

University of Miami
Master's in Sports Administration
Content Optimization Brief



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Introduction & Executive Summary

Laureate's network of 60 campus-based and online universities in 20 countries offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs to over one million students worldwide. Laureate is the largest global network of degree-granting, higher education institutions. Their students are part of a diverse, international community that spans the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Laureate's institutions offer undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs fields. These include business and management, medical and health sciences, engineering, information technology, architecture, education, law, communications, and hospitality management.

The University of Miami (UM) is a private research university with more than 17,000 students from around the world. Their vibrant and diverse academic community focuses on teaching, learning, the discovery of new knowledge, and service to the South Florida region and beyond. Comprised of 11 schools and colleges, UM serves undergraduate and graduate students in more than 180 majors and programs. UM ranks No. 46 on U.S. News & World Report's 2018 Best Colleges list, and No. 44 in the 2018 Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education College Rankings.

Both Laureate and University of Miami pride themselves on offering top tier educational resources, connecting their students to a wealth of resources, networking opportunities, and supporters to help them along their career paths.

The goal for this initiative is to take a critical look at how the University of Miami's online Master's in Sports Administration program represents itself, and how potential students access necessary content to guide them in applying for the program.



Format of This Document

This document focuses on how the University of Miami's online Master's in Sports Administration program can better position its content with the primary goal of increasing application submissions.

For brevity, additional supporting references, appendices, and sources are included at the end of this document.

What We Learned

SEO & Analytics

This research uses analytics data spanning from May 1, 2017 – May 1, 2018.

SEO

Evaluating the pages on the site, there are opportunities for improved optimization. While each page meets a minimum on-page requirement, there are some inconsistencies that can be adjusted. For example:

- Add “Master’s in Sport Administration” to the title tag.
- The <h1> is the same on each page within the program—displayed as the title in the banner image. The best practice is to include the page’s focused keyword.
- The site is loading a considerable amount of code prior to getting to any content. This can have an impact on page load times, which influences search engine optimization (SEO). Streamlining the code can speed up the page speed. Example: Adobe Dynamic Tag Manager, Google Tag Manager, Google Analytics, other JavaScript, are all loading in the header or top of the <body>, well before any content.



- More content is not always better from a user experience perspective, but the best practice is to be over 500 words on a page.

This is a good reference for SEO ranking factors:

<https://searchengineland.com/seotable>

Behavior Flow

The Behavior Flow report from Google Analytics visualizes the path users traveled from one page or event to the next. This report can help you discover what content keeps users engaged with your site. The Behavior Flow report can also help identify potential content issues.²

- Courses
- Admissions
- Student support
- 5 things to consider when choosing a sport management program
- Careers

Purpose & Insights

A story emerges from the Behavior Flow report. For the prospective student on the site, that path includes: learning about the courses available and workload, what the admissions process looks like, how the program accommodates their online students, affirmation of the program experience, and how the degree helps students reach their professional goals.



Bounce Rate: 51%

Bounce Rate is the percentage of single-page sessions (i.e. sessions in which the person left your site from the entrance page).¹

Purpose & Insights

By itself, bounce rate may not provide context to success of a page or site. A single page website would expect a higher bounce rate. For visitors to UM's online Sports Administration section the expectation is to provide them content that keeps them connected to the program, thereby lowering the bounce rate.

Drop-Off & Abandonment Rate: 66%

Drop-off reflects the page on which visitor left an identified "Visitor Flow"—the intended flow of site traffic—and went down a path different than the Visitor Flow. In taking this action, the visitor either clicked a link on your website that does not correspond with your Visitor Flow or they left your site altogether.⁶

Purpose & Insights

The higher drop-off rate suggests an issue with the way the site's content may be arranged, and that prospects may be moving off of the site before reaching the preferred conversion action. This may indicate problems with the site's information architecture, and how these prospects are able to find the information they need before abandoning the "Sports Administration" section of the site.



Age

The data gathered regarding common prospect age ranges helps to determine which age groups are most valuable to your website. By reviewing the key metrics and drilling down into Site Usage or other Acquisition and Affinity data throughout you can find out how people of different ages digest your content and convert in such different patterns.³

- **25-34:** 34%
- **18-24:** 32%
- **35-44:** 19%
- **45-54:** 11%
- **55-64:** 3%
- **65+:** 1%

Purpose & Insights

Age data helps connect the dots in the development of personas—validating current versus expected trends—based on actual student data.

User Research

Study of the key traffic and real life data segments provides an opportunity to examine the site more critically, and understand how success might be defined for them as people. The key data points include:



Analytical Data

The following are used to inform the personas, their typical path when visiting the site, and identify where their potential pain points may be arising:

- **Audience Geographics: Location (Cities)**
Reviewing the common cities in which people on the site are coming from. This allows us to look into what the environmental concerns and needs are for people based on geography.
- **Affinity Categories**
Identifying the highest converting interest categories for different demographics allows us to find where we may want to focus our outreach for marketing impact, make psychographic hypotheses, and provides more data with which we can use to ultimately gain empathy for the person we hope to reach.
- **Acquisition Data: Source**
Source is one of the main dimensions for reporting and analyzing how people found your website. This source value shows where the message was seen. For example, a source of “google” would indicate that someone found the website after performing a search on Google.⁴
- **Exit Pages**
The Exit Pages allows you to see which pages people most frequently end their sessions on or leave the site after viewing.¹
- **Gender**
Companies find gender data very useful to know where their biggest emerging markets are within gender splits. It can also really help with content planning and even understanding conversion choices.³
- **Device**
Device category allows you to view performance based on the different devices people are using to experience your website. Sessions occur on desktop (which also includes laptop devices), tablet, and mobile.¹



Attributable Data

Attributable data verifiable information that has been pulled from human sources. In this case, active students in the online Sports Administration program. This information was cross-referenced against the data pulled from Google Analytics for validation. Below are the elements used to construct user personas:

- **Gender**
Understanding the current gender make up of active students helps check how trends from web analytics align with reality.
- **Race**
Identifying the breakdown of students by race in active students provides enhanced validation of the user personas.
- **Employment Status**
The employment status of active students allows consideration of user journeys and persona needs, motivations, and frustrations.
- **Age Groups**
The number of students per age group (20+, 30+, etc.) enables comparison of the real data to analytics data to determine if a trend is closer to a false-positive, or more valid.
- **Largest Age Segment**
Breaking down where the largest cluster of active students, based on age range, provides insight as to where the our largest opportunity of target demographics may lie.

Please see Appendix A: University of Miami research data



Consolidated Data

The ideal persona demographic segments blend data from Google Analytics with active student data, with the intent of reflecting a relatable prospect of the online Sports Administration program.

User Personas

The purpose of creating user personas is to provide reliable and realistic representations of your key audience segments. These user personas are based on qualitative and quantitative user research, including web analytics. User personas help to focus decisions surrounding site components by adding a layer of real-world considerations to the conversation.⁵

For the purposes of this initiative, two unique personas have been developed. The goal was to capture the broad cross-section of age ranges that are primarily navigating the site.

Please see Appendix B: User Personas.

Devin Huron

Age: 32 • **Current Job:** Military Policeman • **City:** Washington, DC.

Behaviors & Actions

Devin is always on the move, whether he is exploring the city with his family, coaching his 10 year old son's basketball team, or preparing to defend his fantasy football championship back at base. He is always planning his next move. He spends a lot of time on the computer, doing mandatory online based training programs, email scheduling, and planning a multitude of meetings and other functions he is responsible for managing. Although occasionally you can also find him scrolling mindlessly through his Facebook



feed—which he uses to keep up with his military buddies—and share pictures of his kids with his family back home.

When he has off time, Devin reads up on business and entrepreneurship blogs. He watches anything competitive on TV—including NFL football, especially the Philadelphia Eagles.

Demographic & Psychographic Details

Devin was born in Dover, DE, as the youngest of a three sibling, he has two older sisters. They were raised by their mother and father who met while they were in the military. Devin is competitive and a big sports fan. He tried his hand at all of the major sports in high school, but none of them translated into a scholarship. This forced him to reconsider his options for attending college.

As a way to pay for college, Devin enlisted in the military—fresh out of high school—enabling him to pursue a BS in criminal justice from American Intercontinental University via their online program. This was instrumental in helping him rise in the ranks to become a member of the military police.

Devin has always been an entrepreneur at heart and regularly imagined owning and running his own athlete training facility. As he approached military retirement, he became more serious about executing on his plan to go into business for himself. He began to develop a business plan while trying to understand some of the nuances of working in the field of sports and professional athletics.

He has always respected University of Miami for their sports program's success and he admires many of the athletes that have passed through that university.

Devin's military schedule is demanding. Anything he does on the side must be flexible as he prioritizes family and work. He finds it challenging to achieve a work-life balance. Devin's main concerns in working towards an advanced



degree are the time and financial strain that it could put on his family's future.

Needs & Pain Points

- The primary need is to support his family.
- His income could limit his options for investing in an advanced degree in sports.
- He is not convinced that sports administration is the right career path for him.
- He needs flexibility, given his demanding schedule both at work and home.
- He is not certain how to evaluate course plans for their true value in assisting him with his career or entrepreneurial efforts.
- He is worried about the right time to pursue a change in career.
- He needs a business plan or a career path post-military, after retiring.
- He fears becoming overextended with school causing strain on his home life.

Katt Remil

Age: 24 • **Current Job:** Athletic Trainer • **City:** Charlotte, NC.

Behaviors & Actions

Katt stays connected with her close peer network, although most of them have moved to take on opportunities in other markets. Her work schedule keeps her busy, so she mostly keeps track through social media, and especially loves following her friends' Instagram and Snapchat stories. In their two years out of school, she and her peers have experienced the ill-effects of exhausting workloads and overall frustration in their workplaces. As a result Katt has taken to mindful practices such as meditation and yoga, which she has introduced to some patients at work.

In her free time, Katt likes to take in immersive experiences, such as catching an exciting new movie on IMAX or hitting the trails for a hike. Due to her late



work schedule, she typically gets home just in time to catch late night talks shows, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon being her favorite.

Demographic & Psychographic Details

Katt was born in Concord, NC, where she and her younger brother were raised by their mother and father. She is a big pet lover and has one dog that she loves taking for runs through the park. She has always been involved in sports and enjoyed playing basketball and soccer with her brother and cousins as a child. Upon high school graduation, Katt wanted to stay close to home and family, so she enrolled in the University of North Carolina Charlotte where she decided to build on her passion for fitness and an active lifestyle. She graduated with her an undergraduate degree in exercise science.

While many of her friends from school left for greener pastures—moving to cities such as LA, New York and Miami—after college Katt had an opportunity to jump right into work. She secured an internship with Carolina’s Healthcare System. Here she was offered a full-time position as an athletic trainer after only a few months.

Katt quickly learned how easy it can be to burn out in this type of position—as many of her friends in similar positions would also lament about the long hours and mental toll associated with their career. Wanting to head off this type of burn out, she focuses on advancing to the administrative level with a goal to become and athletic director. She found it difficult to land interviews for these higher positions and she believes age is making her less credible. She believes that gaining her master’s degree will boost her credibility and open the door to more interview opportunities.

Needs & Pain Points

- She lacks credibility in her field.
- She is looking to positively impact her profession.
- She wants more financial security.
- She wants a higher position that will give her more recognition.



- She is concerned about her work-life balance.
- Her time is always an issue.
- She is afraid that she could waste valuable time and money.
- She is concerned with the perception of online schools.

Current Analysis

Based on the findings throughout the discovery, we have created recommended key performance indicators along with recommended key system attributes that the system should reflect in its solution for the organization. These are metrics that Laureate and the University of Miami's online Sports Administration program can use to test decisions of new content suggestions, and determine the success of new implementations.

Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators, or KPIs, help an organization measure the primary areas of focus to help progress and goals. The KPIs selected should remain consistent for this web presence unless there is a major organizational mission change. The number of KPIs should be limited to about three to four to maintain a clear focus, but never more than six. We have related each KPI to Key System Attributes, or KSAs, which we elaborate on in the next section. Below is the list of our defined KPIs:

1. Improve the capture accuracy of the Request for Information form.
2. Increase the amount of Chat Live lead captures.
3. Increase the retention rates of users.
4. Boost the early intake applications received.



KPI#1: Improve the Capture Accuracy of the Request for Information Form

There is an issue with capturing accurate information for potential leads. This yields an inability to follow-up with “Request for Information” (RFI) leads, and impacts the chance to convert a potential enrollee.

Measurement: Ratio of accurate captures to submissions.

Related KSAs:

1. Improved lead capture process in the RFI form.
2. Maintain contact to prospect throughout the RFI submission process.

KPI #2: Increase the Amount of Chat Live Lead Captures

The “Chat Live” feature represents a major lead capture opportunity, and conversion funnel on the site. This tool is a direct link between advisors and potential students. Enhancing its ability to act as a lead generator will allow educational advisors to follow up with leads after their initial chat interaction and maintain the thread of communication with prospective students.

Measurement: Ratio of Chat Live users to successful follow-up engagements.

Related KSAs:

1. Extend functionality of the Chat Live function.
2. Maintain contact to prospects after the initial Chat Live contact.

KPI #3: Increase the Retention Rates of Users

While a 51% bounce rate is considered average, when combined with a high drop-off rate of 66%, demonstrates a concern. Higher engagement and retention should be a key goal in driving higher application and RFI rates.



Measurement: Lower user drop-off and bounce rate (analytics data).

Related KSA: Provide useful content that speaks to prospect concerns.

KPI #4: Boost the Early Intake Applications Received

The early intake process experiences a low sense of urgency for potential enrollees. This presumably drives down application submission rates as a whole, which puts new students at risk of missing out on financial benefits and placement opportunities that can be obtained if enrolled earlier.

Measurement: Number of applications in relation to submission open period.

Related KSA: Provide useful content that speaks to prospect concerns.

Key System Attributes

Key system attributes, or KSAs, help support areas of critical importance and defined KPIs. KSAs are listed under each KPI, which are often repeated to support multiple KPIs. KSAs are subject to change over time as data supports better strategies for KPIs. There is no limit to the count of KSAs.

KSA #1: Answer Pertinent Questions, Earlier in the User's Journey

Saving prospective students the time it may take to track down the information they are looking for shows that the program is taking their needs into account.



KSA #2: Use Content to Drive Interest & Demonstrate Value

Blogs, testimonials, news articles featuring faculty and staff, and other user-focused content help to affirm a prospect's decision to submit an application. Some prospects may not fully comprehend the concept of online degrees or they may have a perception that the value of an online degree is less than an in-person one. Promoting content that shows the quality of education can establish legitimacy and drive prospects further in the funnel.

KSA #3: Provide Clear & Accessible Tuition Information

Tuition information is a key factor in the decision-making process. While this may be most important to a prospect closer to the evaluation/conversion phase of the funnel, it is critical to provide this information—and information about financial aid—to all prospects, regardless of their funnel position.

KSA #4: Extend the Chat Live Functionality

This is dependent upon the limitations of the Salesforce tool.

Targeted Conversion Funnels

Request for Information Form

The Request for Information (RFI) form is a key conversion funnel point. The goal of this lead-generating tool should be to provide prospective students with information that will help their decision to apply. Removing roadblocks that the prospect may have at the time of interaction with the RFI will result in more valuable leads. The journey for the persona of Devin H. will focus on his experience with the RFI feature and his pain points.



Chat Live

Chat Live has the potential to be a powerful lead capture tool that can enhance the prospective student's experience. This tool should act as a guide through the information gathering process. It may provide a fail-safe in the event the prospect needs assistance overcoming a barrier in their journey to the RFI or application submission process.

The journey for the persona of Katt R. will focus on her experience through the site, which leads to her interaction with the Chat Live option.

User Journeys

A user journey represents a sequence of events or experiences a user might encounter while using a product or service. A user journey can be mapped or designed to show the steps and choices presented as interactions, as well as the resulting actions.⁷

See Appendices C and D: User journey maps for Devin and Katt.

Pain Points

See Appendix E: Pain points and recommendations.

Lack of Useful Content

In both user journeys, each user persona was challenged by a lack of readily available, useful, and detailed content. The main program page does not convey the program's unique value proposition. Each persona wants to get a sense of what to expect from the program, and the "why"—as in, why choose UOnline for this degree. As each persona navigates further into the site, the



topic pages that they expect to provide information are not found on the main page and these pages are light on details.

Poor Information Architecture

The user journeys demonstrated numerous issues where users are getting lost when navigating through the site. Multiple pages are listed as if they belong to the Sports Administration section, but lead to the top-level, UOnline portion of the site—forcing the prospect to find their way back into the Sports Administration program. This not only leads to higher drop-off, it also creates a hurdle for the potential student to gather the information they deem necessary to submit their application.

Tell, Do Not Show

The content on the site often refers to the school's reputation, which assumes prospects know about University of Miami. This presumed familiarity can lead to important content being omitted. A school's reputation is a major selling point, but it should not be the only selling point. Much of the content is promotional and focused towards prospects who are familiar with the brand, as opposed to how UM impacts the lives of its students, beyond the classroom.

Bottom Funnel Focus

From the perspective of each persona, a majority of the site's content seems focused towards those who have most likely made their decision. Based on the cyclical nature of the admissions/enrollment process, this may be expected at certain times of the year. For example, a call-out for an early application deadline—that is five weeks away—makes sense to highlight on the program landing page. The challenge, however, comes during the time of year when prospective students are gathering information. Is the content changing to meet their needs?



Buggy Intra-Section Navigation

The program navigation disappears when scrolling down the page. In earlier explorations of the site, it “stuck” to the top of the browser window on scroll, which helped keep the visitor connected to the Sports Administration section. Without this working, the possibility of visitors navigating out of the program is higher.

Button Definition

The “Program at a Glance” and general overview icon blocks found throughout the site present as buttons on the page. Upon interaction, they only send the visitor back to the top of the page. These buttons have hover states and animations, which make it even more unclear as to their purpose. The only area of the site where the icons do behave as buttons is on the “Admissions” page. However, the inconsistency leads to confusion on the part of the personas and they may miss valuable information.

Strategy

This includes improvement opportunities, suggestions, and analysis.

See Appendix E: Pain points and recommendations.

Lack of Useful Content

On the Sports Administration main page (left), there are three areas (highlighted red) that are considered low-impact content—in context to the journeys of the personas, Devin and Katt. A landing page or the homepage of a website is often going to be one of the key drivers of conversion. Failing to address the needs of prospective students there can mean missed opportunities. The homepage—excluding the “Program at a Glance”



block—does not provide substantial detail about core concerns facing the target personas.

Experience Landing Page

Site Link:

<https://welcome.miami.edu/online/programs/masters-in-sport-administration/experience>

The first two blocks that open this page contain the same content. While infographics can offer a more engaging way to present content, this infographic does not speak to the experience that a prospective student will have. The link to the “Sports Industry Conference” directs the visitor to an outdated page. The “Optional On-Campus Orientation” link yields a non-dated PDF schedule for the orientation.

UOnline Sport Administration Program Class Profile

Site Link:

https://welcome.miami.edu/online/programs/~//link.aspx?_id=4C7C1F1C81D0494D938F9FD504F5B5D9&_z=z

This page is listed as a “Class Profile” in the Additional Benefits block throughout the site. However, it takes the visitor to a page about enrollment advisors (EA). As a top-of-the-funnel user, Katt would not have much concern about who the EAs are. Re-labelling the page or revamping content are recommended.

Faculty Spotlight Landing Page

Site Link:

<https://welcome.miami.edu/online/programs/masters-in-sport-administration/faculty>



The program's faculty are promoted heavily as a key benefit of enrolling into the MSED program throughout the site (as well as in retargeted display ads). The faculty page, however, does not communicate the same sense of value. Each faculty member has a brief bio. Those who have a "read more" link—which is difficult to see—bring the visitor to outdated content.

Content Recommendations

Incorporate more high-impact content, relatable to both the respective page and the target personas. A great example of a high-impact, well-balanced content homepage with upper-funnel positioning, is from the [University of Florida's online Master's Degree in Sport Management](#). The page is scannable and key content is front-and-center. The language speaks to the needs and desires of the potential student, as does the design.

The UM Sports Administration homepage could benefit from a more diverse and targeted set of content—with details about the courses, tuition, class work/life balance, or substantiation information (such as content centered around successful student/alumni of the program). Other pages, such as "Experience," should have more content speaking directly to the purpose of the page. The content on Experience speaks more to a student who is in Miami—or nearby. Consider the needs of Katt—an athletic trainer in Charlotte, with a limited budget and overloaded work schedule—who is unlikely able to make it to an on-campus orientation. Similarly, Devin—a military policeman, with two kids and a busy schedule—who is not expecting to attend the "Sport Industry Conference." The current content speaks to the student base, but overlooks the needs of the target personas to encourage application/RFI submission.

Add additional targeted calls-to-action to the homepage, directing visitors to key content pages. [Ohio University](#) provides an abundance of action items such that prospects can choose actions that best suits them.



Provide more details about the faculty. Treat this like a resume for each faculty member. Link to articles they have authored or been quoted in. This is the opportunity for a potential student to gain more insight about who they will be spending upwards of two years with. Also, keep in mind, that if someone is reviewing faculty, they are typically in the bottom of the funnel—doing their due diligence prior to applying/RFI. Anything we can do to keep them from leaving the site—for example, to search deeper into the faculty—is more opportunity you have to keep them on the site and convert.

Give more tuition details, particularly on the homepage. Analytics shows that visitors are looking for this information. Ensure tuition data consistency. There are three miami.edu sites with three different tuition amounts.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations

1. KPI: Lower drop-off and bounce rate
2. KPI: Improved capture accuracy of Request for Info form
3. KSA: Demystified tuition information
4. KSA: Provide content critical to user needs

Questionable Information Architecture

Sink Link:

https://welcome.miami.edu/online/programs/~/_link.aspx?_id=8EEC11DD050D45C6A8E4723DFDBE779E&_z=z

The current information architecture has a couple of holes that need to be fixed. There are a few examples of broken links. Clicking these links results in a “404” error or navigates to an unexpected page. These are areas that can cause problems for the visitor when moving through the site. Certain links direct the visitor away from the Sports Administration section of the site, causing confusion. One example of this is the “5 Things to Consider When Choosing a Sport Management Program” link.



Recommendations

Auditing the site's content organization, and streamlining its page flow, will help ensure that the correct pages, relationships, content, and links are provided for necessary nodes.

Consider ways to keep a visitor connected to the program when traversing the content of the site. This could be a simple backlink, providing the visitor an opportunity to return to the program they were previously viewing.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations

- KPI: Lower drop-off and bounce rate
- KPI: Improved capture accuracy of Request For Info form
- KPI: Boost early intake applications received
- KSA: Answer pertinent questions, earlier in the user's journey
- KSA: Provide content critical to user needs

Top-of-the-Funnel Content

Site Link:

<https://welcome.miami.edu/online/programs/masters-in-sport-administration/careers>

The current website content and other communications—including paid media ads—are placing too much emphasis on the faculty as it profiles professors such as Wendy Dies. Although the staff pedigree and experience is a critical piece of the overall content—that prospective students need to evaluate the program—it is not going to be the most effective “top-of-the-funnel” content. The goal of top-of-the-funnel content is to draw your target audience in, create brand awareness and start to build a relationship—especially when they are just learning about your program. Unless the faculty has “star power” that extends beyond UM and the Sports



Administration community it is not going to be as effective at creating an emotional connection with users.

The current content—including faculty profile videos and other campaign materials—does not focus enough on outcomes. The faculty members talk about a large network and that they have worked in sports, but users want examples of these folks in the network, as well as logos of the sports organizations the faculty and graduates have work for.

Recommendations

Move the faculty profiles and spotlights back slightly to make more room for top-of-the-funnel content that will engage the different user personas with emotional connections. This could be a connection to showing what it feels like to work in sports. You could use successful graduates who will resonate with users as people who were “just like them” before they enrolled. Now as a result of the program they have the status they hope to achieve. There is a little bit of this being done currently, but it does not focus on outcomes. Overall, the site content needs to be more outcome-focused. For example, sharing logos of the companies for whom graduates go on to work. Sell the dream of working in sports and communicate the type of life that working in sports can afford you using actual examples/outcomes. Remind people why they want to work in sports and show them how UM MESA can get them there. We believe the career page comes closer to conveying this than other areas of the site.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations:

- KPI: Lower drop-off and bounce rate
- KPI: Improved capture accuracy of Request For Info form
- KSA: Answer pertinent questions, earlier in the user’s journey
- KSA: Provide content critical to user needs



Bottom Funnel Focus

Starting from the top of the homepage and moving down, the content served throughout is geared toward the needs of someone who has already made a decision to move forward in the process.

- Home Top: The focus on faculty speaks to someone who has probably had the majority of the information they need, and are ready to spend time getting to know the faculty in-depth.
- Home Mid: Application deadline is markedly a low-funnel conversion.
- Home Mid-lower: Another call out for the faculty—while faculty will play a role in the decision—it is likely it is not as important early on.

Recommendations

Incorporate more upper-level content into the homepage. Add more content that speaks to what the this type of user is looking for, which boils down to: “Professional Progression” and “Career Validation.” On the [University of Florida Online Master in Sports Management](#), note how the opening call “Your Path to a Winning Career,” speaks directly to the human need for validation and progress.

[Columbia University’s online program](#) starts immediately with a video overview of the program. As you move down the page, details range from individual benefits of the program, courses and syllabi, to faculty and testimonials. With this landing page you get a little bit of everything about the program.

Consider placement of a RFI form lower on the page, instead of a pop-up or modal window. Bringing a full form lower on the page invites the user to read the content first. With the RFI later, the user will not feel as if the RFI is force upon them, which may result in more accurate data capture.



It is also good usability for mobile platforms. The RFI form on mobile devices is a bit difficult to use, because these devices are not the best at handling pop-up or modal windows.

The highlighted content found on the [Interactive Learning](#) page speaks directly to some key concerns, such as timeframes, start dates, and support. The video on this page is great and would be ideal earlier in the site.

Incorporate tuition details. The “At a Glance” block gives an idea of the tuition per credit. However, have more detailed info about the tuitions and potentially add language that subtly suggests options for lowered tuition. While it may not be completely desired to talk about reduced rates, for users with tight incomes it can play a factor. When we consider the pricing of the program being more than most, we think letting people know that there is an option. Even if we simply put military-specific scholarship information in there.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations

- KPI: Lower drop-off and bounce rate.
- KPI: Improved capture accuracy of Request for Info form.
- KPI: Boost early intake applications received.
- KSA: Answer pertinent questions earlier in the user’s journey.
- KSA: Provide content critical to user needs.
- KSA: Demystified tuition information.

Buggy Intra-Section Navigation

In early tests of the site, we remember the specific program navigation sticking as the user scrolls. It is no longer doing that and it would be helpful to maintain context as the user moves throughout the site.



Recommendations

Make navigation sticky again. If it was not sticky in the first place, we would suggest making it sticky.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations

- KPI: Lower drop-off and bounce rate.
- KSA: Provide content critical to user needs.

Button/Not a Button

Multiple blocks are presented throughout the site in a format that looks like buttons. However, when clicking these buttons, the only function is to shift the user back to the top of the page.



Recommendations

If elements are intended to be clickable, ensure they go to the appropriate content. If they are not intended to be clickable, then it would be highly advisable to remove the hover state that gives it the appearance of being a button.

Intended KPIs & KSAs Impacted by Recommendations

- KSA: Provide content critical to user needs

Next Steps

Quick Wins

Below are some areas in the site that you all may begin to make edits on, as a way to improve the overall experience of the site:

- Remove hover states or add actual page hyperlinks for “At a Glance” buttons.
- Fix broken links (“404” errors) and change links to an appropriate path.

Editorial Calendar

See Appendix F: MESA editorial calendar.

Opportunities to Innovate

Below are some areas in the website where you may want to consider to add value to the site and its content.

Utilize Live Agent Auto-Chat Triggers

Currently Live Agent is the tool that provides the Chat Live feature, which is only activated when a user interacts with it.

However, Live Agent has some rather useful features, that may find useful. One such feature is the “Automated Chat Invitations.”

Automated invitations can be set to trigger based on certain criteria, such as whether a customer remains on a web page for more than a specified amount of time. Invitations can be associated with specific skills, which ensures that customers will be routed to the appropriate agent when they accept an invitation to chat.⁸



This feature will add value, since it can be triggered after a certain amount of time. This means if a user seems to be stuck, we can step in to help change the experience for them—hopefully before the drop-off.

Make it Easier to Get Answers via Chat

The Chat Live feature currently requires a visitor to enter first and last name, along with an email address. Chat tools are quickly replacing the search tools on websites for users to get the fastest answers to their questions. Not everyone wants to identify themselves right away in a chat, but they do want quick answers. Therefore, in order to make it easy to engage with your program, you may want to consider preloading answers to the most frequently asked questions. These can be delivered by a chatbot that does not require contact info immediately. Similar to how people avoid filling out website forms until they have done a little research on their own, they take the same approach to chat. Meanwhile, the Chat Live feature is there for them to engage in a chat with a live person. This approach will ensure that your user finds what they are looking for.

This approach seeks to accomplish two things:

1. It improves the customer experience by removing the impersonality felt when the user wants to chat briefly (only to be forced to put their personal information).
2. It ensures that a user gets the right information quickly—connecting them to a live person when they are ready. Conversions will increase through nurturing.

The Need to Validate

One crucial thing must be mentioned: All of the work we have done is based on educated assumptions, the data we had, and the research we could conduct. This means that our next step from here is to validate our findings.



This ensures that what we are doing is truly impactful and we can find where our assumptions may require adjustment. Validation is one of the most important aspects of the user experience process. We can only practice human-centered design when we include actual humans in the process. Upon review and subsequent approval of this audit, Unleashed Technologies would like to set up a follow-up meeting where we can discuss and plan efforts to go through the validation process. Some validation measures may be complex; some may require actual users, and user testing. Other validation may be based on doing A/B testing. We can discuss this more when the time is right. However, we cannot stress enough that even a little validation is better than none.

Conclusion

After reviewing the University of Miami's Online Sports Administration site—while our focus has mostly been on several sore spots—it should be noted that this site has some extremely valuable content on it. Valuable content needs to be pulled to the forefront. We hope to see that happen. It has been a pleasure to help such a prestigious program take a step toward building quality online relationship with its students. Overall, we recommend thoughtful content edits, strategic usage of marketing outlets, adjusted brand position, use of a more consistent voice, and a few tweaks to the underlying system. This will help the online MSED program boost its reputation in the industry, and uphold the standard that has thrived at the University of Miami.



Appendices

Appendix A: University of Miami Research Data

<https://unleashed.teamwork.com/#files/2946650>

Appendix B: User Personas

<https://unleashed.teamwork.com/#files/2946651>

Appendix C: User Journey Map for Devin H

<https://unleashed.teamwork.com/#files/2946652>

Appendix D: User Journey Map for Katt R

<https://unleashed.teamwork.com/#files/2946653>

Appendix E: Pain Points and Recommendations

<https://invis.io/5XK4ILEHQND>

Appendix F: MESA Editorial Calendar

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bHoY1kxeq065sXSkiNHBbfiX4KXIfRIS8FdVs7BjeoY/edit#gid=1225976759>



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