THE QUEST FOR THE USER

Case Study: University Intranet Portal Design for Functionally-Diverse Audiences
Duke University – The Fuqua School of Business

Campaign Setting

Setting Overview

Graduate business school with 1- and 2-year programs:
- 1-year Masters for recently graduated undergraduates.
- 2-year Daytime MBA program for mid-career professionals aged ~27-32.
- 2-year Executive MBA programs for established executives in their 30s and 40s.

Campaign Objectives

High-Level: Provide targeted, important information to a variety of internal audiences in a cohesive, easy-to-use fashion.

Concrete: A modern, responsive replacement of an existing 15-year-old design that emphasizes search and a clear information hierarchy.

Player Characters
(Internal Audience)

Students: 1633

In 2014, Daytime students in the Technology Advisory Council voiced dissatisfaction with the outdated interface for FuquaWorld, the internal portal linking them to the various critical websites and applications necessary for their work. The project was championed by the 2015-2016 Council.

Faculty: 175

Largely ambivalent, though potential high-impact and politically critical.

Staff: 273

Also largely ambivalent. Reliability for job functions a priority. Frequent users. Long view.

FuquaWorld Classic

The existing portal was dubbed FuquaWorld Classic. Its table-based design hailed from 2003.

FuquaWorld Classic consisted of a homepage dubbed "the land of links" internally by IT due to 4 columns of 10-point text links organized into loosely-defined groups by the primary developer of the site. For over a 15 years, the developer had diligently added each new page and application as new links, making it both **overwhelming and indispensable** at the same time.

Monsters of the Dungeon

- **Lack of requirements documentation.**
- **Slow-moving academic environment**, yet student turnover happens in 1-2 years.
- High student engagement, but **less interest from staff and faculty**.
- A **novel project** that required integration with third-party software and a lot of new technologies on the part of both the programmers and the designer.
- **Lack of resources.** But what else is new?

Research Process

User Interviews

Interviews with staff began in 2014. Staff were a good place to start as they have reasonable availability and deal with a broad range of internal systems.

Staff Findings: Almost all staff used the Directory and about two other features, at least one of which was relatively obscure and specific to their role.

Interviews with students began in 2015 and consisted of members of the Technology Advisory Council.

Student Findings: Students wanted a "one-stop shop" for events and information about the various third-party systems at school. Students are very calendar and schedule-driven.

Interviews with faculty were mostly ad-hoc due to poor availability and interest.

Staff Findings: Faculty think very long-term and tend to use systems in ways that fit their own mental models.

Overall Findings: Many users were unaware of functionality due to the overwhelming interface.

Usability Testing

In summer of 2015, **remote usability tests were conducted with 9 students** from the Daytime program using an HTML prototype via Skype.

Part 1: Student goals and how students use FuquaWorld.
Part 2: Three tasks identified as high-risk: Directory Search, Technical Support Documentation Discovery, and Course Directory Navigation.

Findings: Students focused on finding profile information, course-related information, and links to other sites. General layout and organization validated; high-risk task workflows received 10-point scale scores of 8-10.
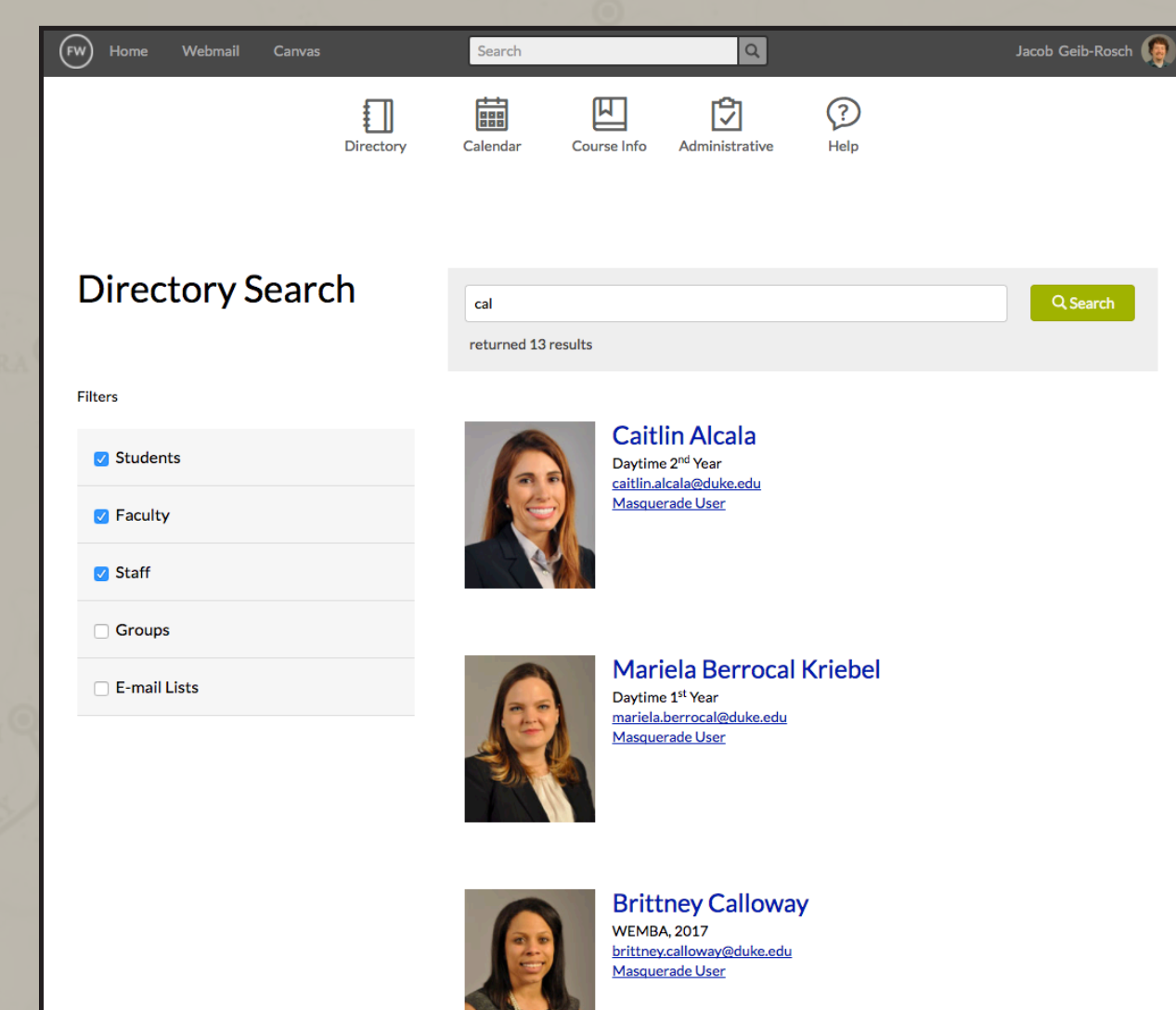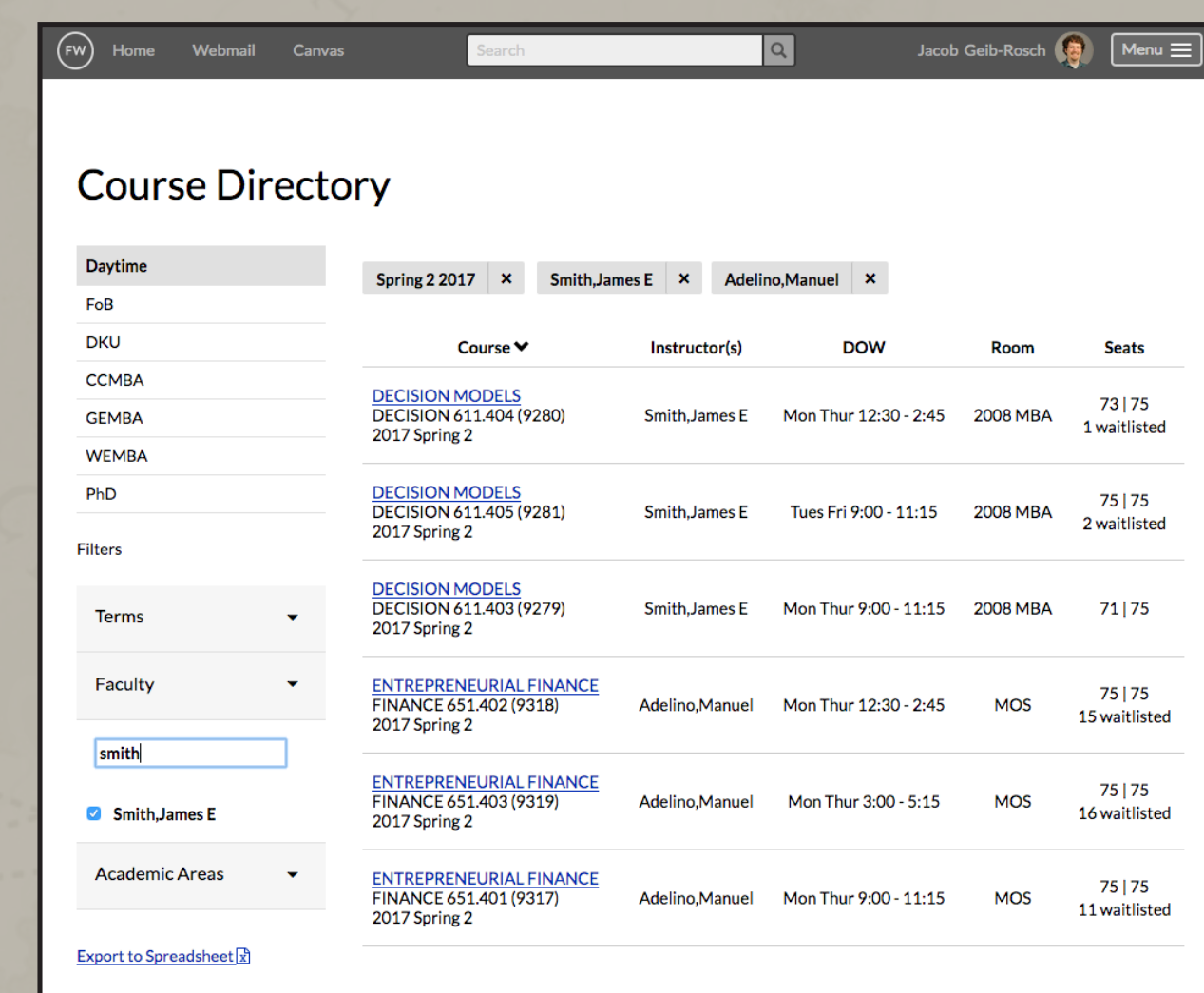
Level Up!

Directory Search

Directory Search

- Included in site-wide search at top of every page
- Directory-first navigation
- Large search box
- Dynamic toggle groups

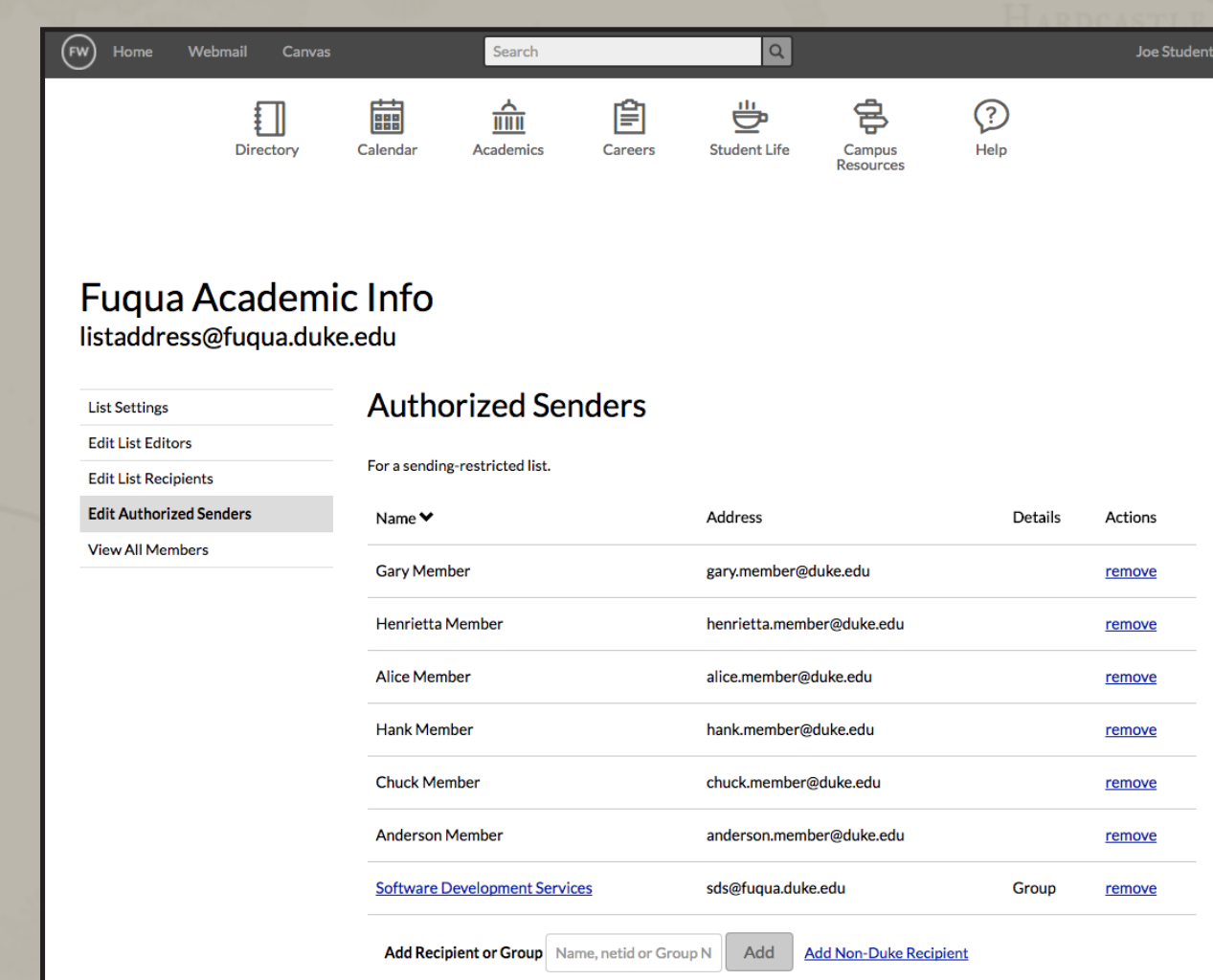**Future solution:**
- Dynamic toggle sub-groups

Course Directory

Course Directory

- Site-wide search
- Search within filters
- Multiple filters at one time

Future solutions:
- Cross-program view
- Course-specific search

Email List Management

Prototype: Email List Management

Future solutions:
- Email list-specific search
- Contextual terminology clarification
- Tabbed view affords contained list management and holistic view

Our Adventure Continues...

Future dungeons: visual design, content management, announcements, and more!

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