



Immigrant and Undocumented Student Life

UndocuTerps Mobile App – Usability Report

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5/10/25

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Introduction

This report discusses usability testing of a prototype mobile app for the Office of Immigrant and Undocumented Student Life. Usability testing of the mobile app was conducted with 5 participants. In addition to pre-test and post-test questions, the usability test focused on the following tasks:

- First, imagine you would like to apply for state aid from the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Try to find out the deadline for the MHEC (Maryland State Aid) one application.
- Imagine that you have been classified as out-of-state and need to find out how to get reclassified for in-state tuition. Try to find the email of the office that can help you get reclassified.
- Try to RSVP for the Dream Gala.
- Try to apply for the Terp Dream Crisis Fund.
- Try to register as a member for Migrating Shells.

Based on the results from the usability test, recommendations and revisions to the prototype are discussed in the rest of this report.

Methodology

After creating a high-fidelity prototype of the app for the Office of Immigrant and Undocumented Student Life, I conducted usability studies with participants. The studies were held in person and online, all screen and audio recorded with transcripts. Participants were asked preliminary questions and used the think aloud protocol during select tasks surrounding the app's core functions. After engaging with the tasks, participants were asked about their overall experience and impressions of the app.

Recommendations and Revisions

Of the five tasks, the following three have usability issues that prevent the user from completing the respective task. However, there is a broader usability issue related to these tasks: users struggle to complete tasks that are unrelated to the Resources tab/screen or do not fall within users' expectations of the Resources tab/screen. These next sections will introduce the task and the usability issue, the behaviors, emotions and analysis of the reason behind the issue before introducing the solution that integrates the resolution of the issue of all the tasks.

Financial-Related Questions

Residency Reclassification Task

During task #2, users are asked to imagine that they have been classified as out-of-state and they need to get reclassified for in-state tuition. When trying to complete their task ("Try to find the email of the office that can help you get reclassified"), users would be confused about how to reach their destination, often frustrated or lost when tapping on a resource tab did not lead anywhere. One user expressed bewilderment, believing that they were making a mistake after choosing two choices they believed would lead them to the task:

"Oh, okay. Well, I would click at...I think I'd go to resources actually. And then go to "UMD." The only one that's not working. I feel like it's fault of user. We'll go to "New Student." Is this fault of user?" (User 1)

The same user went through the process of reclassification when transferring to UMD and provided the following information about where they expected it to be:

"I think I called someone when I did it because I don't know where it would be under. I feel like it would be under 'New Student.' I can't click on 'New Student.'" (User 1)

Some users became frustrated after the tab they wanted to click did not lead to the task on both the Home screen and the Resources screen such as:

"So first, I would probably...I'm gonna scroll through this app to see if there's anything else that I would probably need. I'm just going to click 'New Student.' Well, I would love to click 'New Student.' It seems like 'New Student' will not load...So I'll click resources and I will probably keep scrolling to see if there's anything relevant. Oh, this is the same as the front page. Oh, it's still not working...so I don't think any of these would help." (User 3)

"'New Student,' that's not working. Maybe I can try this [User quickly switches over from the Resources screen to the Home screen to click 'New Student']. Yeah, that's not working. I can't click on it." (User 4)

From these behaviors, it can be inferred that given that the task frames the issue as happening at the beginning of their education at the University of Maryland, the task's question could have led user's expectations to align with "New Student" as being the most plausible solution. As some users had gone through the process of residency reclassification when transferring to the University of Maryland, their prior experiences reinforce their expectation that this issue would occur during a specific timeframe as a student: when a student is new or transferring.

Based on this conclusion, the recommended solution is to provide another pathway for users to complete the task, especially due to the issue being more likely to occur to new students than current students. However, given the larger usability issue, the pathway for the revised task flow has been impacted by the removal and adding of elements.

Figure 1 shows how this task is currently formatted to have the user go to the financial tab in either the resources section in the Home Screen or the financial card in the Resources screen. The current task flow then leads to the "Residency Reclassification" button, which takes the users to the information needed to complete the task.

The revised task flow, depicted in Figure 2, shows that there is primarily one resource to choose from in the main app: Financial. "New Student" has been removed as have many other resource options. Instead, this new pathway breaks up different financial aid elements and places residency reclassification under "Tuition," as it affects tuition. The card for Tuition has a shorter blurb than its predecessors and mentions residency reclassification. It also places residency reclassification at the top of the screen as it is unavoidable for all immigrant and undocumented students. Therefore, it should be placed at the highest importance as students need to get it fixed immediately.

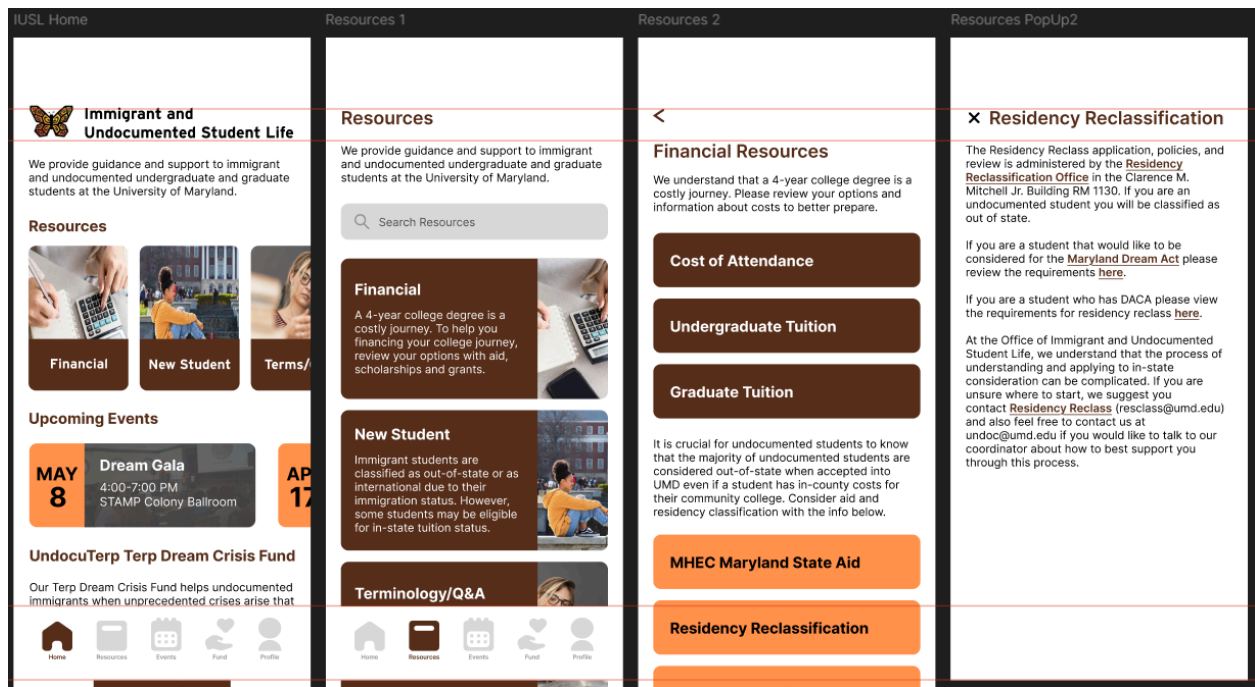


Figure 1. Current format and task flow of Residency Reclassification task (task #2)

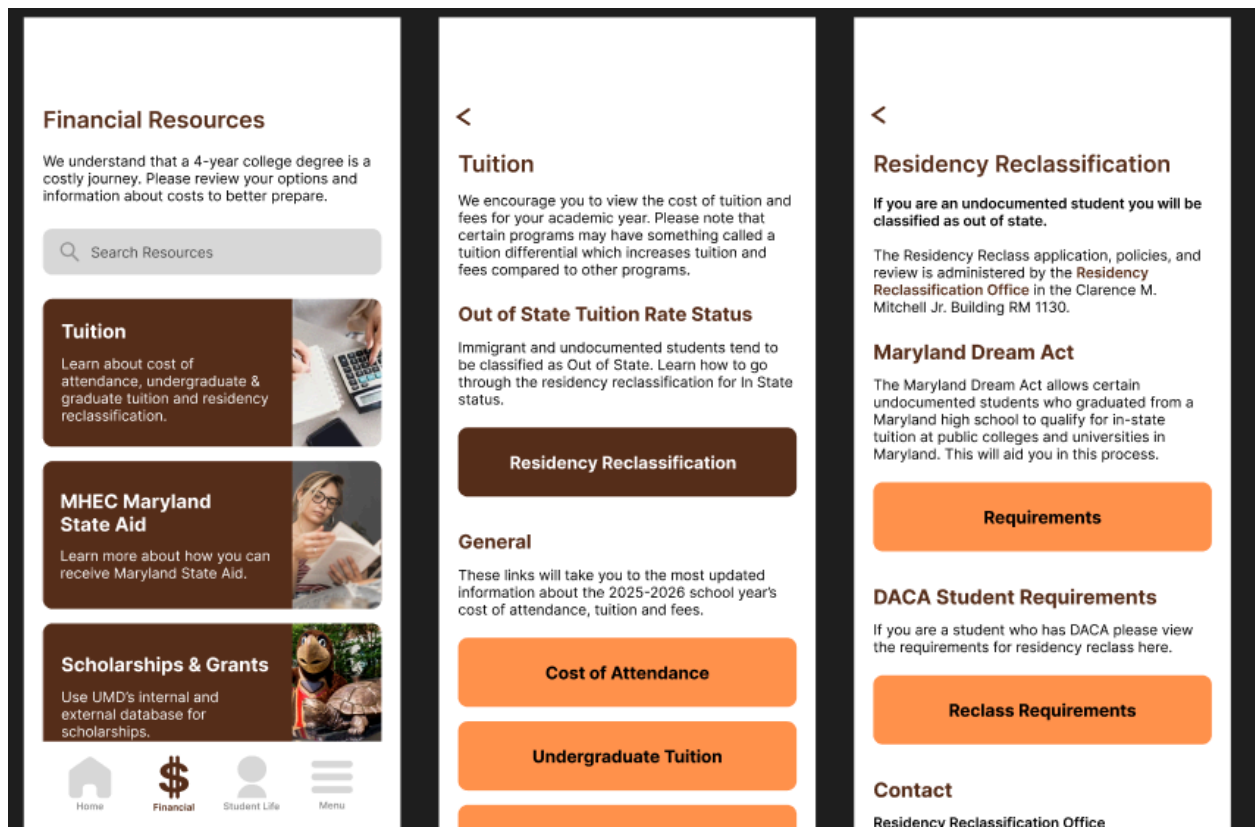


Figure 2. New task flow for the Residency Reclassification Task. (task #2)

Terp Dream Crisis Fund Task

During task #4 (“Try to apply for the Terp Dream Crisis Fund”), users were lost when trying to find information about the Terp Dream Crisis Fund, becoming deflated and guessing about how to get to the task. User expectations did not align with the task flow for some users, which is currently two different avenues: the Terp Dream Crisis Fund section on the home screen and the Fund screen. Some users believed that the task could be completed through the Resources screen or the resources section on the Home screen. One user believed that they did complete the task:

“Yes. Finding that one was a little bit hard for me, just because I was looking for the word crisis, and not so much emergency. But crisis falls under emergency. That just took me a little bit to get to.” (User 2)

User 2 believed they solved the task, but they went to “Emergency Assistance” under the Financial section of Resources. This section does not lead you to apply for the Terp Dream Crisis Fund, but it does mention it as a resource for emergency assistance.

Another user showed guessing behavior as tapping numerous buttons and sections left them confused and fatigued with finding the task’s destination:

“Ok, I’m going to go to the UMD one. That’s not working. So I’m gonna try to go to the financial one...I would go to undergrad tuition under financial resources, because to me that seems like the best thing...where I would go under emergency assistance. But that’s not it. Or I would go to scholarships and grants and press view.” (User 3)

The ability to not apply for the financial resource or find it within the financial section did not align with the users’ expectations.

The recommended solution is to incorporate another pathway for this task to be completed from the financial resources sections as well, allowing it to better meet user expectations.

Figure 3 shows how this task is currently formatted to have the user tap on “Learn More” under the “UndocuTerp Terp Dream Crisis Fund” headline within the home screen, which will then lead straight to the application, or to tap the “Fund” icon in the navigation bar that leads to the option of “Apply” or “Donate.”

For the revised task flow, Figure 4 depicts this task being completed through the financial resource screen, which is now a part of the navigation bar as the singular resource. The users that did not see the separate sections for the Terp Dream Crisis Fund or use the Fund icon went to the financial sections for resources, one believing that the Emergency Assistance screen was the destination for the task. The new task flow makes better use of the Emergency Assistance screen by differentiating and highlighting the Terp Dream Crisis Fund by placing it at the top and including a call to action button.

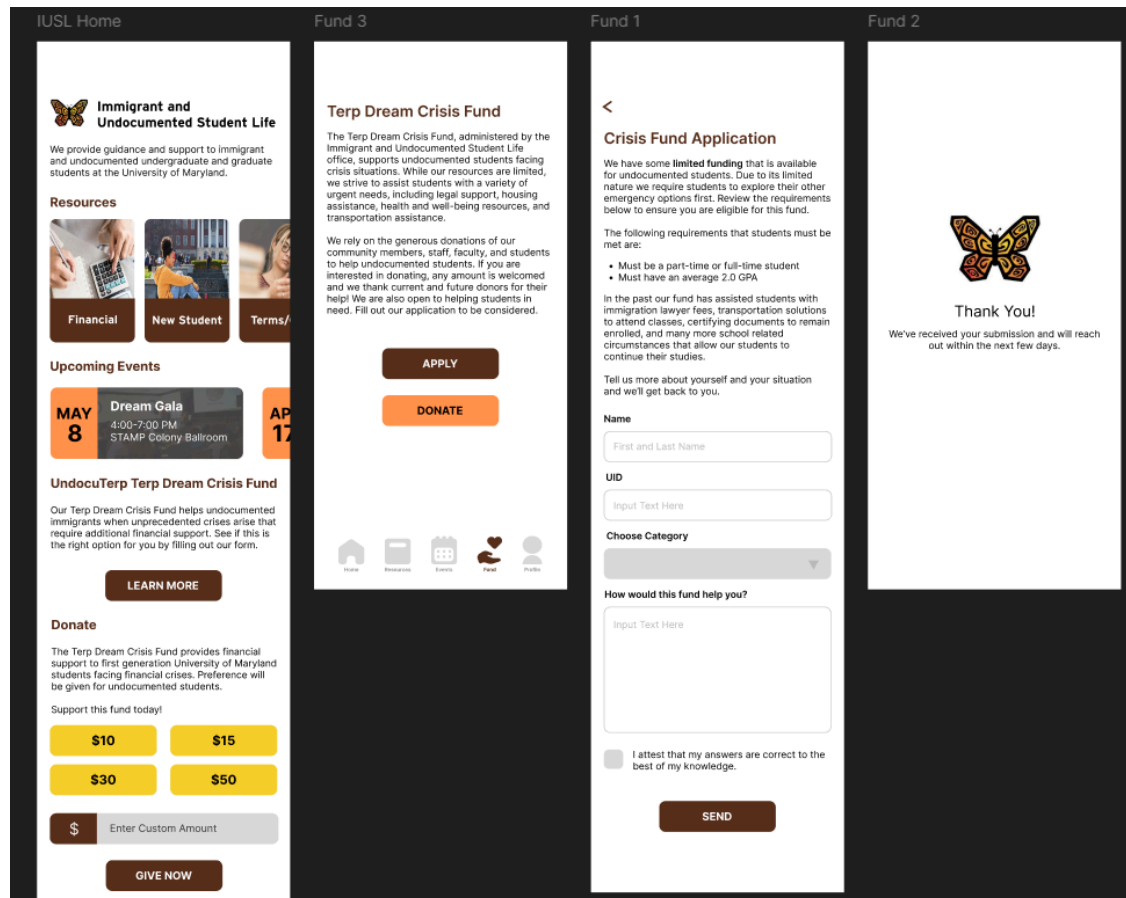


Figure 3. Current format and task flow of the Terp Dream Crisis Fund task (task #4)

Financial Resources

We understand that a 4-year college degree is a costly journey. Please review your options and information about costs to better prepare.

Search Resources

Tuition

Learn about cost of attendance, undergraduate & graduate tuition and residency reclassification.



MHEC Maryland State Aid

Learn more about how you can receive Maryland State Aid.



Scholarships & Grants

Use UMD's internal and external database for scholarships.



Emergency Assistance

UMD offers various options for financial help for students in need.



Emergency Assistance

Unexpected financial circumstances can make affording college difficult. Please review the options at UMD for those situations. **Please note that many of these options do not cover long-term tuition expenses and are not guaranteed availability.**

Terp Dream Crisis Fund

This emergency fund is distributed by our office. Apply or contact undoc@umd.edu for more info.

Apply for Fund

University-Wide Funds

These funds are accessible to all students at the University of Maryland

Economic Crisis Response Grant

Keep Me Maryland Fund

SSES Fund

Department Funds

Crisis Fund Application

The **Terp Dream Crisis Fund** supports undocumented students facing crisis situations. While our resources are limited, we strive to assist students with a variety of urgent needs.

In the past our fund has assisted students with:

- Immigration lawyer fees
- Transportation solutions to attend classes
- Certifying documents to remain enrolled
- Other school related circumstances that allow our students to continue their studies.

Tell us more about yourself and your situation and we'll get back to you.

Name

 First and Last Name

UID

 Input Text Here

Choose Category

How would this fund help you?

 Input Text Here



Thank You!

We've received your submission and will reach out within the next few days.

Figure 4. Revised task flow of the Terp Dream Crisis Fund task (task #4)

Social Question

Migrating Shells Task

During task #5 (“Try to register as a member for Migrating Shells”), users would become fatigued from tapping and examining or reading headlines to find a mention of “Migrating Shells.” Users were not familiar with what “Migrating Shells” was to know that it was an organization and its placement in the app did not align with user expectations, which differed user to user. The confusion regarding the organization could have also been an issue with the phrasing of the task’s question. Some users turned to the Resources section/screen and would become fatigued. A user that completed the task came upon it by chance, relying on visual/textual cues as they were not familiar with the club prior:

“I don’t know what that is so I’m gonna try and click UMD, but that does not work. So I’m gonna click on Resources. Probably search that does not work either. So events, maybe it’s an event. It is not an event. Oh, it’s right here. It says, events, Migrating Shells. Let me learn more. That has all the information on it and I would click, join.” (User 3)

The same user also expressed that the task was one of the most difficult and it was very taxing to find:

“I clicked like 4 or 5 things before I got to it and I think I would have given up realistically. I would have given up looking for it if I didn’t see it as a headline on this page.” (User 3)

Other users felt shock or surprise when they happened to find “Migrating Shells” in an area of the app they did not expect:

“So I’m going to just scroll right back up. I’m going to just scroll down. Maybe, maybe I would look under resources. I would then look for where it is on the app with that. Oh, there it is. It’s under events, of course, because I’m exploring.” (User 1)

“...Maybe I’ll go to resources. And then click UMD if it’s...Okay. Nevermind. And click on that. Um, If it’s a club, where would I go? Um, Can I click on that? [User attempts to click “Terms/Q&A”] No. Okay. [User quickly switches to Events screen] Can I search stuff? Oh, here it is. Okay. Period. Migrating Shells. Learn more. And then join.” (User 5)

A user that did not complete the task found that its location did not align with the user's expectation of where to find club information within the app:

“‘New Student,’ that’s not working. Maybe I can try this [User quickly switches over from the Resources screen to the Home screen to click ‘New Student’]. Yeah, that’s not working. I can’t click on it.” (User 4)

“So far I have gone to the home page and tried to find ‘New Student.’ That did not work. So then I proceeded to go to the UMD. That did not work. So then I went to Resources, clicked on ‘New Student’ because it seems like it might be under there. So I clicked under ‘New Student’ and that also doesn’t work and then did the same for UMD also doesn’t work. My next thing was to look under profile, because maybe it’ll recommend based off of who I am. I go to UMD. It might be under profile. Unfortunately, that’s not working. So those are the options I would pick to look for a club.” (User 4)

The recommended solution is to move the Migrating Shells section out of the events page. While some users came upon the section on accident, those who recognized Migrating Shells as a club particularly struggled as it being under events did not align with its identity as a club, even if the events were relevant to it.

Figure 5 shows how this task is currently formatted to have the user go to the Events screen where Migrating Shells is the first headline. Users would then click “Learn More” and be directed to a page to the TerpLink page to apply as a member. Its placement under “Events,” though the club is the primary host for events, is very confusing given its status as a club and not as a solitary or recurring event.

To solve the usability problem with this task, Figure 6 portrays a different approach that allows the club, Migrating Shells, to remain with events under a different name and icon in the navigation bar. Instead of having the Events screen in the navigation bar, the screen changes to Student Life, a broader category that allows both to coexist. Moreover, Migrating Shells is given a special spotlight given its connections to the office.

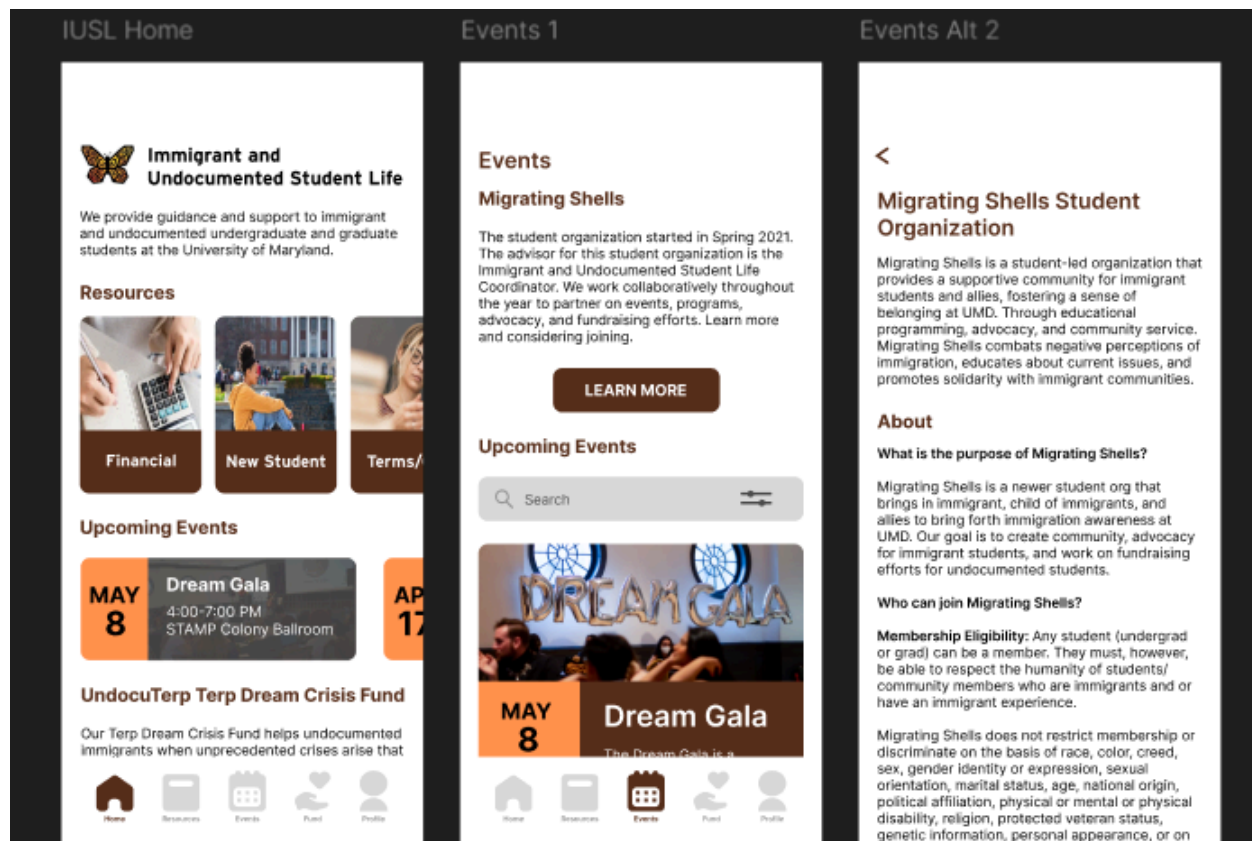


Figure 5. Current format and task flow of Migrating Shells task (task #5)

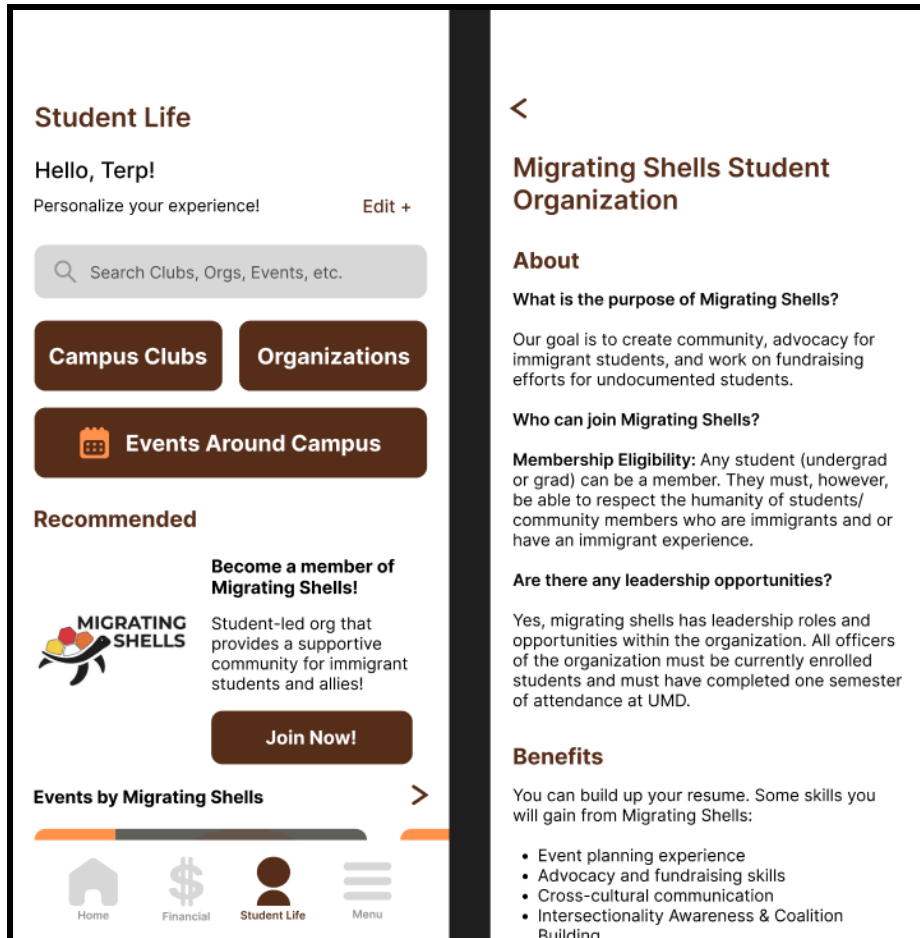


Figure 6. Revised task flow of Migrating Shells task (task #5)

Wider Usability Issue

The solutions to these tasks would be to place them in an area of the app that aligned with user expectations. At the current state of the app, that would result in the task flow changing so that the users can find the task within the appropriate section of Resources, however this alludes to a larger usability issue. Based on users' behaviors, the resources section and screen are the most helpful to find the information they seek and to carry out their needs. Based on this, the rest of the app needs to reflect what serves users' needs and change the navigation bar and the expand the resources sections to separate sections of the navigation bar and as a hamburger menu.

Figure 7 shows the original bar, while Figure 8 shows the solution to the wider usability issue, changing the navigation bar to highlight the most important resource for students: financial. The Events screen becomes Student Life to help Migrating Shells and Dream Gala coexist as

both are directly related to the office, but do not have enough importance alone to justify there being an “Events” or “Club” screen in navigation. The resources that are less involved with the office or need more detail (website) are with the hamburger menu (Figure 9).

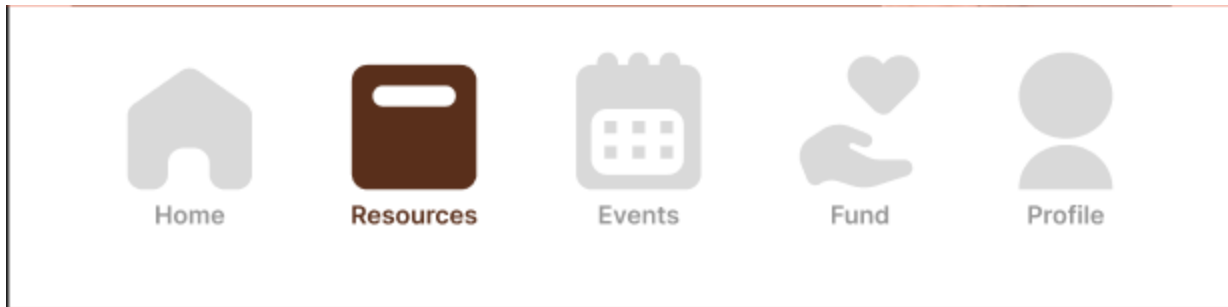


Figure 7. Original navigation bar.

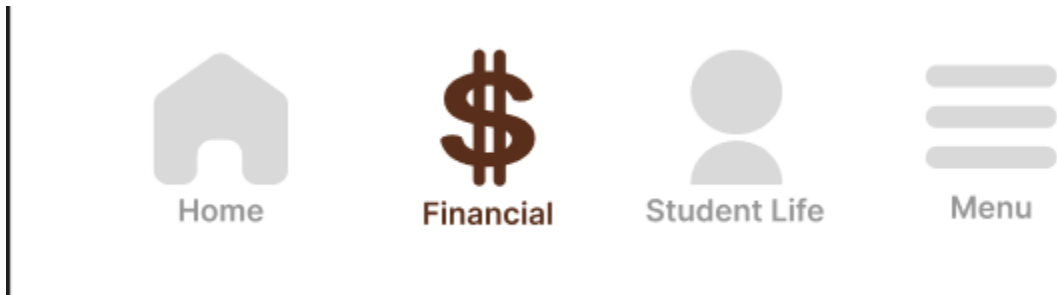


Figure 8. New navigation bar.

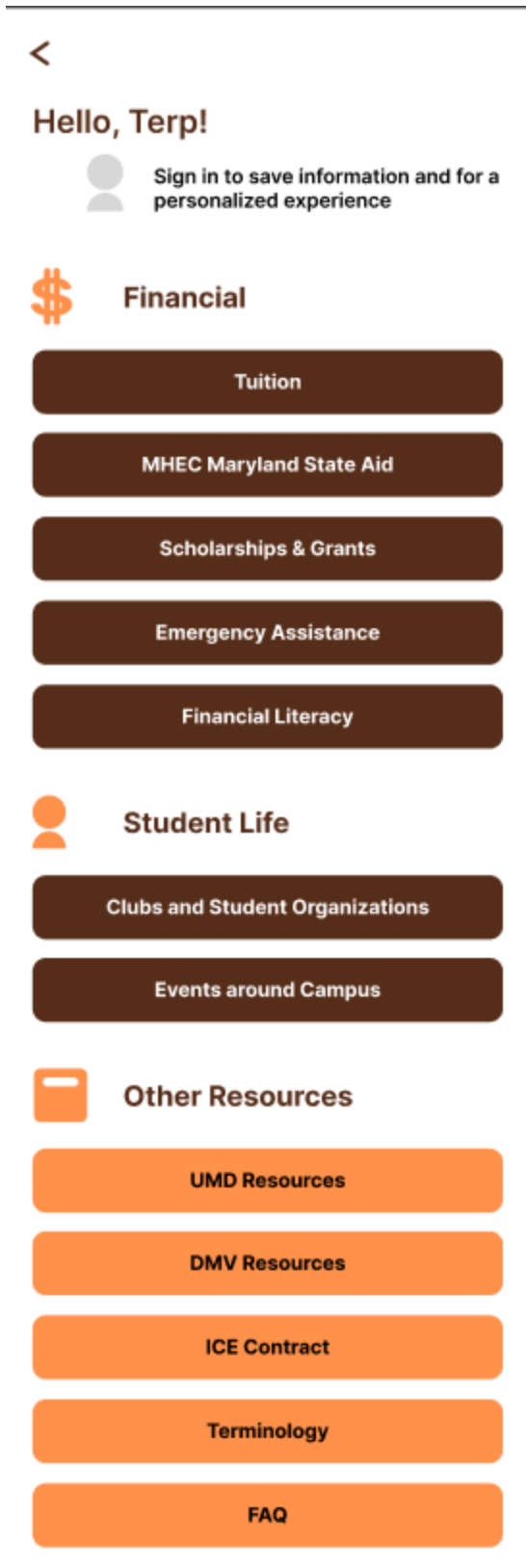


Figure 9. Hamburger menu with all resources.

Conclusion

The revisions to the app for the Office of Immigrant and Undocumented Student Life not only improves upon the initial prototype, but highlights what information is most important to students within the website itself. It highlights a confusing information architecture that the app has the ability to address, and opens opportunities for streamlined engagement with social events and fund applications. The “UndocuTerps” app’s new design better serves its purpose of highlighting the capabilities of the office and making resources accessible to students.