Central Carolina Community College — May 2023

Heuristic evaluation recommendations

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Report Outline

Part 1: Background & Overview

- Research objectives and methodology

Part 2: Heuristic Evaluation findings

- Detailed analytical & qualitative assessments

Part 3: Summary of recommendations

Background & Overview

What is a Heuristic Analysis?

Heuristic analysis is a process where experts use rules of thumb to measure the usability of user interfaces in independent walkthroughs and report issues.

Evaluators use established heuristics and reveal insights that can help design teams enhance product usability from early in development.

10 Usability Heuristics (1)

1. **Feedback is important:** Keep users informed about its status **appropriately** and **promptly**.

2. **Match the real world:** Show information in ways users understand from how the real world operates, and in the users' language.

3. **Keep the user in control**: Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through an extended process.

4. **Consistency and standards:** Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform and industry conventions.

5. **Error prevention:** A system should either avoid conditions where errors arise or warn users before they take risky actions (e.g., "Are you sure you want to do this?" messages).

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10 Usability Heuristics (2)

6. **Recognition not recalling:** Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible.

7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use:** Allow users to tailor frequent actions. Be flexible, so that experienced users find faster ways to attain goals.

8. **Aesthetics and minimalist design**: Avoid clutter, containing only relevant information for current tasks.

9. **Error recovery:** Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no error codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

10. **Help and documentation:** It's best if the system doesn't need any additional explanation. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks.

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Heuristic evaluation findings

Issue categorization

During the analysis we will categorize our recommendations based in the following:

Positive (P)	An element of the design that works nicely and is a differentiator or highly valued by the users.
Low severity	A recommendation that has low impact in the experience of the user but would be nice to address.
Medium severity	A recommendation that has impact in the experience of the user and should be addressed.
High severity	A recommendation that has a considerable impact in the experience of the user and must be addressed urgently.

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Glossary

Here is some of the technical language we may use:

- **CTA**: A CTA is short for Call to Action which is a piece of content intended to induce a website user to perform a specific action, typically taking the form of an instruction or directive (e.g. buy now or click here).

- **H heading:** The title at the top of each section of content in the page. All pages must have at least one H1 heading to follow best practices.

- **Navigation:** A navigation area is a page component that links to appropriate sections/pages in a website that helps readers in traversing its content.

- **Breadcrumbs**: a navigation component that builds a list of pages or 'breadcrumb' of links based on the page's location in the content hierarchy.

- **Footer**: Section on the bottom of your website that contains all the useful information that isn't included in the primary content. In most cases, visitors will scroll all the way down to find the links they can't locate anywhere else.

Homepage

Unclear main purpose for the homepage (M)

Although the 4 main CTAs used in the homepage are really useful, they are currently competing against each other and don't create a clear hierarchy.

Recommendations:

To address this, add a prominent CTA for enrollment or finding courses/programs to establish a clear main objective and aid content scanning.

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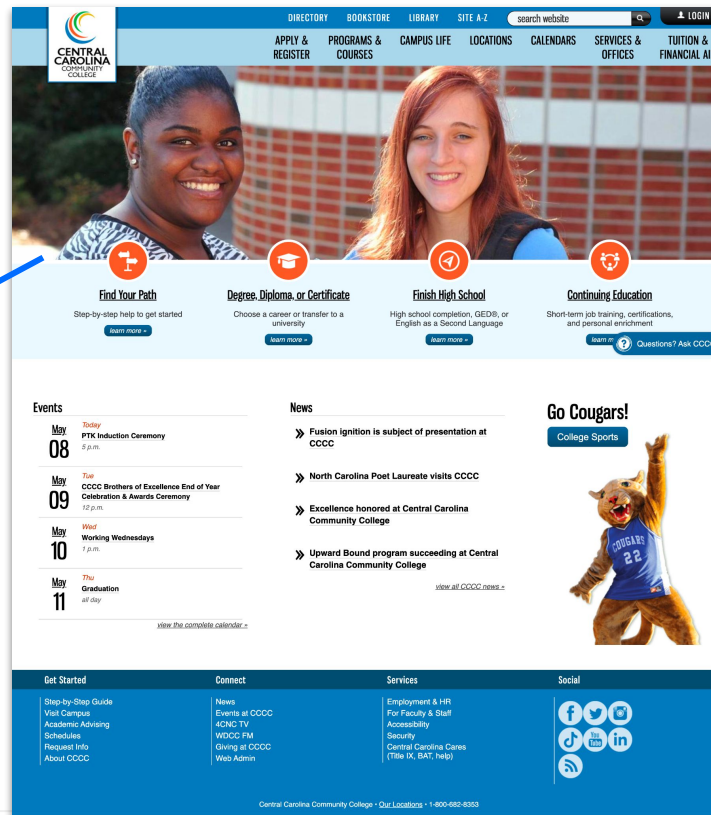
Homepage

Mobile design looks dated (M)
The current design for mobile makes the page look dated with a logo that looks too big and buttons instead of usual icons for Menu, Search and Login actions.

Recommendations:
Update the mobile design of the website with a more modern look and feel that follows current best practices.
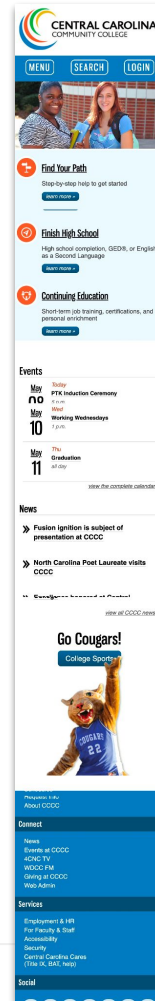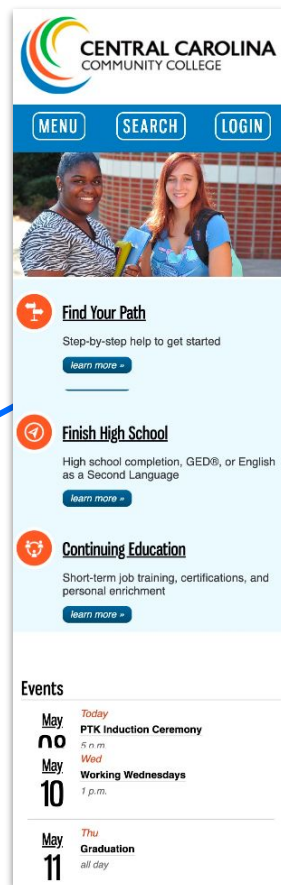
Homepage: Navigation

Simple navigation options (P)
The current navigation options may seem wordy, but are quite self-explanatory and still in the recommended range for short-term memory.

Easy to miss search functionality (L)
Users tend to prefer the use of search functionality on websites with significant amount of content and placing it at the same level as the secondary navigation can make them easily miss it

Recommendations:
Consider moving the search link to the primary navigation and on a prominent place particularly in the Homepage.

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Content pages: Navigation

Inconsistent secondary navigation placement and style (M)
Depending on the section of the website the secondary navigation changes location (it can be on the right or the left) and each has very different styling. Users tend to identify components by recognition and having different locations and styling can be confusing

Recommendation: Consider using the same templates for content across the site that will have similar placement and styling for all page components.

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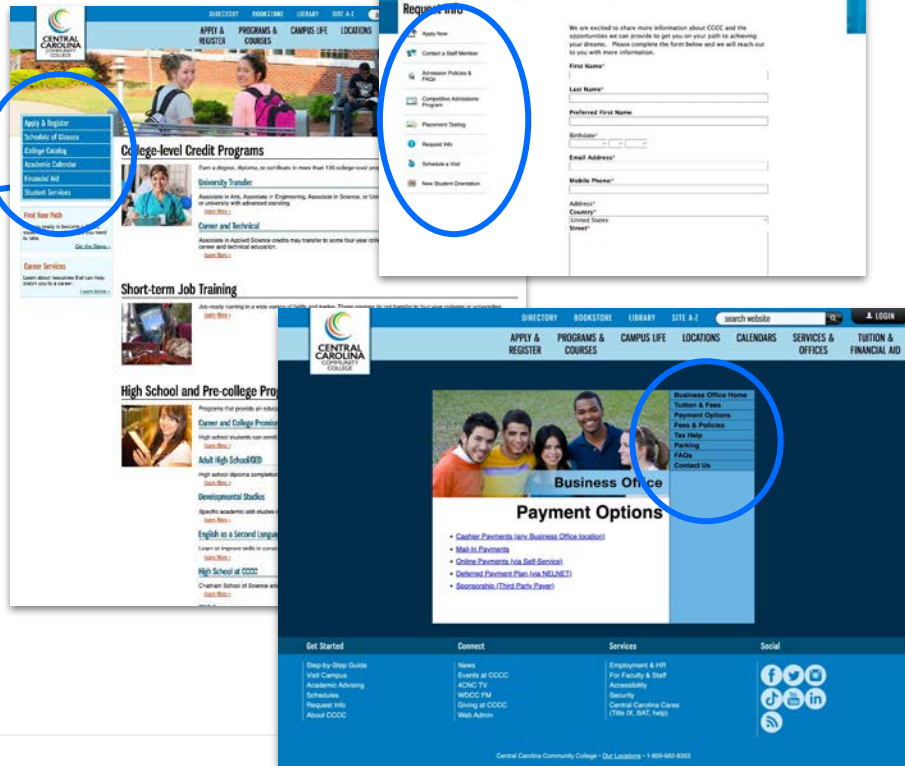
Content pages: Look and feel

Different templates for content (H)
There are a few different templates for content and landing pages used across the site with multiple variations of headers, navigation, CTAs and other components. This diversity creates trust issues, increases maintenance cost and complexity and reduces the aesthetic.

Recommendation: Ensure all pages in the website follow the same template and style guide.

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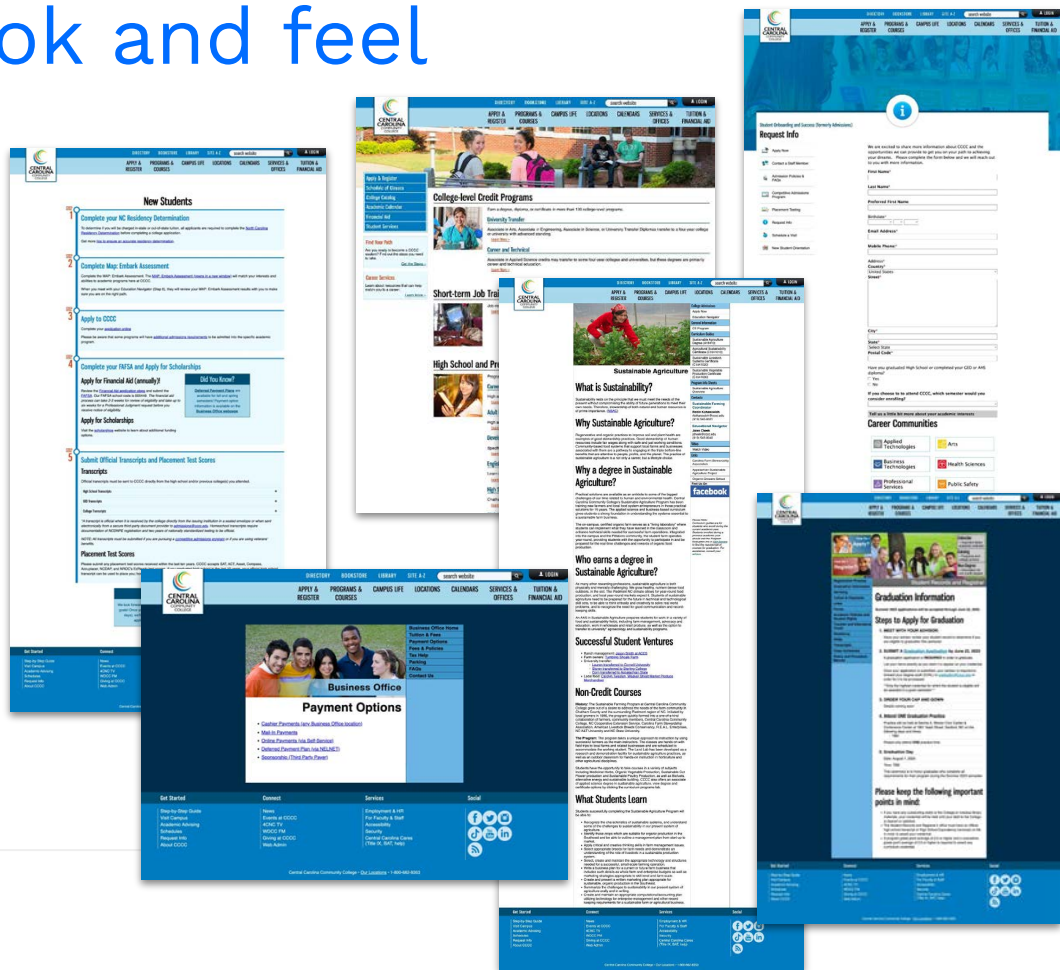
Content pages: Orientation

Missing breadcrumbs (H)
Users tend to rely on breadcrumbs to find their way around a site, particularly on a site with lots of content and different sections.

Recommendation: Include breadcrumbs just below the H1 heading of each page to help with site orientation and overall understanding of the structure of the sitemap

Content pages

Good formatting for instructional content (P)

Using numbered steps, subheadings and different background colored boxes for prominent information is a great way to facilitate the understanding of content and making it easier to remember.

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Find your Path

Confusing path functionality (M)
The path finder link from the homepage gets you to this page, but suddenly the wording changes considerably which can create misunderstanding, backtracking and increased clicks to get to information.

Recommendations:
Try to have consistency in naming of pages and functionality to increase user's reassurance.

Programs & courses

Lack of filtering (H)
Listing all types of courses under all types of programs and student types can be overwhelming and significantly increase the time and effort required to decide where to click

Recommendations:
To cater to user preferences for shortcuts and information control, it is recommended to incorporate a filtering feature. This functionality would enable users to select the specific type of program they are interested in, empowering them to refine their search and access relevant information more efficiently.
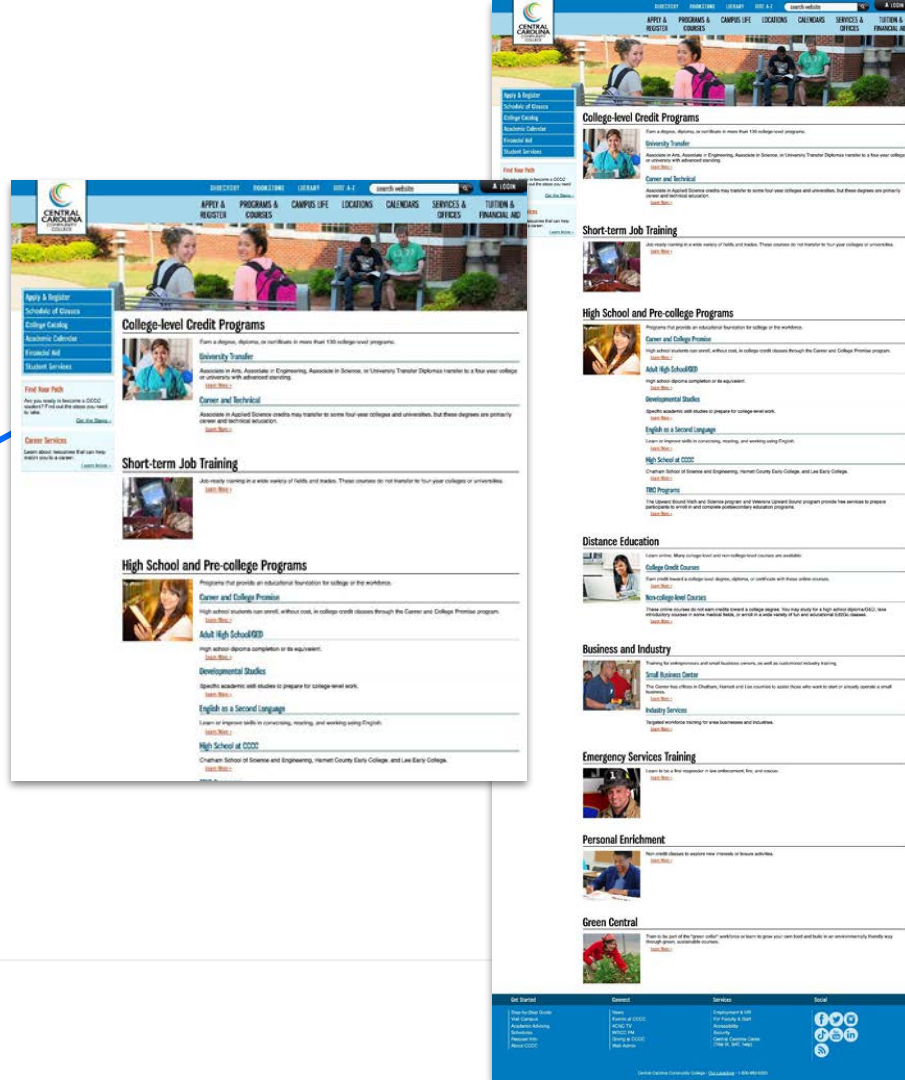
Program pages

Missing engaging content and clear CTAs (M)

Although the program pages are very informative and include all information required, the content looks quite dry and lacks interaction and clear Call to Action for application or finding more information

Recommendations:

Include more engaging content like videos and images of the laboratories and curriculum content, as well as clear CTAs to either start application or contact the faculty/counselors.

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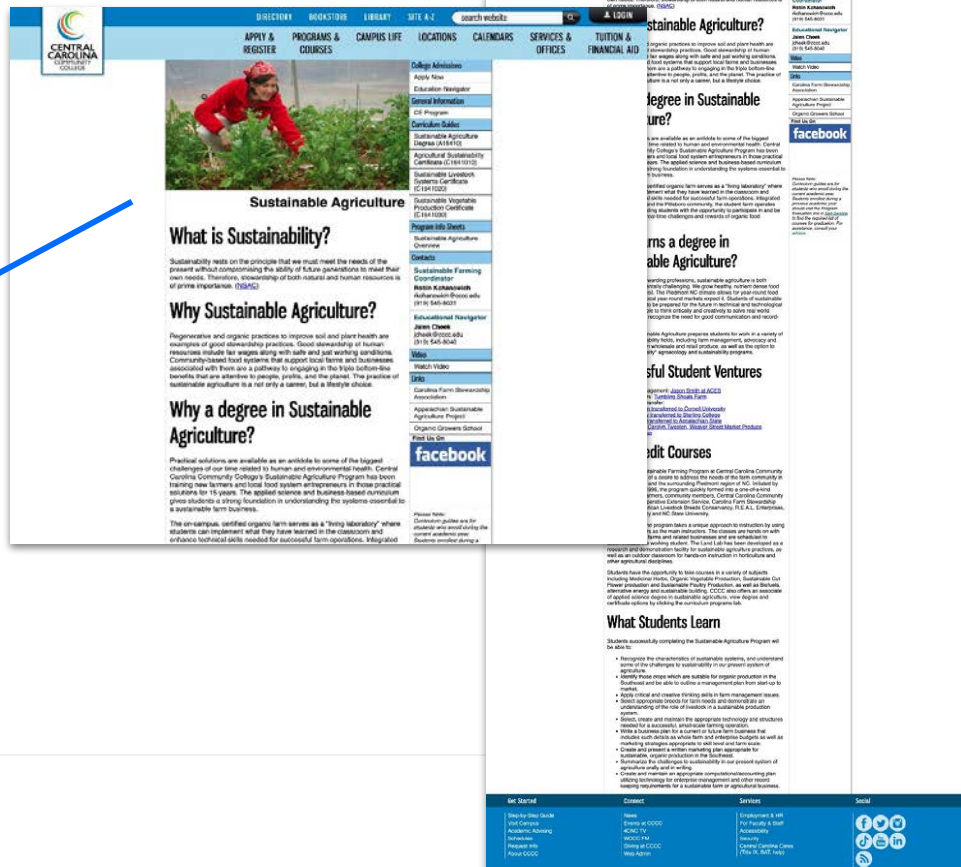
Financial aid

Aesthetically outdated templates (M)
Although the content on the pages is very important and the structure and formatting of it is quite correct, the look and feel of the pages seems dated and can create trust issues about its relevance and up-to-date.

Recommendations:
Consider using a more modern template for ensuring this key content is easily digested and looks fresh and trust-worthy.


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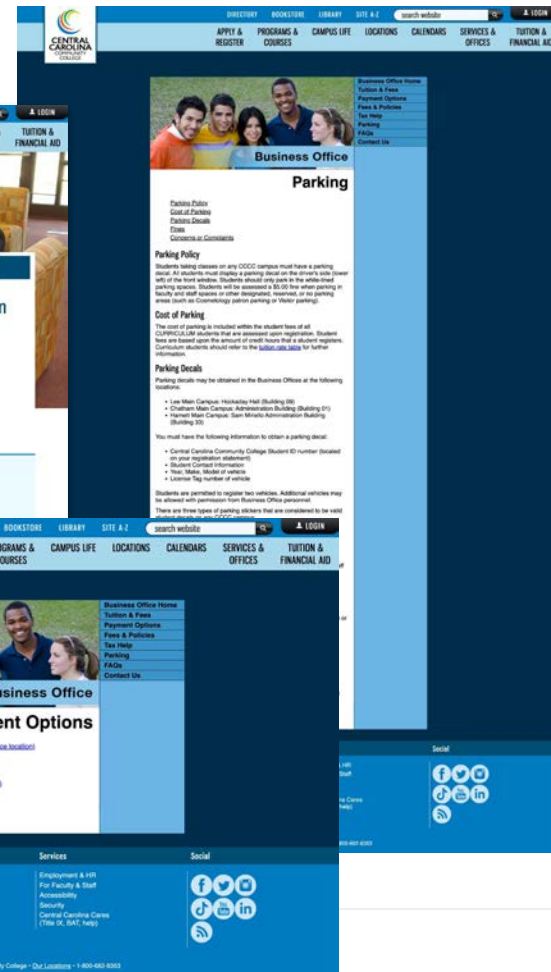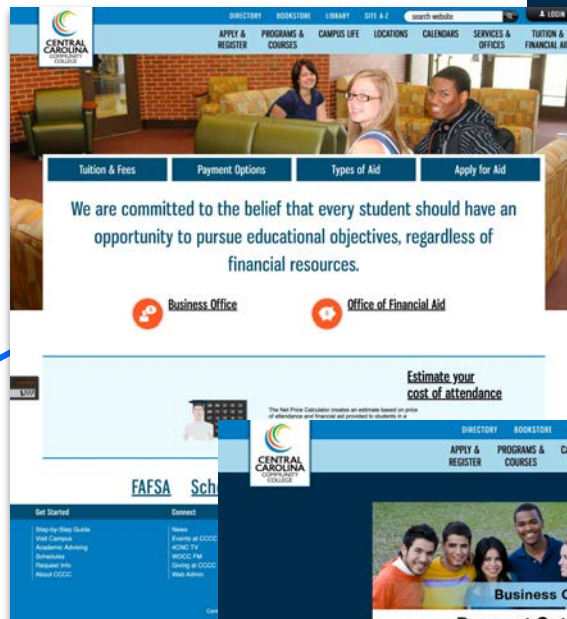
Tuition and fees (1)

Difficult to scan content (M)
The current design and information architecture of the tuition and fees page makes it difficult to scan the content and requires a lot of scrolling

Recommendations:
Consider using a more modern template that makes better use of the available space, as well as selection and filtering components that reduce scrolling and allow users to easily identify their key content and data (like the quick links at the top of the page) but without having to show all the content below too.
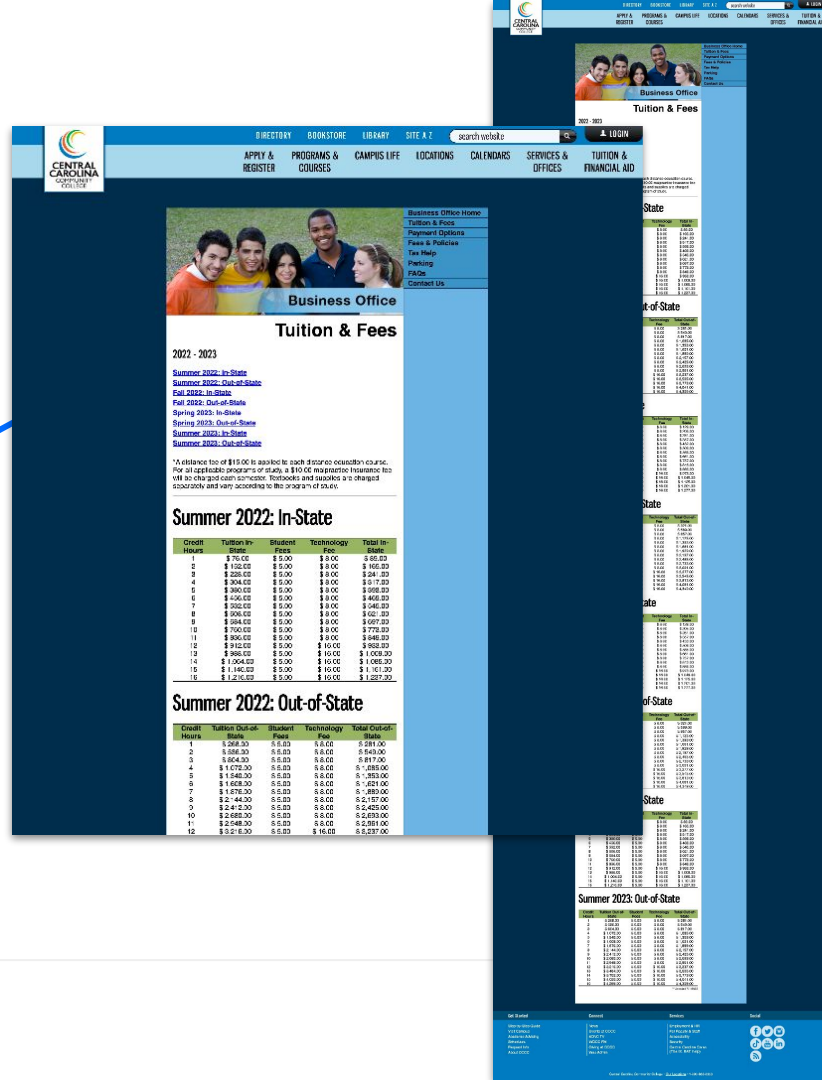
Tuition and fees (2)

Confusing affordance for tables (H)
Using a component that highlights the rows when the user mouses over it creates the perception that they will get access to further information by clicking

Recommendations:
Reduce the perception of affordance by using a different table style like zebra stripes that will aid with readability of the table content too.

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Ask a question

Asking a question functionality (P)
A floating component appears in the bottom right corner of the site offering a link to the contact form which is quite a nice practice, although could hide other content or not be noticeable enough.

Unnecessary mandatory question (L)
The current contact form is nice and simple although some of the questions like date of birth could feel unnecessary and deter users from using the form.

Recommendations:
Consider removing unnecessary questions or add an explanation as to why they are being requested.

Summary

Summary of recommendations

Overall the current site has a good information structure and primary navigation, with nice formatting and structure for content. There are a few things that may be interesting to consider for the redesign:

- Ensure all the pages for all different section follow the same template in look and feel and structure.

- Simplify the navigation aesthetically by increasing the prominence of the search functionality and adding a main CTA for Contact.

- Improve the content engagement by including filtering and search functionality for those content pages that are long and not applicable to all user types.

- Adopt a mobile first approach for the redesign that will help with keeping the website usable, simple and easy to maintain.

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Thank You!