

CASE District II
1999 Accolades Awards Program
Period covered: July 1, 1998 to August 31, 1999

Category 7: World Wide Web Sites

d) Publications/Special Purpose

***myUMBC* web portal for students, faculty and staff**

<http://my.umbc.edu>

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Program Description

Patterned after web portals like *myYahoo*™ or *myExcite*™, *myUMBC* gives current UMBC students, faculty and staff a dedicated site for information and applications personalized to their needs and interests.

Goals and Objectives

Rather than trying to build one web site for all users, the goal of *myUMBC* is to present internal users with personalized information through a dedicated, secure site for accessing services. Students receive information tailored for their needs while faculty and staff can access content appropriate to their work.

The most immediate benefit is for current students, who can now register for classes, check their schedule, view their account balance and even change their billing address--all from one page. Thanks to a more robust Oracle database server and a clean graphic interface designed by the Office of Institutional Advancement, *myUMBC* replaces EASI (Electronic Access to Student Information), which often performed poorly during peak usage periods. Faculty will also benefit from the improved performance as they advise and authorize students to register.

The key to *myUMBC* is a secure login system that identifies UMBC users based on their user id, password, social security number and a personal identification number. Once "authenticated," users can view personalized information, use secure applications, set up a personal set of links, or view their email.

Also, *myUMBC* is not browser dependent, which means campus users can login from the library or Liberia, and still get a uniquely personal web interface.

Finally, *myUMBC* gives the campus an important platform on which to build future content and functionality. Likely enhancements will include access to the faculty annual report, an online procurement system as well as utilities for changing benefits or stopping email while on vacation.

Audience

Obviously, internal users are the primary audience for *myUMBC*. Their needs were determined from anecdotal feedback after the redesigned 1998 UMBC site was launched, as well as from an online user survey in May 1999 and a student focus group in June 1999. Eventually, a feedback form appearing on the site and the logout screen will help gauge user needs and steer future development.

To help launch *myUMBC*, a permanent link was added to the home page, accompanied by a campus-wide email message. In addition, feature articles appeared in the first issues of the semester for both *The Retriever Weekly* student newspaper and *Insights*, the faculty/staff newspaper. Also, flyers and specially designed banners announcing "*myUMBC* What Is It? (*my.umbc.edu*)" were posted throughout campus, and several domain names (including *myumbc.edu* and *myumbc.com*) were registered, to make it easier for users to remember. Finally, demo accounts for students, faculty and staff were recently added to highlight features and promote awareness.

Whenever a web site serves internal and external users, the challenge is creating content and navigation systems that are meaningful to both audiences. Internal users are certainly helped by *myUMBC*, but so are external users--indirectly. By providing a quick gateway to relevant internal content, the UMBC home page is not burdened by unwieldy navigation schemes or overly-detailed content that would turn off external users. At the same time, seeing the *myUMBC* home page logo (and being able to demo its features) could be influential to prospective students wanting to get a taste of what UMBC is like.

Budget & Staffing

About 10 staff members from Academic Services, Institutional Advancement and University Computing Services collectively spent approximately 500 hours on the *myUMBC* project, which began in June and launched on August 27, 1999. Consequently, the primary budget cost was salaries, conservatively estimated to be about \$9,500. An additional \$5,000 in new (Oracle) software brings the total project cost to date to approximately \$14,500.

Response and/or Results

The response from students, faculty and staff has been overwhelmingly positive. The weekly average for logins is (?), and the backend database server(s) have improved performance dramatically compared to the old EASI system. The *myUMBC* logo has even been seen in several incarnations, including a newspaper ad sponsored by the Student Government Association:

"*myUMBC* is not just about technology. It also means you have membership. Decide to make a difference in your community . . . Become a New Student Senator" (*The Retriever Weekly*, October 5, 1999, p. 29).