
COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Prepared for: SMC DESIGN TECHNOLOGY
Prepared by: MAX MACAPAGAL AND FELIX MONTANEZ
Date: 09 22 2011
Proposal #: F11



Competitive Analysis

The SMC Design Technology website needs a major redesign due to its outdated visual design, poor navigation and weak information architecture. This analysis is supported by comprehensive industry research by comparing competitive sites in the academic sector as categorized from public to private institutions of higher learning.

Goals and Objectives

Results from the client survey has strongly indicated that the new redesigned website needs to be cohesive, modern and up to date to serve the best interests of the target audience specifically students, prospective students, alumni, faculty and administrators. The main goals and objectives are listed as the following:

- Increase enrollment, return traffic and brand awareness
- Redesign a user friendly site providing quick and easy to find information
- Increase donor sponsorship and sense of community
- Improve navigation as a result of new site information design and structure

Methodology

To accomplish these goals, competitive sites were analyzed for features that work and don't work. The final recommendation for possible implementation into the redesigned site is the result of the following methods informally conducted by team members, and compiled in the Features and Ratings Grid.

- Compare competitive sites with user-based orientation
- Conduct task-oriented tests for each of the sites
- Compile features in grid to establish detailed site features for comparison
- Analyze and rate observations, input and overall use of each site

Individuals participating in this analysis are classified as potential users allowing them a range of observations, input and overall experience. The analysis, features comparison and ratings were conducted in four phases:

- Individual site analysis
- Informal usability testing (task-oriented)
- Features comparison
- Ratings for overall experience evaluation

Competitive Sites

The following colleges can be classified as similar or more highly rated in academic standings as SMC Design Technology offering certificates and degrees in AA, BS, BA and above. Staffing and budget appropriated for these sites are also considered and categorized as publicly or privately funded. Thirty total features are compared.

Public Colleges

- **LA Mission**
- **College of the Canyons**
- **San Diego State University**
- **SUNY Cortland**

Private Colleges

- **California Institute of the Arts**
- **Art Center College of Design**
- **Otis College of Art and Design**
- **Brooks Institute**

Screen Shots

- **LA Mission:** Public - 12/30 main features - 3.1 X overall rating (1 X poor to 5X excellent scale)



- **College of the Canyons:** Public - 14/30 main features - 2 X overall rating



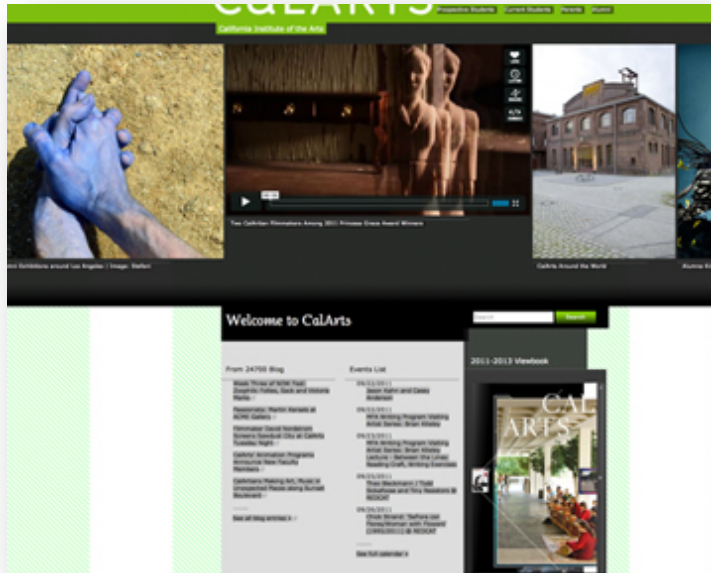
- San Diego State University: Public - 21/30 main features - 3 X overall rating



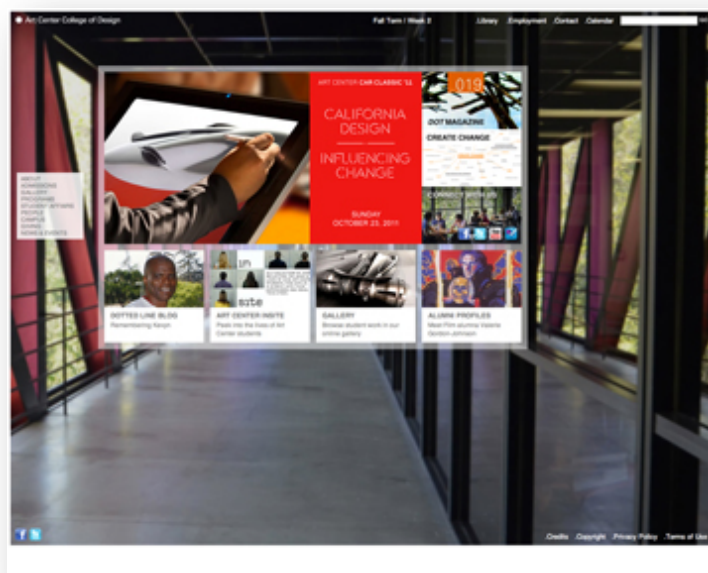
- SUNY Cortland: Public - 22/30 main features - 3 X overall rating



- **California Institute of the Arts:** Private - 30/30 main features - 4.5 X overall rating



- **Art Center College of Design:** Private - 25/30 main features - 4.3 X overall rating



- Otis College of Art and Design: Private - 21/30 main features - 4.3 X overall rating



- Brooks Institute: Private - 22/30 main features - 4.7 X overall rating



Findings and Recommendations

In comparison with other educational institutions, SMC Design Technology website has ranked the lowest in overall experience, functionality and look and feel. Some of the lowest scores are derived from the lack of features whereas other institutions had a more cohesive feel with functionality tied into their websites.

Most other universities had social media ties creating more of a community, along with easy to find information and navigation which targeted most demographics. Results from collected data from the features comparison and overall rating grid indicate that the present SMC Design Technology website failed in all categories:

- **SMC Design Technology:** Public - 11/30 main features - 1.2 X overall rating

Colleges that equally compete with SMC Design Technology in terms of public funding, size, administration and budgets have higher ratings:

- **LA Mission:** Public - 12/30 main features - 3.1 X overall rating
- **College of the Canyons:** Public - 14/30 main features - 2 X overall rating

Public 4 year+ colleges with a slightly higher budgets and size have higher ratings:

- **San Diego State University:** Public - 14/30 main features - 2 X overall rating
- **SUNY Cortland:** Public - 22/30 main features - 3 X overall rating

Private 4 year + prestigious colleges expectedly have the highest ratings maintaining their strength in up to date communications, enrollment, donor sponsorship, higher budget allotments for marketing to enhance their brand image:

- **California Institute of the Arts:** Private - 30/30 main features - 4.5 X overall rating
- **Art Center College of Design:** Private - 25/30 main features - 4.3 X overall rating
- **Otis College of Art and Design:** Private - 21/30 main features - 4.3 X overall rating
- **Brooks Institute:** Private - 22/30 main features - 4.7 X overall rating

There is not a valid reason for SMC Design Technology website to be cohesive, modern and up to date to serve the best interests of the target audience and compete with other colleges with the following implemented factors:

- Goals and objectives defined
- Site structures improved
- Stunning and dynamic visual interface designed
- Swift back-end programming incorporated

It is recommended to create a wireframe that ties in all three sub departments under the single SMC Design Technology website and implement the redesign to put all the factors considered in motion to have the best overall look and feel with most or all the features implemented. A strong team is needed to update the look and feel of the site as well as integrate the social media component along with instilling a sense of community. A complete overhaul of the website is needed to integrate all three departments into one.

Summary

The shortcomings of the current website are a lack of features and a dissemination of information. There is a strong need to incorporate social media, cross-browser compatibility along with delivering a mobile platform to view the website.

In review, the existing website is a main gateway for alumni, perspective students, current students along with perspective donors. SMC Design Technology needs to completely re-design the website to create a pleasing visual design along with delivering content that is easy to find and understand.