

Project Description:

Through our project, we aim to design for TAs at UW, both graduates and undergraduates who could benefit from additional support resources. New TAs could possibly struggle with the onboarding process, dealing with lack of participation from students, frustrations with teaching tools, or issues with developing/improving teaching skills amidst other commitments. We hope to create some sort of technology to improve the teaching experience of TAs which in turn, may hopefully improve student experience.

Sarah Saverson

Bio

One of our personas is Sarah Saverson, a sophomore at the University of Washington intending to major in Infomatics. Her goals are to get at least a 3.5 in CSE 142 to be competitive for Informatics, build connections with TAs and faculty members, and make friends with peers in the UW community.

Expectations

Expectation	Source
Sarah expects the product to allow her to communicate with her TA outside of class	[KZ, KC] – CSE 142 was expressed as an intimidating class so we assume she might not feel comfortable asking questions or for clarification in person
Sarah expects the product to allow her to instantly provide her TA with suggestions for improvement	[KZ] – course evaluations are often used at the end of the quarter which only help future classes so we assume Sarah would appreciate seeing improvements during the class
Sarah expects the product to be on a platform she can access easily	-- 93% of UW students reported having a smartphone and 45.2% reported having a tablet in 2015 (https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/research/mobile-device-usage-2015/)
Sarah expects the product to let her know if her feedback has been acknowledged	-- “Feedback provides comfort and a sense of security; it tells us we’re doing the right thing, and it helps us decide if the outcome of our actions is valuable.” (http://www.givegoodux.com/feedback-5-principles-interaction-design-supercharge-ui-5-5/)
Sarah expects the product to help her learning experience improve	[KZ, CI] – interviewees indicated taking classes as prerequisites, thus it was important for them to do well; we assume students want to be able to master or at least gain a pretty good understanding of class material

Scenario

It is the middle of the quarter and midterms are coming up soon for Sabrina. As she walks to campus, she checks her email. On Tuesday after quiz section, she sent her TA an email about a practice function they were working on in class and some questions about other concepts she has been struggling with. It is now Thursday and there is still no reply from her TA.

The big midterm for her CSE class is next week and she does not feel prepared. She is extremely worried because she has struggled with some of the homeworks as well as the practice problems. She not only hopes to do well in this class to be competitive for applying to Informatics, but also truly hopes to understand the material to succeed in later programming courses.

Sarah gets to her CSE quiz section and sits by her new friend that she met at the start of the quarter. These two are some of the few girls in section so they decided to stick together. The TA starts by letting everyone know that they will be working on a practice exam to prepare for next week's midterm. He then passes out a practice exam packet for everyone to start working on. The class sits in silence working individually on the practice exam. Sarah looks through the packet and attempts to work on some problems but cannot fully get through anything. She hears others fiercely writing on their practice exams as if it were the real thing. She wants to ask for help but does not want to bother anyone or break anyone's concentration. Before she knows it, section is over and they did not have any time to go over questions yet again.

She and her friend leave section and Sarah still feels confused. However, her friend reminds her of the new app that was talked about at the beginning of the quarter to let her TA know of ways to help improve in the classroom. Sarah opens it up on her phone then sends her concerns/suggestions to her TA. The next morning, she wakes up to a notification that her feedback was acknowledged along with a brief message from her TA saying he appreciated her feedback and would try to make some improvements in future quiz sections. She now feels a bit more hopeful that she will be better helped in the future.

Tom McGill

Bio

Our second persona is Tom McGill, a junior at the University of Washington studying Computer Science. His goals are to learn and write clear emails, prepare answers for possible student questions in section, and have at least 10 minutes at the end of quiz section for homework help and clarification.

Expectations

Expectation	Source
Tom expects the product to help him realize his teaching weaknesses to become more confident in the classroom	[CI, KZ] – some interviewees expressed feeling comfortable leading in the classroom but not exactly confident
Tom expects the product to help him figure out how to prepare better for section	[KC, CI] – interviewees expressed wanting to feel prepared to answer questions
Tom expects the product to help him communicate with his students	[KC, AK, KZ, CI] – communication is important with students, many interviewees use email as a way to answer questions/concerns
Tom expects the product to keep a record of feedback	[KZ] – the course evaluation catalog records provide helpful suggestions, so having a record to look back on would be valuable
Tom expects the product to have a clean/simple interface that requires little to no learning required	[AK] – interviewee indicated having various commitments and sometimes feeling overwhelmed, thus we assume Tom would want a simple product that requires little learning and thinking to use

Scenario

Tom stayed up late studying and trying to answer as many emails as possible. Next thing he knows, he wakes up, it is 8:15 AM and he has to teach a quiz section at 8:30 AM. He quickly gets ready then rushes to the library to print out copies of the practice exam for students to work on during section.

He arrives to section a few minutes late and immediately starts handing out the practice exam. The students begin working on it and assumes the silence means no one has any questions. The practice exam ends up taking students the whole class time so he does not have time to go over any questions. He is somewhat disappointed in himself for not being on time and leaving time at the end of section to go over some questions. He wants to be helpful to his students but he is still not exactly sure how to best help them.

After section, Tom gets a notification that a student in his quiz section has sent him some feedback. He opens up the report on his phone which indicates he could show improvement in his responsiveness over email, some time could be left at the end of section to go over specific problems step by step, and that he should encourage more collaboration in section. He appreciates this feedback and sends a reply message to the student that he will try to implement some of these changes in the future.

The following week, Tom tries to make some of the suggested changes in his two sections then at the end of Thursday's section, he sends out a poll to his students using the app to see if they felt these changes helped them learn better. After class, he checks the poll results and to see if he has been making positive progress as a TA.