the CashNet payment gateway which allows students to track their financial aid and billing statements, and includes a travel registry used by the students while abroad. Program information and details contained in MyEAP are syndicated to the UCEAP website, and student data is transferred to UCOP, Registrars, Bursars, and Offices of Financial Aid, as well as the IRS.

In 2016, UCEAP made the critical decision to replace MyEAP and the existing website. Proprietary solutions would not meet the distinctive requirements of UCEAP. Because UCEAP works with Registrar's and Financial Aid Offices across the UC system, any "out of the box" solution would have required extensive customization as no software system could support the multicampus operations that UCEAP required. It was decided that UCEAP would build its own system.

Redesigning legacy systems with a backlog of feature requests spanning years and a disparate, wide-ranging group of stakeholders required the development team to introduce new methodologies to the organization. UCEAP IT championed the Scrum framework as a logical way to tackle the development of MyEAP 2 or simply M2 as it grew to be known. Agile methodology was new to the organization, and consultants were hired and brought onsite for training, and critical staff members were sent for additional training as well.

Given the complex nature of UCEAPs operations, the development team requested volunteers from each functional area when programmers worked on features. These subject matter experts (SMEs) tested functionality and participated in bi-weekly "sprint" demos and retrospectives. The IT team continued to work in close collaboration with each functional area as they transitioned from one "epic" to the next. SMEs were also often called on to participate in the quality assurance process and tested numerous "user stories" to ensure that developers had delivered features that met staff needs.

It is worth noting that the IT Team worked in close collaboration with the Marketing group from the very beginning of the project. The redeployment of M2 and the website also represented a significant rebranding effort undertaken by the Marketing team who conducted a lengthy and thoughtful investigation, including soliciting feedback from students, the campuses, and partnering organizations. And it was also during this period that UCEAP transitioned from the umbrella of UCOP and realigned more closely with UCSB. This move added another challenge in transitioning from uc.eap.ucop.edu to uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu.

A mobile-first philosophy dominated the decision making regarding user interfaces and the user experience. Accessibility was also a leading consideration. The end goal was to make these systems "frictionless" to remove impediments and steps that might discourage the student from completing their application. The Marketing team likewise engaged in a substantial content audit to ensure students received the right amount of content necessary to make informed decisions and to provide them with relevant information at each step of their journey.

Another significant decision made by the IT team centered on separating outbound and inbound student experiences. In MyEAP, developers co-mingled the student data for these distinct populations and designed a website with content that primarily served the needs of outbound students.

As the requirements of the inbound or reciprocity students are uniquely different than those of the outbound students, the IT team determined they would be better served by a standalone web presence dedicated to their needs and one that specifically highlights the UC campuses. The Marketing team was also interested in the opportunity to create distinct promotional materials for this student audience.

The new Reciprocity website, reciprocity.uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu, launched in December 2018.

Key features of the new site included:

- Inviting and consistently branded look and feel of the webpages and application
- Responsive design allowing the user to access UCEAP from a variety of platforms
- An interactive experience for the student who receives system messaging and can see real-time results of their application
- Elimination of paper documents transfer which provides a secure environment for the storage and exchange of information in compliance with GDPR, CA and UC privacy regulations
- Automation of student participation letter process: A dashboard tile allows students to acknowledge the terms and conditions, confirm the duration of their participation and print their UCEAP letter for visa application.

With the completion of the Reciprocity website and application management system, staff developers were transitioned to M2, and the new website effort with one team of developers focused on the new SIS. At the same time, the UCEAP Marketing team devoted their energies to the new website, playing a crucial role in providing style guidelines for the developers, as well as professionally edited content and fresh imagery.

In June 2019, during UCEAPs Annual Conference, the minimally viable product versions of M2 and the new UCEAP website were well received by students. The first applications came within minutes of M2 going into production, and website traffic grew steadily and significantly in months following its launch.

Since then, development has continued at a breakneck pace adding new features and components – effectively "chasing the students" and releasing just-in-time features shortly before the next step in the application process. The 1.0 version of the website is on track for completion in June of 2020, and M2 following shortly after that.

Key features of the new website include:

- Cost calculator for each program and package option allows students to get an accurate estimate of program costs as they explore and compare offerings
- Life in the City pages that including maps, recommended activities, and imagery on living abroad for cities with UCEAP programs
- Program overview cards in the Program Builder and on the program overview pages allowing quick, consistent, and visually appealing means for students to compare programs on the variables that are most relevant to them
- Promotional sliders on the homepage, country pages, and field of study pages allows UCEAP to integrate scholarship, financial aid, program, and discipline content throughout the website.
- Integration from M2 permits UCEAP marketing and communication staff to select featured programs that impact the order of the first six program results in the program builder.

Key features of M2 include:

- Robust permissions matrix segmenting system access and PII/FERPA/GDPR data by user and role
- Application system that provides tailored experience based on student's program of choice and campus of origin
- Financial tools which track fees across academic years and programs and transactional records integrated with CashNet payment gateway tied to campus general ledger
- Emergency welfare check-in system with geographic search tool that includes API integration with SMS and WhatsApp
- Sophisticated data transfer via JSON, API, and SFTP.

With the impending completion of Phase I, members of the UCEAP IT and Marketing teams will continue to forge ahead and work on additional features and enhancements, including CRM integration. In contrast, others will begin work with their peers at UCDC. UCDC's next-generation, SIS, will utilize much of the underlying code of the M2 system.

The seamless integration between the website and M2 has supported a 28% increase in the number of applications from 17,727 in 2019-20 to 22,286 in 2020-21 (as of 5/29/2020). Initial conversations have also occurred to discuss using the M2 system as an alternative to the propriety study abroad applications used by the UC campuses. Similarly, other universities have shown interest in the M2 project (University of TX Austin), and the UCEAP development team intends to present it during the Higher Education day at DrupalCon in the spring of 2021.

URLs:

https://reciprocity.uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu/

https://uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu/

https://my.uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu/

Designs

https://ucsb.box.com/s/eqf7eid7q2d3z0fpx1cvc4te7i767h2u