

## **Highlight A Portfolio Piece**

### **My Portfolio Piece: The School of Public Policy Website Redesign**

#### **Introduction to the Challenge**

The School of Public Policy needed to redesign their outdated website to more effectively highlight the school's purpose and offerings to the student. In addition, it needed to reflect enough of the design of the Georgia Tech main site to look like a component of Georgia Tech.

The major challenge redesign will address is the uncertainty surrounding what the school is about and what the programs offered by the school can provide to prospective students. Many schools at Georgia Tech are self-explanatory such as the School of Biology, the School of Psychology, and the School of Economics. Their names evoke a sufficient notion of what the school is all about so students can make informed decisions regarding their interest, typically without any need for investigation. The same isn't true for the School of Public Policy. Having a poorly established identity, its name doesn't induce the same general level of understanding about the areas of interest it encompasses. Furthermore, it does not reveal the uniqueness of Georgia Tech's version of Public Policy.

The redesign aims not only to satisfy the minds of the semi-familiar with information about Public Policy as a field, but also to generate interest in those who are completely unfamiliar. Public Policy, unlike biology, psychology, and economics, is not a subject most students cover in high school. The site needs to convey an idea of what students could cover in their studies as well as what careers one could pursue with a degree in Public Policy. The issues need to be covered on the first page of the site in a few brief seconds, because that is all of the time we may get with some students. As is known, a site has a few seconds to engage the visitor. Therefore, the challenge was to spark an interest on the first page in the first few seconds of the visit to the site.

A second challenge of the redesign is to make academic peers and other interested parties aware of the research interests and focus areas of the school. For an academic institution, it is important to clearly show where the school's areas of expertise and interests lie in order to establish connections with other experts, institutions, and communities. These connections can lead to funding, publications, and strategic alliances.

The final challenge the redesign needs to address is to bring the site more in line with the Georgia Tech main site. The Public Policy site needs to share enough of the identity of the main site so that it can be easily associated with Georgia Tech, while establishing its own uniqueness and individuality within the University.

## **Design Goals of the Portfolio Piece**

### **General Goals**

There are two primary design goals of the portfolio site. One is to bring the audience along the journey of tackling the challenges presented in the previous section. It is to build an appreciation for the implemented design, by sharing with the audience the steps in the journey. This journey begins with the original design, goes past the consideration and discarding of alternatives, to the finalization of the chosen design. The pages in this portfolio site will share with the audience how the design became what it is while satisfying the constraint of maintaining an appearance that was congruous to that of the Georgia Tech main site while establishing an identity of its own.

Before beginning the journey, however, the portfolio site puts the challenges into the necessary context. Without context, the audience may not adequately appreciate and acknowledge the intelligence behind the decisions that were settled upon. By presenting the need for a site with a message that quickly and effectively explains what Public Policy is and what one can do with a degree in it, the site cultivates a longing within the audience to reach the conclusion, which is the final design. It also equips the audience with the necessary skills to be able to judge the success of the design for themselves on some level.

The general audience for this site will be potential employers or clients. The goal is to communicate the challenges and solutions of the redesign in a quick and minimal way. The presumption is that hiring managers are busy and do not have the time to sift through a website with much text. The portfolio will use focused wording and illustrations to convey its message. Also, this portfolio piece is not meant to take the place of visiting the Public Policy. The piece is meant to generate an appreciation for the design choices made by the designer. Therefore, in order to keep the file size of the movie down for faster loading, the movie was created with fairly small dimensions.

## Page by Page Goals

### Putting the Challenge in **Context**

- ❑ *First page* – describe the problem
- ❑ *Second page* – to establish the ambiguity that shrouds the subject of Public Policy in terms of a major.
- ❑ *Third page* – to convey the difficulty a prospective student experiences when trying to decide on a major at Georgia Tech.
- ❑ *Fourth page* – establish a desire on the part of the student to find out what Public Policy is about.

### **Design Process**

- ❑ *Fifth page* – introduce the old design as a point of context and point out some of the weaknesses.
- ❑ *Sixth page* – bring to light the complexity and enormity of the content that makes up the Public Policy program and set the redesign in motion.
- ❑ *Seventh page* – introduce the first alternative design
- ❑ *Eighth page* – introduce the second alternative design
- ❑ *Ninth page* – display some of the brainstorming ideas that led to the chosen approach
- ❑ *Tenth-Eleventh page* – show the new design and highlight why it meets the challenges laid out
- ❑ *Twelfth - Thirteenth page* – show the impact the new site's design has on the student and how it makes him understand Public Policy.
- ❑ *Fourteenth page* – show the student's decision to pursue Public Policy as a career and encourage viewers to check out the School of Public Policy's website.

## **Implementation Strategies**

### **General Strategy**

Overall, the strategy is to guide visitors through the evolution of the School of Public Policy's website. It should show the original look of the site, the objectives of the redesign as they were articulated to me by the School's Chair, and the other ideas that were considered. It should then display the design that was settled upon and highlight why that design was considered the most effective. Though a goal of the site is to design it in such a way that the visitor will know for

himself why the final design tactic was chosen, the site will articulate the strengths of the chosen design.

The chosen implementation strategy is to illustrate the thought process of a prospective student encountering the “Select your major” field on the application. Uncertainty about Public Policy strikes the student as he turns to the Georgia Tech website to learn more about that major. At this point, after setting the stage with the motivation of the School of Public Policy’s website, the visitor is presented with the major questions posed to the designer in the formation of the redesign. Should we use collages of work places and government buildings? Should we juxtapose academic photos with “real-world” photos? Should we use text to explain why a student should choose Public Policy as his major? These questions are answered for the visitor by displaying a design featuring those elements on screen and fading them out. The chosen design is then displayed and the features of the design that are meant to stand out to the visitor are highlighted. The features are shown to impact the student and cause him to think about how he may be able to affect change in the world with a degree in Public Policy.

### Page-by-Page Strategy

- First page – Describe the problems with bold text.



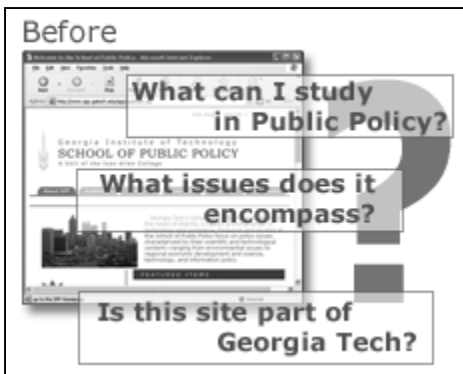
- *Second page* – depict an application for admissions into Georgia Tech, highlighting the section “Select Your Major” and the space for “Public Policy,” which stirs the question about the nature of Public Policy. Depict the ambiguity that shrouds the subject of Public Policy by contrasting it with other more obvious majors such as Biology, Economics, and Psychology.



- *Third page* – a prospective student displays his confusion over the meaning of Public Policy to show the words “Public Policy” don’t mean much to him.



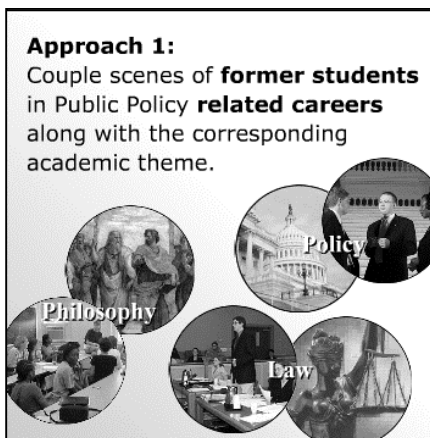
- ❑ *Fourth page* – prospective student goes online to the Georgia Tech website to learn more about Public Policy



- ❑ *Fifth page* – Shows the previous Public Policy website and points out some of the weaknesses the stimulated the desire for a new website. Displays some of the questions we felt like the site didn't answer.



- ❑ *Sixth page* – uses images and text to establish the range of subject matter available for study in the Public Policy program. The question we posed to ourselves before redesign.



- ❑ *Seventh page* – displays one alternative design that was considered as possible answers to the question presented on the previous page.

**Approach 2:**  
Address the variety of **classes** and **career** possibilities with text and graphics.

**Pre-Law**  
Legal Assistant  
Assistant Public Defender  
Director of Environmental Affairs

**Policy Analysis**  
Defense & National Security Policy  
Public Utilities Regulatory Analyst  
Federal Policy Analyst

**Statistical Analysis**  
Data Analyst  
Federal Policy Analyst  
Senior Analyst, Dept. of Energy

**Engineering/Computing**  
Operations Research Analyst  
Research Engineer  
Network Engineer

- *Eighth page* – displays the second alternative design that was considered as possible answers to the question presented on the previous page.

**Approach 3: Questions**  
Students like to ask questions, so let's **pose questions to them**.

We can use the **research questions that guide each professors**

Let's seek out **highly illustrative photography** to show the questions impact on the modern world.

**Chosen**

- *Ninth page* - Describes approach 3, the chosen approach, in text and graphics. Articulates the details of the design which best translates the subject matter in a clear way through the use of research questions accompanied by a poignant photo.

**New design**

Banner randomly displays one of twenty questions with accompanying photos that explain Public Policy in terms of the variety of research interests of the school's professors.

Site reflects the Georgia Tech site design

- *Tenth page* –reveals the chosen design and points out how this design is the strongest. Generates thought within the student, conveys research interests to peers, and is clearly reflective of the Georgia Tech main site.

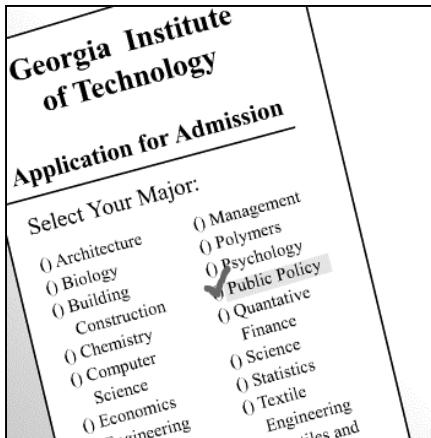
**Public Policy**

How do we put... on an...  
Professor Gordon Kingery

How do we put... on an...  
Professor William...  
Philip Shapiro

How do we adapt to an uncertain...  
Douglas Norman

- *Eleventh page* – Revels more of the questions and image banners. Student quickly learns and understands the nature of this major and the variety of specializations available to him.



*Twelfth page* – Show the effectiveness of the new design by way of the student believing Public Policy is a match for him and selecting that as his major.

### **Design Rationale**

This design was chosen because it is easily accessible to any type of audience, but specifically potential employers. A Flash implementation was chosen because it controls the path and the pace of the viewer. It minimized the work on the viewer by using a one-button click. Employing a representation of a student using the site to successfully learn more about Public Policy conveys the primary motivation behind the site's redesign strategy. In the end, illustrating a student understanding and choosing Public Policy as his major because he feels it is a perfect fit demonstrates the success and intent of the site.