

Case Study: Show Me Mizzou

Finished site: <https://showme.missouri.edu/>

The Project

The University of Missouri wished to create a new website to feature news stories and interesting articles highlighting the University and what is happening around campus. This site was to be called Show Me Mizzou.

- All new content was to be created for the bulk of the site.
- A heavily outdated site featuring press releases and media advisories as well as the online version of printed MIZZOU Magazine articles were to be absorbed into the site.
- The site needed to maintain a look and feel similar to other Mizzou web properties.
- The project had an eight month deadline.

My role

While my title is UI Designer, I wore many hats for this project:

- UI/UX Researcher
- Project Manager
- Product Designer
- Front-End Developer

Phase 1: Discovery and UI/UX Research

Working closely with the project stakeholder, Jody, I obtained a list of features and content that would be required for the finished project. As there was no current site in which to conduct user testing, my research consisted of collecting examples of other, similar sites currently in production. From those, we identified two that were of particular note.

Phase 2: Information Architecture

IA was a complicated affair. Those in high ranking positions who had final approval on all phases of the project wished for a specific content structure focused around specific categories of articles. Not only did this list become very cumbersome very quickly, various other members of leadership began forcefully adding more items to the top navigation for internal political reasons. If Department A was to be listed in the nav, then Department B needed to be listed as well! The requested navigation that leadership provided me was as follows:

- Campus
- Students
- Alumni
- Community
- Research
- Schools and Colleges
- Teaching and Learning
- Business and Entrepreneurship
- Photos and Videos
- Accolades
- Events
- MIZZOU Magazine
- For the Media

Not only was this list entirely too long for a top-level navigation, but many of the terms provided were unclear to the average user. This prompted many questions such as:

- What exactly would be included in Teaching and Learning?
- Why were topics such as Business and Entrepreneurship listed but not Arts or Sciences?
- Did “Campus” refer to events happening ON campus or articles ABOUT the campus?

Using my comparative analysis, I proposed a new, much simplified navigation:

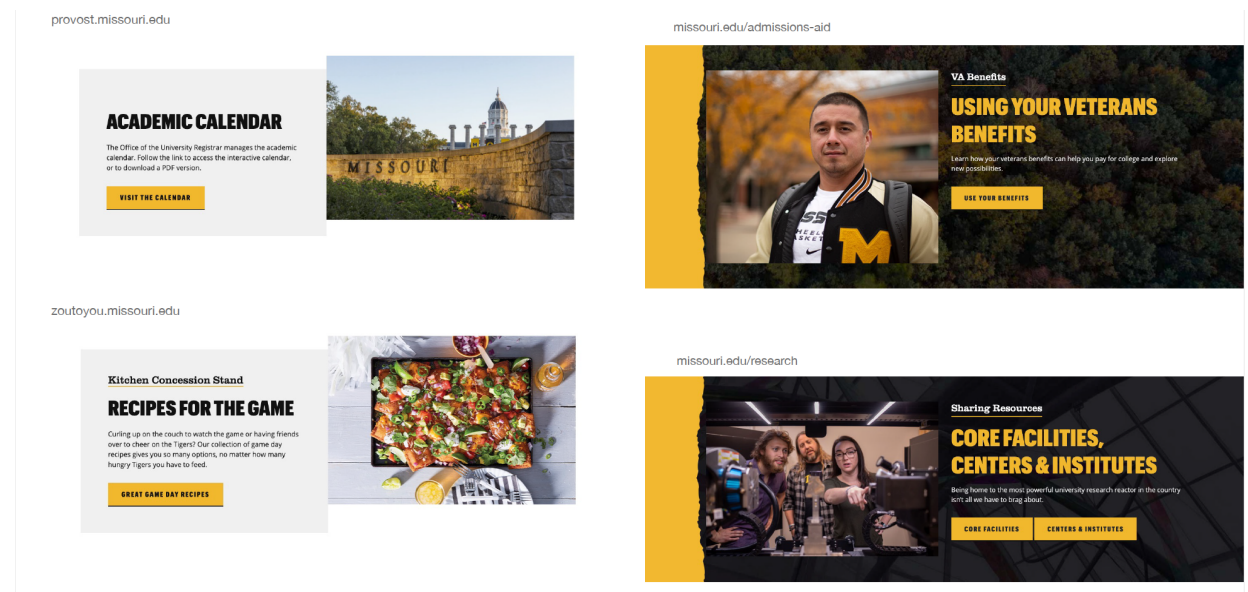
- Topics
- Schools & Colleges
- Events
- MIZZOU Magazine
- For the Media

This allowed for a wider range of specific categories that would be contained within a dropdown under “Topics.” Also, the different leadership entities would no longer need to jockey for their department to be listed in the nav as “Schools and Colleges” was able to give each one their own, equal section. MIZZOU Magazine and For the Media maintained their spots in the nav as these were the two entities that would be merging into Show Me Mizzou and needed to have a strong presence across the site.

Phase 3: Design

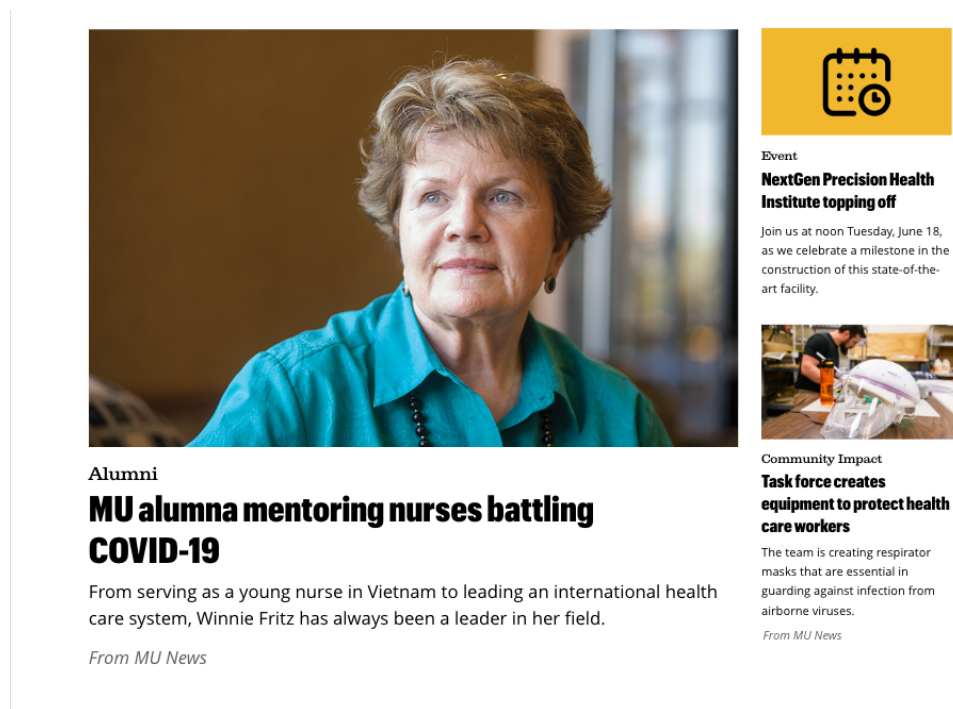
The Show Me Mizzou website was to utilize our existing Design System as much as possible to maintain strong brand representation. However, our Design System was created with a heavy

marketing influence and thus did not contain elements or layers for displaying content with large amounts of text.



Example of existing design system layers

Thus, I was responsible for creating several new layouts for this site that could then be added to the Design System library. These designs also needed to be responsive and fully accessible. On top of structural design changes, I had to make numerous typographic adjustments to make the text more legible for news articles and headlines. The following screenshots are examples of some of these newly created layers:



More from Show Me Mizzou



Alumni

Alumnae returns as an Artist in Residence

University of Missouri School of Music alumnae Alicia Olatuja returned to campus to participate in a variety of classes and perform as the featured guest and Artist in Residence at the 2020 Chancellor's Arts Showcase.

Accolades

Anthony Lupo wins SEC Faculty Achievement Award

Mizzou students selected for prestigious STEM award

Mizzou NSBE Chapter wins Chancellor's Excellence Award

Mili Kuruvilla-Dugdale receives Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year Award

[Submit an Accolade](#) >

Upcoming Events

May 8
Reading Day, Spring 2020

May 10
93rd Annual Tap Day

May 10
Commencement Weekend, Spring 2020

June 8
Classwork begins, Summer 2020

[All Events](#) >

Other design elements for the site included:

- An updated masthead with new branding specific to Show Me Mizzou
- New headline designs with tags and categories for the individual article views
- Specialized archive layouts for news articles as well as events and accolades
- Social media integration for all types of content
- Specialized landing pages for MIZZOU Magazine and For the Media sections

Interruption: COVID-19

This project came to an unanticipated halt during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between the months of March and May both my department and the client's department became preoccupied creating emergency messaging for students, faculty and staff. As a result, the project deadline of August became very very tight. To meet the deadline, a refocus of priorities was necessary.

Each element of the site was divided into its own mini project with tasks needed to complete it. I worked closely with our lead developer to create accurate time estimates. With all requirements documented, we decided to split the site into Show Me Phase 1 and Show Me Phase 2. All critical features would be implemented with Phase 1 on our original launch date with Phase 2 launching two months later.

MIZZOU Magazine was to be the flagship feature for Phase 2 with a flashy “launch” to highlight the update. This also allowed additional time for those working on the Magazine to publish their Winter issue which provided extra content to feature. A few smaller elements were moved to Phase 2 as well, freeing up enough time to launch Phase 1 in August as planned.

Phase 4: Build

I was responsible for coding all the front-end elements of the site. I worked closely with developers who then hooked up the logic on the back-end to make the site fully functional as intended.

The site started in WordPress with our Mizzou Design System Base Theme to provide initial styling and general formatting. From there, multiple custom post types, custom archive templates and specialized views were created to accommodate all designs from my mockups. I worked within the Twig framework language for design system elements, PHP for WordPress custom functionality and SaSS to generate my CSS.

Phase 5: Test

The Mizzou Accessibility Department provided a detailed review of the site to make sure it met ADA standard compliance. I also utilized a browser plugin called “Axe Accessibility” to pinpoint specific issues within the code. Extensive browser testing was also conducted to ensure proper functionality for multiple versions of all major desktop and mobile browsers.

Phase 6: Launch!

Show Me Mizzou Phase 1 launched in Mid-August 2020 with Phase 2 the following January. The site is used widely across the University system to share stories and highlight all the achievements happening around Mizzou. Stories are frequently shared across social media with new content added daily. You can view the live site here: <https://showme.missouri.edu/>