MEMO

TO: [DEPARTMENT CHAIR]

FROM: CLA – OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MAIN NAVIGATION BAR – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPT. OF HISTORY BASED ON AN OPEN CARD SORTING STUDY

This memo provides an overview and analysis of the findings gathered from 15 student participants during open card sorting exercises for the Department of History. More specifically, the following sections present portions of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as notable statistics from 8 card sorting sessions conducted in-person on Auburn University's campus. Based on this data, the memo concludes with several recommendations for a new, standardized navigation bar to be implemented as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) moves forward with website redesign efforts.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS
At present, the department of History homepage contains 7 main navigation links:

- About
- People
- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Courses
- News & Events
- Giving

Nested under these main headings are 21 additional links. Comparatively, on average, card sorting participants created 4.7 main navigation links for the same 21 additional links (2.3 fewer main navigation links than the current site configuration).

This finding is supported across all tested department navigation bars and suggests that students prefer or at least expect fewer items on CLA navigation bars. In fact, on average, participants created 5.1 main navigation links which is 1.8 fewer than the average across all tested departments (6.9).

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS
- Across all 15 participants who completed a card sort for History, 13 created a main navigation link with the word "About" in its title. Of those, 10 specifically named their main navigation link "About Us." Though the prevalence of "About Us" can likely be attributed to the presence of an "About Us" card/navigation link, we consider this finding significant as it aligns with findings from other departments and suggests that students expect to find an overview section on department pages.

- History's current directory is titled "People" and contains "Faculty," "Staff," "Graduate Students," and "Emeritus." Of the 15 participants, 0 created a main navigation link titled "People." Instead, 7 out of 15 participants created a main navigation title with either "Faculty" or "Staff" in the name. The remaining 8 participants placed the faculty and staff links under differing categories (e.g. "About Us," "Contact Us," "Student Information"). These findings suggest that while "Directory" may be succinct and all-encompassing, it may not be the best descriptor for today's site visitors, as students seem to sometimes prefer clarity over brevity.

- It is also worth noting that only 1 out of 15 participants paired "Graduate Students" with "Faculty." This suggests that, at present, the link between these items is unclear to students. Specification (e.g. "Graduate Student Teachers" or "Graduate Teaching Assistants") may help mitigate this issue and strengthen association between the two.

- Though the Department currently divides information between undergraduate and graduate students, only 4 out of 15 participants created a main navigation link for graduate students, and 0 out of 15 participants created main navigation links for both graduate and undergraduate students.

- While, in their interviews, participants expressed that they thought in terms of prospective versus current students during sorting, 11 out of 15 grouped the "Prospective Students," and "Current Students" together under the same main navigation link. This differs from other departmental findings in which participants more frequently split current and prospective students into separate categories.

- Regarding confusion about individual links, 10 out of 15 participants placed "Emeritus" in the 'not sure' pile during their sort, explaining that they did not understand the meaning of the word. This supports findings from other departments with an "Emeritus" link and suggests that students likely need more clarification through titling (e.g. "Emeritus Faculty").

- Similarly, 5 out of 15 participants placed the "Kicklighter Professorship" in the 'not sure' pile during their sort, explaining that they did not understand its meaning. Even for those who attempted to sort this link, 0 paired "Kicklighter Professorship" with "Donate" (though the two are currently grouped together under the main navigation link "Giving").

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Following each card sort, participants were interviewed and asked questions about their methodology and overall thoughts. Specifically, each participant was asked to:

1) Explain the overall pattern of their sort
2) Identify any groupings that were difficult to create and explain why
3) Identify any individual cards that were difficult to sort and explain why

For the Department of History, a significant portion of participants explained that they operated with current students and prospective students in mind (even though card sorting data does not explicitly corroborate this). More specifically, participants tended to divide information between these two

audiences, or at least think about their differences, while sorting. One participant expressed their belief that there should be a page specifically for prospective students on the homepage.

Similarly, several participants saw less of a divide between current and prospective students and more of a divide between student information (both prospective and current) and "general department information." In this sense, participants gave the impression that a portion of the Department's current links may not appeal to students at all.

Still, in some other cases, participants sorted information between students and faculty or between students, faculty, and alumni. Regardless of their methodology, it is clear that participants view the Department of History homepage as multi-faceted, or intended for multiple audience types.

In terms of groupings, several participants noted how it was difficult to create their "About" section as so much information could potentially fit underneath it. For example, two different participants pointed specifically to the "Research Strengths" link and were unsure about where it would fit best (both ultimately placed it in "About").

In terms of individual cards, participants mostly had trouble with "Emeritus," "Kicklighter Professorship," and "Diversity & Inclusion." While for "Emeritus" and "Kicklighter Professorship" participants were unsure of meaning, for "Diversity & Inclusion," issues stemmed more from the link title's vagueness. Unsure of which category to place it under, one participant felt that "Diversity & Inclusion" would be better off as a featured section on the Department's homepage, rather than as a separate link. They further explained that such information, along with a mission statement, should be implied or stated right away.
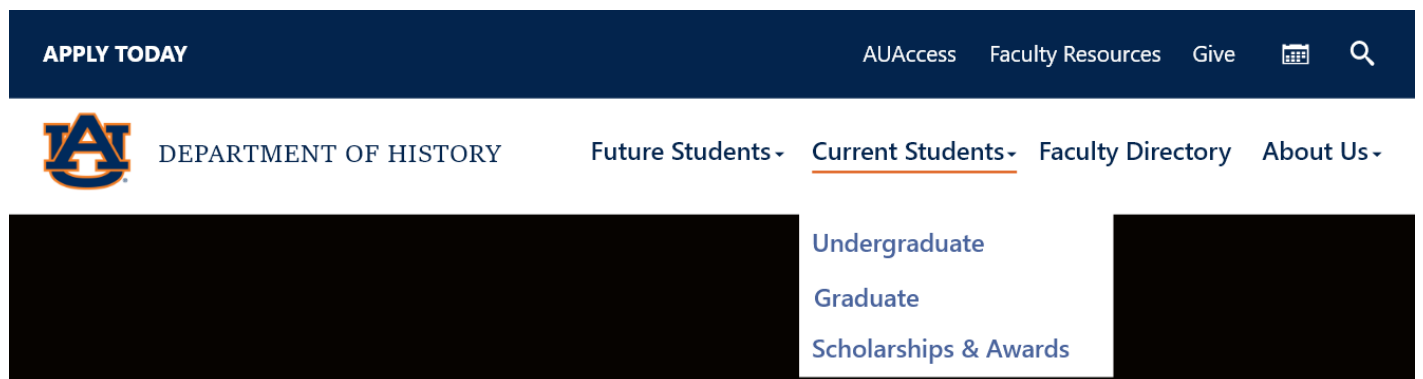
RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations for the main navigation bar are offered:

- Reduce the total number of main navigation links on the Department of Theatre's homepage from 7 to 4
    - o The new main navigation bar would read as follows: Future Students, Current Students, Faculty Directory, and About Us
- Create a global navigation bar with links that are consistent across all departments
    - o This navigation pane would contain links such as AUAccess, Faculty Resources, News and Events, and Give
- Create a "Future Students" main navigation link to attract prospective students
    - o This tab may contain links relating to admissions, visiting information, financial information and financial aid opportunities, and information about how a History degree will benefit students
- Create a "Current Students" main navigation link to offer greater clarity and better reach the intended audience
    - o This tab may contain links such as "Undergraduate," "Graduate," and "Scholarships & Awards"
- Change the main navigation link "People" to "Faculty Directory" and house all faculty on one page with the ability to filter by type

- Remove both the "Undergraduate" and "Graduate" main navigation links and redistribute their content to more appropriate areas
  - For example, graduate and undergraduate information could be housed under both "Future Students" and "Current Students"
- Remove the "Courses" main navigation link (which provides overview information about classroom size and types of workload) and place the information in a more appropriate area, such as "About Us"
- Remove the "News & Events" main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar (represented by a calendar icon)
- Remove the "Giving" main navigation link and move it to a global navigation bar
  - To maintain consistency with the Central Development Office, we recommend renaming this link "Give"
- Create an "AUAccess" link for a global navigation bar
- Create a "Faculty Resources" link for a global navigation bar
- Reassess all remaining links and reduce the overall number by either combining or eliminating

By following some or all of the above recommendations, we believe that the navigation bar on the Department of History's homepage will better serve its intended audience. Student feedback suggests that clearly titled navigation links are essential for deciding whether or not to visit a page in the first place. By creating clearer divisions (e.g. current students vs. future students) and reducing the total number of links, we feel that visitors will have a better idea of how to navigate the website to meet their needs.

Below is a mockup of what this new navigation bar might look like. This mockup includes both the global navigation bar (colored blue) and the main navigation bar specific to the Department of History (colored white). It should be emphasized that this is not a finalized version. Rather, it is a working draft that will evolve with feedback from your Department and further student testing.

Should you have any questions about the contents of this memo, contact me at jdn0023@auburn.edu

Card Sort Groupings - History

Participant 017	Participant 018	Participant 019
About Us	**About Field**	**About Us**
About Us	What Can You Do With a History Degree?	What Can You Do With a History Degree?
The Works	The Minor	Faculty
Prospective Students	The Major	Staff
Current Students	**Inquiries**	About Us
What Can You Do With a History Degree?	Visit Us	Alumni
The Major	About Us	Events
The Minor	**Students**	News
Research Strengths	Current Students	Visit Us
Graduates	Prospective Students	Donate
Graduate Students	Graduate Program Guide	**Students**
Graduate Program Guide	Scholarships and Awards	Graduate Students
Alumni	Graduate Students	Graduate Program Guide
Fun Stuff - Get Involved	Alumni	Current Students
Events	**Professionals**	Prospective Students
Visit Us	Staff	Diversity & Inclusion
Seminars	Faculty	Scholarships and Awards
News	Kicklighter Professorship	Kicklighter Professorship
Recent Publications	**Support**	The Minor
Scholarships and Awards	Events	The Major
Donate	Donate	**Extras**
Diversity & Inclusion	**Buzz!**	Research Strengths
Faculty / Staff	Recent Publications	Recent Publications
Faculty	News	Seminars
Staff	Seminars	**Not Sure**
Not Sure	Research Strengths	Emeritus
Emeritus	Diversity & Inclusion	
Kicklighter Professorship	**Not Sure**	
	Emeritus	

Card Sort Groupings - History

Participant 028	Participant 030	Participant 032
About Us	**About History**	**About Us**
About Us	What Can You Do With a History Degree?	About Us
What Can You Do With a History Degree?	Research Strengths	Events
Diversity & Inclusion	**Academics**	News
Staff	Events	Visit Us
Faculty	Scholarships and Awards	Donate
Emeritus	News	**Students**
Research Strengths	Seminars	Current Students
Kicklighter Professorship	Recent Publications	Prospective Students
News + Events	Graduate Students	Graduate Students
News	**More**	Scholarships and Awards
Recent Publications	Visit Us	**Faculty and Staff / Alumni**
Events	Alumni	Alumni
Seminars	About Us	Staff
Visit Us + Prospective Students	Diversity & Inclusion	Faculty
Visit Us	Current Students	**The History Major**
Prospective Students	Donate	What Can You Do With a History Degree?
The Major	Graduate Program Guide	Graduate Program Guide
The Minor	Faculty	The Major
Current + Graduate Students	Staff	The Minor
Current Students	Prospective Students	Emeritus
Scholarships and Awards	**Not Sure**	Kicklighter Professorship
Graduate Students	Kicklighter Professorship	**Research**
Graduate Program Guide	The Major	Recent Publications
Alumni	The Minor	Seminars
Donate	Emeritus	Research Strengths
Donate		Diversity & Inclusion
Not Sure		**Not Sure**
N/A		N/A

Card Sort Groupings - History

Participant 037	Participant 038	Participant 040
Alumni	**Faculty + Staff**	**About Us**
Donate	Faculty	About Us
Alumni	Staff	Visit Us
Contact Us	Emeritus	What Can You Do With a History Degree?
About Us	Kicklighter Professorship	Diversity & Inclusion
Visit Us	**Alumni**	Faculty
Faculty	Donate	Scholarships and Awards
Staff	Alumni	Alumni
Diversity & Inclusion	**Current Students**	Donate
Student Tab	Current Students	**Majors - Minors**
Scholarships and Awards	Scholarships and Awards	The Major
Research Strengths	**Graduate Students**	Recent Publications
Current Students	Graduate Students	News
Graduate Program Guide	Graduate Program Guide	The Minor
Graduate Students	**The Department**	Staff
Prospective Students	What Can You Do With a History Degree?	**Events**
The Minor	Prospective Students	Seminars
What Can You Do With a History Degree?	The Major	Events
Prospective Students	The Minor	**Students**
The Major	**Current Publications**	Prospective Students
Upcoming Events	Recent Publications	Current Students
Events	Research Strengths	Graduate Students
News	Seminars	Graduate Program Guide
Seminars	**Contact Us**	Research Strengths
Recent Publications	About Us	**Not Sure**
Not Sure	Visit Us	Emeritus
Kicklighter Professorship	**Happenings**	Kicklighter Professorship
Emeritus	Events	
	News	
	Not Sure	
	Diversity & Inclusion	

Card Sort Groupings - History

Participant 041	Participant 043	Participant 045
Students	**About Us**	**Faculty**
What Can You Do With a History Degree?	About Us	Faculty
Current Students	What Can You Do With a History Degree?	Staff
Prospective Students	Visit Us	**About**
The Minor	Diversity & Inclusion	About Us
The Major	Kicklighter Professorship	Events
Seminars	**What's News?**	News
Graduates	Research Strengths	Donate
Graduate Students	News	Visit Us
Graduate Program Guide	The Major	**Programs**
Alumni	The Minor	Prospective Students
Research Strengths	**Events**	Current Students
About Us	Events	Graduate Students
About Us	Seminars	Graduate Program Guide
Faculty	Graduate Program Guide	Alumni
Diversity & Inclusion	Scholarships and Awards	**Other**
News	Donate	Scholarships and Awards
Events	Recent Publications	Kicklighter Professorship
Scholarships and Awards	**Student Info.**	Seminars
Staff	Current Students	**Resources**
Visit Us	Graduate Students	The Major
Donate	Prospective Students	The Minor
Staff	Faculty	What Can You Do With a History Degree?
Recent Publications	Staff	Research Strengths
Not Sure	Alumni	Diversity & Inclusion
Emeritus	**Not Sure**	Recent Publications
Kicklighter Professorship	Emeritus	**Not Sure**
		Emeritus

Card Sort Groupings - History

Participant 047	Participant 057	Participant 062
About Us	**About Us**	**About Us**
About Us	About Us	About Us
Visit Us	News	Diversity & Inclusion
Faculty	Events	Research Strengths
Staff	Visit Us	Visit Us
Emeritus	Staff	**Students**
News	Recent Publications	Prospective Students
News	Diversity & Inclusion	Current Students
Recent Publications	**Students**	Scholarships and Awards
Events	Current Students	Graduate Students
Donate	Prospective Students	Graduate Program Guide
About the Degrees	Graduate Students	Kicklighter Professorship
Prosepctive Students	The Major	**Why History?**
What Can You Do With a History Degree?	The Minor	What Can You Do With a History Degree?
The Major	Graduate Program Guide	The Minor
The Minor	What Can You Do With a History Degree?	The Major
Graduate Program Guide	Scholarships and Awards	**Staff**
Current and Former Students	**Faculty**	Faculty
Current Students	Faculty	Staff
Graduate Students	Emeritus	**Alumni**
Alumni	Kicklighter Professorship	Alumni
Not Sure	Seminars	Donate
Diveristy & Inclusion	**Alumni**	**News**
Scholarships and Awards	Alumni	Seminars
Kicklighter Professorship	Donate	Recent Publications
Seminars	Research Strengths	Events
Research Strengths	**Not Sure**	News
	N/A	**Not Sure**
		Emeritus