

## **Chapman Learning Commons Assistant Transition Report – Summer 2012**

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## 1. Your First 3 Weeks

So you've just been hired by the Chapman Learning Commons and it's your first week on the job, congratulations! You're not entirely sure what the Learning Commons website is about, you don't know how to solve all these technical problems you keep hearing about and you don't know the first thing about coding or programming.

Don't worry. You're in the same place that all the people who've previously held this position were in when they started. The only way you can truly learn how to do this job is to jump in and experience tasks and projects you'll spend your summer working on.

### *1a) Getting Oriented in the Space*

You'll spend part of your position working on the help desk in the Chapman Learning Commons. There, patrons will ask you all kinds of questions about printing, technology, services at UBC and just about anything else you can think of. You don't need to know every answer but you will need to learn where the best place to refer people is. When in doubt, ask for help.

In your first few weeks get familiar with the student services that operate out of the Irving K. Barber building are located, as well as where all those resources *actually are*. Get familiar with what Coaches Corner is, who can use it and when you would refer a student there. Learn about the Writing Centre and what they are allowed to help you with (i.e. not proof-reading). Explore the various tutoring services that operate out of the CLC.

It's also helpful to learn about other services around the building, like where the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology (CTLT) is, or where you can get change for a bill when you need to add value to a print card. One of the most common, and therefore important, referrals we make is directing patrons to either the reference desk, or circulation. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the difference between these two service points so that you can accurately refer patrons to the right place. For a detailed overview of this and other common questions, refer to the general Chapman Learning Commons Assistant training manual.

Basically, the more you can explore the space and ask questions, the sooner you'll be comfortable referring people to all the different services and resources all over campus. Much of this job is about knowing *where* to search for answers and not necessarily knowing the answer right off the bat.

### *1b) Brainstorming Ways to Enhance/Improve the Website*

The first few weeks in your role is the time to start brainstorming some big picture ideas for the summer. Spend time looking at the website. What about it works and what

doesn't work? Think about if you were a first year student: what would you want to have access to on a website like this? This is the time to think critically, dream big and ask lots of questions. This initial thinking will help shape some of the projects you will be working on this summer.

In the past, a method of brainstorming that seems to have worked well for the full-time CLC team is to lock ourselves in a room with whiteboards for a day and de-construct everything on the website. We talk about the purpose for everything on the website and, if we had unlimited resources, what could we do to make things better. It seems to help to not cap your big ideas by worrying about feasibility of the idea. This is the time to dream big and get creative.

### *1c) Learn the Basics of WordPress*

WordPress is a content management system that learningcommons.ubc.ca is build on. Most of the work you do on the website will involve WordPress so do your best to learn how to use it. Further on in this document, you'll get a run-down on some important things that we do on WordPress, but in the first three weeks it would be a good idea to get familiar with the interface and some basic concepts.

### *1d) Pages vs. Posts*

Posts are temporary blog-type entries that are listed in reverse chronological order on our homepage. We use them for content that rotates on a regular basis and things that aren't accessible via our navigational menu bar. Posts are short, temporary write-ups that usually describe an event that is happening or a student's perspective on student life or academics.

Pages are static and aren't listed by date, or categorized by tags. We use pages to house important content that we want to be permanently accessible. They are generally longer, and have more complex design elements.

## **2. Overview of the Space/Working in the CLC**

### *2a) The Learning Commons Space*

Part of your role will be staffing the information desk in the Chapman Learning Commons, which is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. The Learning Commons encompasses by the Chapman Learning Commons and the Qualicum Room. The space is a collaborative learning environment meant to encourage interdisciplinary student discussion. The Learning Commons also offers a range of academic services to students including:

- Technology help (retrieving iclicker IDs setting up Wireless Internet, setting up wireless printing, scanning, conversion to PDF)
- Peer Academic Coaching (peers who helps students on a drop-in basis with things like time management and study skills)
- Directions for patrons to services in UBC Library and on campus (patrons include students, staff, faculty, community members and visitors)

Often mistaken for a silent study space, the Learning Commons is actually a place where we encourage students to have discussions. Excessive and disruptive noise is mostly kept to a minimum just by the nature of the space (echoey vaulted ceilings) and the mutual respect of the people in the space for one another.

### *2b) Working in the CLC*

Working in the Chapman Learning Commons offers a great opportunity to connect with students from all different faculties and walks of life. It is important that the Chapman Learning Commons be viewed as a safe and inclusive study space for all patrons. The CLC serves both graduate and undergraduate students, as well as faculty and visiting scholars. Our computers are available for anyone to use (non-UBC students must get a guest log-in ID from the Circulation Desk). Printing is also accessible to anyone provided they purchase a print card. Many questions we receive at the Help Desk revolve around the basics of connecting to technology at UBC (such as UBC's wireless network: UBC Secure) or directions to a service or building on campus. It is important to familiarize yourself with the campus and student resources. The more nuanced the information you know about UBC's student services, the more you will be able to help CLC patrons.

An excellent way to build relationships with patrons is to direct them to the Learning Commons website ([learningcommons.ubc.ca](http://learningcommons.ubc.ca)). As much as possible, use the Learning Commons website as example of an online hub that can direct students to different resources.

### *2c) Services in the Chapman Learning Commons*

#### *i) Writing Centre*

The Writing Centre offers drop-in writing help in the Chapman Learning Commons as part of the Coaches' Corner services. The Writing Centre also offers appointments at Ponderosa Annex C. Writing Centre tutors help students with structural and style questions related to academic writing such as: improving grammar, writing academic essays, and writing reports along with other business correspondence.

#### *ii) AMS Tutoring*

AMS Tutoring provides exam review sessions, a tutor registry and drop-in tutoring sessions in the Qualicum room, all of which is provided by excellent UBC students in good academic standing. AMS Tutoring provides help to first and second year students in economics, math, physics, and chemistry. As their mission statements says: "We aren't here to give you all the answers, we're here to help you find them for yourself."

### *iii) Peer Academic Coaching*

The Peer Academic Coaches are students with excellent teaching skills who provide assistance to other students. They focus on "soft skills," including but not limited to: time management, assignment organization, exam prep, studying habits and more. Peer Academic Coaches do not provide tutoring services but rather help fellow students transition to university.

## **3. Functionality of Website**

### *3a) Site Architecture*

Here is a short overview of all the pages on the website, as of August 2012.

1. Homepage
2. About Us
  - a. The Chapman Learning Commons\*
  - b. Canaccord Learning Commons\*\*\*
  - c. UBC Okanagan\*\*\*
  - d. Quick Links for Students\*
    - i. Study Tips for Science Students\*
3. What We Offer
  - a. Academic Advising
  - b. Assignment Calculator
  - c. Computers, Printers Scanners
  - d. Guide to Academic Integrity
  - e. How to Cite Sources
  - f. Improve your Writing
  - g. Peer Academic Coaching
  - h. Resources for Faculty
  - i. Study Spaces
  - j. Tech Help
  - k. Tutoring
  - l. Workshops
    - i. On Campus Workshop Resources\*
    - ii. Online Workshop Resources\*
  - m. Your Approach to Learning: Self Assessment

- i. The Learning Process\*
      - 1. The Reflection Process\*
      - 2. Plan and Evaluate\*
      - 3. Read/Review and Organize\*
- 4. Student Toolkits
  - a. Choosing Technology
  - b. Critical Thinking
  - c. Exam/Study Prep
  - d. Group Work
    - i. Group Process\*
    - ii. Resolving Conflict\*
    - iii. Communicating Effectively\*
    - iv. Supporting Collaboration\*
  - e. Note Taking
  - f. Presentation Skills
  - g. Profs and TAs
    - i. Office Hours\*
    - ii. E-mail Etiquette\*
  - h. Library Research
  - i. Time Management
    - i. Time Management Tools\*
  - j. Textbook Reading
  - k. Writing
- 5. Enhance Your Degree
  - a. Dive Into Research\*\*\*
  - b. Get Involved\*\*\*
  - c. Meaningful Volunteer Work\*\*\*
  - d. Run Your Own Course\*\*\*
  - e. Speaker Series\*\*\*
  - f. Study Abroad\*\*\*
  - g. Sustainability Education\*\*\*
- 6. Secrets for Students
  - a. Secrets of First Year
  - b. Resources for Distance/Online Learners
  - c. Secrets for International Students
  - d. Live Well, Learn Well
  - e. Blog Archive
- 7. Connect With Us

\*Indicates page is only accessible via link from its parent page (i.e. not accessible from the navigational menu bar)

\*\*\*Indicates a page that redirects to another website



### *3b) Using WordPress*

WordPress is a fairly intuitive platform for website design and after you spend a bit of time working on it, we're sure that you'll feel confident. However, there are a few tips and tricks we have for things that we do a little differently and you may not be able to find elsewhere on the Internet.

Spend some time learning basic HTML and CSS. HTML is the most important for content and CSS will dictate how your page is styled. As you get more comfortable, you can start using things like shortcodes and Javascript.

### *3c) Resources*

- Check out the [WordPress](#) site for tutorials or help with any of the basics
- If you want to learn HTML or CSS, [Code Academy](#) walks you through lessons in a fun way
- For an explanation of [column shortcodes](#), check out the UBC Wiki
- For help and explanations for how to do stuff on the [Learning Commons Website](#)
- For support and help working within UBC's theme, check out [the UBC Wiki documentation](#) on it

### *3d) Using Shortcodes*

UBC has created shortcodes that can be used on all of its websites. It makes creating many of our design elements much easier. The two main shortcodes we use are columns and accordions.

### *3e) Columns*

The column shortcode is used all over the site to help organize pages into vertical columns. It is incredibly simple to use and there is a detailed explanation of how to use it in the links above. The page is split up into 12 equal sections along the width of the page. If you want to make a column, you just need to use specify how wide you want each column of that row to be. Once you add up to a width of twelve, any new column will appear bellow. For example:

5+4+3 =12

[column size=5]

This text will be furthest left on your screen.

[/column]

[column size=4]

This text will be in the middle column.

[/column]

```
[column size=3]
    This text will be furthest right on your screen.
[/column]
```

To add a vertical line or border on the right hand side of a column:

```
[column size=6 border]
    Put your words here.
[/column]
```

### 3f) Accordions

The accordions are marginally more complicated than the columns. This is partially due to the fact that they require javascript for them to work. To set up a basic accordion the shortcode is as follows:

```
<div id="accordion">
  <h3>
    <a href="#">
      Title of First Accordion
    </a>
  </h3>
  <div>
    All the content you want in your accordion must be contained within div tags.
  </div>
  <h3>
    <a href="#">
      Title of Second Accordion
    </a>
  </h3>
  <div>
    You only need to create one div id tag per accordion group.
  </div>
```

To have an accordion that looks exactly like the ones we use on the site, we have just done a little bit of extra styling to add a drop down arrow, but the basic elements of the code are the same:

```
<div id="accordion">
  <h3>
    <a href="#">
      Arts 
    </a>
```

```
</h3>
<div>
  Content within the accordion.
</div>
```

The final, and most important things to remember when creating accordions, is that you must insert the Javascript code into the page to make it work. The code for accordions is as follows:

```
jQuery(function($) {$( "#accordion" ).accordion({ collapsible: true, active: false,
autoHeight: false }));});
```

### *Javascript*

While you don't need to know how to write Javascript for this job, understanding how to use it is important. The only finicky thing to remember revolves around where to copy and paste Javascript into a page to ensure it works.

If you scroll down to the very bottom of a page, there will be a Custom Javascript box that has two tabs: "Custom CSS" and "Custom Javascript". Open the "Custom Javascript" tab and paste your code into the box. It's as simple as that.

The thing that often trips people up is that there is a Custom Fields box directly under the text-editing portion of the page, and there is a "Custom Javascript" box within the Custom Fields box. Any code entered there will be wiped once you update the page and your Javascript will not work. Be sure to scroll all the way down to the very bottom of the page. If you paste script into the lowest box on the page, it will automatically appear in the top box, and it won't be wiped when you update the page.

If you're looking for a guide on how to create buttons for the website using CSS and Javascript, look at this [report on coding buttons](#)

## **4) Strategic Overview of the Website**

### *4a) Site-Wide Philosophy*

The major guiding principles when deciding on whether content should be placed on the website, or deciding where in the architecture this content should go, are as follows:

1. Is the content relevant and helpful for first-year students?
2. How is the information better than what you could find with a simple Google search?

3. Could a first time user find the information easily on the website? (2 clicks or less to reach content is ideal)
4. Will a user understand what the page is trying to accomplish before scrolling past the fold?
5. Is the information interactive and engaging?
6. Does the content reflect the mission statement of the Learning Commons? Does it help people learn better?

#### *4b) Home Page*

The Home Page has seen been through several iterations over the years and will likely continue to evolve. As it stands currently, we use the carousel as a navigational aid and to display new blog posts. Of the eight tiles, six of them are static and link to our highest traffic pages. Even though the pages are static, we do change some of them a couple times a year when a service like Tutoring isn't being offered in the summer.

The other two tiles can be used to highlight important content from our campus partners (for example, if a pertinent event is taking place on campus), or to highlight a blog post. One rule about content in those rotating tiles is that if it's in the carousel, it should not replicated in the stream of blog posts below the carousel. There should be no duplication of content on the home page.

#### *4c) About Us*

The About Us page is a brief overview to what the Learning Commons is as a whole. It provides links to several Learning Commons at UBC, one of which is the Chapman Learning Commons. This page also explains some of our resources and houses staff bios. This page also lists relevant contact information as well as open hours for all locations.

#### *4d) What We Offer*

This is the page where we list all of the services and resources that operate out of our physical space. It also houses several online resources. All of the pages within this section are designed to all look a little bit different, but most of them use columns and accordions to help make the page interesting and keep lots of information above the fold.

#### *4e) Student Toolkits*

The focus of the Student Toolkits is to cultivate the best resources that will help students build strong academic skills. These pages were designed to cater to all learning styles. The toolkits are essentially an online representation of the kinds of things that Peer Academic Coaches would help students with. In fact, we like to suggest to students that they use both resources in conjunction.

From two summers worth of feedback, we know that clean and straightforward page design resonates with users. We have endeavored to use engaging and fun graphics for buttons that will be permanent fixtures on the website (ex. Coaching button). We think that using text links is an outdated form of web design that doesn't appeal to younger people. We have tried to limit our text links within the accordions and deemed it acceptable to have 3-5 text links at the bottom of the page within the Enhance Your Resources section.

#### *4f) Enhance Your Degree*

This is the section of the website where we link out to resources that many of our campus partners provide. These are many of the things that UBC's Strategic Plan, Place and Promise, consider essential when providing a holistic University experience. The term that UBC uses is Enriched Educational Experiences. You can think of it as the section that will enhance a student's experience at UBC and improve the quality of their degree as a whole.

#### *4g) Secrets for Students*

The pages within this tab are collections of important resources for specific populations at UBC. We have cultivated the most pertinent information for each population and laid the information out in a fun and interesting way. These pages are popular with campus partners because they target a specific audience or issue at UBC.

#### *4h) Connect With Us*

The Connect With Us page is an aggregation of our social media and communications channels. Our Twitter and Facebook feeds are intentionally first on the page because we devote the most effort to making sure the content is current and relevant.

### **5. Working in a Collaborative Team**

One of the most interesting elements of the full time CLCA position is that you get to work very closely with one or more student colleagues. In 2012 and in previous summers, a team of three students worked closely on the [learningcommons.ubc.ca](http://learningcommons.ubc.ca) website and other projects. This structure allows you to build strong communication and project management skills, recognize your strengths and balance individual and team goals.

#### *5a) The 2012 Student Team*

The 2012 student team spent the majority of their working time in the same location. When one team member was on the CLC Help Desk, the other two would usually work behind the desk. At other times, the team would generally work out of the Centre for Student Involvement, in Brock Hall.

Being in close physical proximity makes communication much more efficient. Informal feedback, brainstorming sessions and clarification happens organically. While each team will develop their own style of communication, the 2012 team relied heavily on open communication and informal check-ins. For example, we would often spend fifteen minutes bringing each other up to speed about where we were at with various projects. Because of the interconnected nature of much of our work, it was natural for the team members to keep each other informed of progress and roadblocks.

For larger or more complex projects, the team employed more formal project management strategies such as timelines, formal strategy meetings and clearly outlined feedback processes. For a specific example of how we worked on a collaborative project, read the Toolkit Re-Development section of this report.

#### *5b) Other Teams*

In addition to the student team, you will also have the opportunity to work closely with of Chapman Learning Commons Assistants. They provide a valuable student lens and a wide range of experiences and skills. Reach out to your fellow CLCAs for feedback on your projects. Another collaborative team that you will be a part of is the [learningcommons.ubc.ca](http://learningcommons.ubc.ca) Web Team, made up of the student team and representatives from Student Development, UBC Library and the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology.

#### *5c) Recognizing Strengths and Styles*

In order to work effectively in a small team, it is important to recognize the strengths and styles of your colleagues. Some people like to work on projects alone and then bring their work to the group for feedback, while others prefer to develop concepts and parameters in collaboration and then carry the project to completion on their own.

We recommend that you have a frank and open discussion at the beginning of summer and think critically about how you will work best together as a team. Consider the following factors:

- How will you divide responsibilities?
- How will you give feedback?
- Do you need to set up times or spaces where you won't be disturbed?
- How will you support each other?

- How will you make decisions?
- What strengths does each team member bring to the team?
- What goals does each team member have for the summer?
- What level of structure do you want for meetings and check-ins?
- How will you hold each other accountable and deal with conflict?

In addition to this initial conversation, it is important to continue to check-in with how you are working together. Be respectful of each other's working styles. Strive for a situation where you all feel supported and valued as individuals but can work efficiently and productively as a team.

#### *5d) Project Management Strategies*

Here are a few tools and strategies that will help you work in a collaborative team.

##### *i) Drop Box*

We stored the majority of our collaborative files in a shared Dropbox folder. This allows team member to remotely create, access and edit the same documents. With the exception of large media files, consider storing all of your files in a shared Dropbox folder. You can sync these to your work computer, personal computer and smart phone and never have to worry about having the right version of a file.

##### *ii) Active Collab*

This online project management system functions like the better-known Base Camp. The larger Learning Commons Web Team used it store files, solicit feedback and manage projects. Talk to your supervisor early in your term to make sure you are given access to Active Collab. Check regularly for updates or change your preferences to receive email notifications.

##### *iii) Shared Calendar/To Do List*

While the 2012 team did not use this feature, other teams may find value in combining their workflow in this way.

##### *iv) Gantt Charts*

Gantt Charts help you visualize the timeline for large projects, meet deadlines and divide responsibilities. You can subdivide the workload into smaller pieces. Set deadlines for completion and landmarks for feedback or draft versions. Use colour coding to divide responsibilities. You can make a Gantt chart using Excel,

Google spreadsheets or by hand. See an example of a [Gantt chart the 2012 team used](#) to organize the Student Toolkit re-development

#### *v) Timelines*

When working on larger projects, a useful strategy involves brainstorming all of the projects steps from the beginning stage to completion. Figure out what needs to happen first and which pieces can be developed simultaneously. For example, you need a draft version of your project before you can ask for feedback. Now put the pieces into a project timeline and attach specific dates. Be realistic about how much you can accomplish in a given timeframe. Review this regularly and hold each other accountable to the timeline. Define the ideal outcome of the project so you know what to work towards and when you will be finished.

#### *vi) Check-Ins and Meetings*

Depending on how your team likes to work you may want to set up regular meetings with a formal structure to review progress on ongoing projects. In 2012, the team relied largely on informal check-ins and regular updates. Occasionally, we planned large chunks of time to tackle bigger pieces like a strategic review of a particular section of the site.

#### *vii) Feedback*

While you are setting up a plan for your project, consider who you need to consult. Who are the stakeholders? Who are the users? Who has an area of expertise upon which you can draw? You will also want to think about what points in your process you will solicit feedback and how you will structure the feedback.

In 2012, the student team conducted some initial assessment of the Student Toolkits, looking at the online analytics and drawing from qualitative feedback from a student focus group. This helped the team determine what the needs of the project were. From there, we developed a proposal for the toolkit redevelopment, including a time-line, draft page, and explanation of process. With this in hand, we solicited feedback from our supervisors, the web team and other key stakeholders.

At several points throughout the process, we asked for feedback on our work. Depending on your project, you may ask for feedback in a variety of forms. Some examples include, sending out a draft and asking for feedback via email; presenting part of your project at a meeting a brainstorming ideas; holding a focus group and conducting detailed user testing. When asking for feedback, be



sure to build in ample time for the person you asked to take a look at your project. While your timeline may require an immediate turn around, it is important to give people as much time as possible (depending on how large the request is, give at least 48 hours and ideally over one week).

## **6. Working in Student Development**

In addition to your work in the Chapman Learning Commons, you will have the chance to collaborate with other teams who fall under the umbrella of UBC's Student Development unit. This section will outline what to expect from this opportunity and how to make the most of it.

### *6a) The Centre for Student Involvement (and Careers)*

When the student team was not working in the Chapman Learning Commons, we worked out of the Centre for Student Involvement in Brock Hall, affectionately known as the CSI. The CSI is a collaborative space that supports student-driven initiatives at UBC. It offers a location to work and meet, technology and support resources and brings together talented students and staff into one space.

You can book a small meeting room, a larger boardroom, the kitchen area or the lounge. These are great for more formal meetings or focus groups. To make a booking, email [get.involved@ubc.ca](mailto:get.involved@ubc.ca) or speak with the staff member at the front desk. In addition, there are lots of more informal works spaces.

The CSI has variety of computers available for student initiatives. In addition to basic PCs with Microsoft Office, the space has two multimedia PCs and two multimedia Macs with Adobe Creative Suite and Final Cut Pro. You can also book technology and equipment including laptops, cameras, lights, PA system, carts and more. For a full list of available resources, visit [involvement.ubc.ca](http://involvement.ubc.ca).

The CSI has a shared kitchen, which you are welcome to use. You can keep your lunch in the fridge, use the dishes and supplies or make coffee or toast. Since this is a shared space, make sure to clean up after yourself and keep the space tidy.

### *6b) Collaborative Networking*

One of the biggest assets of working in the Centre for Student Involvement is that you will get to know many other students and staff working on exciting projects at UBC. A lot of great ideas come out of informal conversations so we encourage you to be friendly and outgoing and try your best to learn about other things happening in the space.

Some of the student groups that work out of the space include Orientations, Peer Programs, Healthy Minds, Terry Project, SLC and more. There are also several full-time

Student Development staff who work out of the space. They offer a wealth of expertise and we encourage you to speak with them about your projects and ideas.

#### *6c) Student Staff Meetings*

Another benefit of working out with Student Development at UBC is that you will have the chance to participate in the Summer Student Staff meetings. The specific format and frequency of these meetings are subject to change but in general, they will bring together student staff from diverse groups across campus on a regular basis.

These meetings are a great opportunity to gain experience in a professional meeting setting. You will also have the opportunity to chair a meeting or take minutes. A professional staff member will coach you through this process and help you get the most of the learning opportunity.

The meetings are a chance to share updates, work on collaborative projects and participate in professional development opportunities. We encourage you to make the most of these meetings by collaborating with other groups, bringing new ideas and initiatives and contributing to a vibrant and critical student staff community.

### **7. 2012 Project Example – Student Toolkit Re-Development**

One of the major projects in 2012 was the re-development of the [Student Toolkits](#). This section will provide an overview of the re-development process and the toolkits as they stand now. It will also make some recommendations for future improvements. Finally, by explaining the re-development process in detail, we hope this section provides some useful guidance for managing large web projects.

#### *7a) Overview of Toolkits*

The student toolkits are designed to help students learn fundamental skills that will empower them to excel in their academic work. The toolkits present tips, strategies and resources in a variety of formats. They aim to be student friendly, genuinely useful and easy to consume.

As of summer 2012, we have the following toolkits:

- Choosing Technology
- Critical Thinking
- Exam/Study Prep
- Time Management
- Textbook Reading

- Note Taking
- Profs and TAs
- Presentation Skills
- Group Work
- Library Research
- Writing (still in development, in partnership with the UBC Writing Centre)

## *7b) Sections in the Re-Designed Toolkits*

### *i) Learn*

A prominently featured video. In some cases, we used a Three-Minute Tutorial produced by the Learning Commons in a previous year. The majority of these videos are based off of converted slides from the old gravity form element. We revised the slides and added helpful, friendly voice-overs to make the content more accessible and inviting.

### *ii) Top Tips*

4-6 curated tips that give students a snap shot of how to improve their skills. Some links out may be included, but the main feature of this section is a short text tip no more than 50 words in length.

### *iii) Top Tips Cheat Sheet*

A downloadable PDF version of the Top Tips. This feature exists for students who like to store resources offline or print them out. Note that the Library Research and Writing Toolkits do not yet have this resource.

### *iv) Coaching Button*

A hover button that links to the Coaching Page. We wanted to add a prominent visual element for students to connect with a Peer Academic Coach. This interactive element encourages the action of visiting a coach.

### *v) Learn More Arrow*

A hover element that smooth scrolls to a lower section of the page. This element uses a combination of CSS hover effect, JavaScript smooth scrolling and anchor links. It was added to encourage users to explore the rest of the page.

### *vi) Visualize*

A fun infographic that capture the main points of the toolkits. These pop out to a larger version and can also be shared via social media etc. These were added based on the established need of more visual, dynamic content.

#### *vii) Apply*

This section encourages users to reflect on their learning by answering a series of questions. It is powered by gravity forms and is based off the questions from the old gravity form/slide section. Users can choose to email their answers to themselves for later printing.

#### *viii) Enhance Your Learning*

This section includes a second video that enhances the concepts previously introduced on the pages. It can be something produced by the Learning Commons or a useful video produced by another university or organization.

#### *ix) Enhance Your Wellness*

This section includes tips and links that explain how a focus on wellness can improve a student's academics. This content is produced by our campus partners at Healthy Minds. Several toolkits (Group Work and Choosing Technology) do not have wellness content as of August 2012.

#### *x) Enhance Your Resources*

This section collects a wide range of useful links that allow students to dive deeper into a topic. The number of links should not exceed five. When re-developing the pages, we removed excess links that were not particularly relevant. Our philosophy with this section is that a smaller number of well-curated links is more valuable than the visual clutter of many less-useful links.

### *7c) Project Timeline*

#### *i) Phase 1: Defining Parameters (May to mid-June, 2012)*

Early in the summer, the team had several informal discussions about which sections of the website could be improved. We agreed that the Student Toolkits could benefit from a substantial re-design. The information on the toolkits was useful but we felt the design and layout of the pages made accessing this information more difficult than it needed to be. Furthermore, the main section of the toolkits included a series of slides linked to gravity form questions. We had some serious concerns about the usability of this section.

Upon looking into the number of students who actually answered these gravity form questions, we realized that this section of the pages was not being used (check Active Collab for detailed document on this matter). This may have been a due to confusing instructions, unclear design or that students were not interested in completing reflection questions.

A focus group, held early in the summer, confirmed our concerns with the structure of the gravity form section. From this focus group, we gathered some important information about which elements of the toolkits students found most useful. From this, we determined that we needed to better emphasize the top tips section, re-think the functionality of the gravity forms, improve the clarity of the layout and add more dynamic content, like video and images. We also needed to decide what the most useful and important content is and make sure that section is above the fold (the section of the screen displayed without needing to scroll down).

Using this information, we drafted several mock versions of our proposed page design. We determined this based on the following criteria:

- 1) The most useful resources should be at the top of the page
- 2) Every piece of writing, design or a link should have a purpose on the page
- 3) All of the toolkits should be in the same format
- 4) We should develop more dynamic content for the toolkits.

We drafted a test page and brought it to the Web Team for feedback. After implementing various changes and developing several iterations of the test page, we settled on a final design. During this page we also tested the functionality of the toolkits on various browsers, screen resolutions and on a variety of smart phones and mobile devices.

At this stage, we also established a detailed project timeline and workflow for redeveloping each element in an organized and efficient manner. We identified several major components of the project and divided responsibilities into sub-projects. This allows each member to move forward without the direct need for someone else's work.

First, we identified what needed to happen in order to help other pieces move forward. We also established specific points where we would seek feedback. We used a Gantt chart to map out the [project timeline](#). Throughout the process, we regularly updated each other on our progress and troubleshoot any roadblocks as a team. We also revised our timeline as needed based on unforeseen challenges or faster than expected completion of a specific section.

#### *ii) Phase 2: Re-Development (mid-June to July, 2012)*

The majority of the work was spent re-developing the actual content for the nine existing Toolkits and working on new content for the Research and Writing Toolkits.

Some of the projects we worked on included:

- Revised content of "Learn" slides
- Developed video scripts
- Produced videos for "Learn" section
- Liaised with campus partners to develop wellness content
- Revised top tips content
- Revised enhance content and links
- Revised apply section questions and convert to new format
- Developed infographics
- Coded coaching button and learn more arrow
- Re-coded new layout for all pages
- Developed content for research toolkit
- Developed content for writing toolkit (still in progress as of August 2012)

Throughout this process, we begin to add new content to draft versions of each re-developed toolkit. As we went along, we troubleshooted any technical issues, made design and layout choices and revised each other's content for clarity, tone and to catch any errors.

### *iii) Phase 3: Feedback (July to August, 2012)*

By the end of August, we had draft versions of each toolkit with the exception of Writing. At this point, we went to as many stakeholders as possible in order to get feedback on each section.

We requested that the Web Team go through the Toolkits in some detail to catch any errors. As the team already signed off on the general layout, we focused this feedback on details and content. We also requested feedback from the Summer Student Staff team and from other Chapman Learning Commons Assistants. We requested that they go through several of the toolkits with a student lens and let us know what sections they felt were useful and what sections they found confusing or unnecessary. Finally, we conducted a student focus group to get even more information from a student perspective.

After collecting feedback from all of these sources, we implemented any simple changes such as errors, broken links or clarity of language. We also compiled several larger points of discussion (included below) that we brought back to the website. These issues should be returned to at a later date. They are not problems per se, but considerations moving forward.

#### *iv) Phase 4: Release (August 16, 2012)*

After implementing all of the changes and going through each toolkit with a fine-toothed comb, we prepared to launch the new versions. We saved the code from the old toolkits into a word document. Then we copied the code from the new versions into the old pages to preserve any links. We then updated the pages and tested the links from the tabs and fancyboxes, troubleshooting any issues as they emerged. Finally, we went through each page once it was live to check for any final errors.

#### *v) Phase 5: Assessment (Ongoing)*

In order to track and assess the impact of the re-development, future team members should take note of page views, video view counts and gravity form entries through the end of 2012 and into 2013. We recommend that you compare this period of time to the same 8-month stretch in 2011/12. In 2013 you should also re-evaluate the content on the pages test the usability and relevance in another series of student focus groups. Finally, future team members should regularly review the content and check the functionality of any links on a regular basis.

#### *7d) Considerations Moving Forward*

- Should we remove or modify the section titles? The only one that connects directly to the content is Top Tips (and maybe enhance your resources/wellness). What is the value of using verbs as section titles? Do they add anything?
- Apply section: We still have some concerns about how useful or appealing this section is. Does it have the same value by just having the reflection questions? Can we give it a certain performance benchmark it has to reach before removing it from the site? Is it still confusing to use?
- There are linked out child pages on Group Work, Profs/TAs and Time Management. How do we treat this content? Should we integrate it on the pages? Can we revise the linked out pages?
- Note Taking: Are the images in the Top Tips too small to read? Should we move them to another section and switch to text links? Here are some [new text-based top tips](#) to use.
- What is the landing impression on the coaching page? If we have a button that says "visit a coach", will the next step be clear once a student reaches the coaching page?

- Add additional wellness content as it emerges from our campus partners.
- Implement the new version of the Writing Toolkit as soon as possible.
- What other toolkits could we add? Are there other important themes or topics that we don't yet cover?
- As new resources become available, consider replacing old content with more relevant material.

## **8. Recommendations for Future Projects**

- Review the Toolkits section to determine whether there is a need for developing additional toolkits. Are there topics we haven't covered? Solicit feedback from students about what resources they would like to see. If new ideas emerge, build these toolkits.
- Finish the Secrets for International Students page.
- Brainstorm 5-7 new "Secrets for \_\_\_\_" pages and develop these. This section could become a collection of population-specific learning resources. For example: Secrets for Commuter Students, Secrets for Transfer Students, Secrets for Arts Students, Secrets for Science Students, etc.
- Make a "How to Scan" Video in the same style as the "How to Print at UBC Library" videos.
- Remake the Connect button on the homepage.
- Re-evaluate the Reddit button that appears on every page or post. Recommendation: take this off.
- Go through every page on the website through the backend "Pages" section. Unpublish pages that are no longer in the architecture and re-title them as OLD. Also consider deleting old pages or moving them off of Wordpress onto a text document.
- Come up with a definitive plan for dealing with orphan pages. Solidify a plan for using child and grand-child pages.
- Review of usability and navigation of the site.



- Clarify the philosophy of the site overall and of each major section. Capture this in an accessible document and review regularly.
- Develop a three-year plan for [learningcommons.ubc.ca](http://learningcommons.ubc.ca).
- Revise content on any page last updated in 2011 or earlier.
- Remove or remake the workshops page.
- Continue to improve the coaching page.
- Clarify the pages in the "what we offer" section. Are these a curated collection of campus resources, online resources that we offer, or a list of in-space resources (or everything)?
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the site and develop a stronger workflow for using Google analytics data.
- Develop a framework for keeping a consistent vision and direction for the site, acknowledging the high staff turnover and collaborative workflow.
- Finish the Writing Toolkit.
- Review the content of the child pages linked off of Group Work, Time Management and Profs and TAs.
- Re-code the tab landing pages in CSS.
- Create a Top Tips Cheat Sheet for library research and writing.
- Re-make Top Tips Cheat Sheets to be more printer friendly (i.e., not a huge colour background).
- Pursue a more meaningful collaboration with other UBC Learning Commons (Canaccord, Research Commons, Okanagan, MacMillan).
- Go through website with a student lens. Revise content to resonate with students. Edit copy so it's as short and punchy as possible.