The Student-Centered Starter Kit is a series of tools that you and your colleagues can use to explore the content and design of your website through the lens of prospective and current students. These worksheets are intended to be considered in sequential order, but can also be independently deployed depending on your current needs. Above all, the tools provide easy-to-use methods and prompts that will help you bridge the gap between your prospective student's desires and your college's priorities, providing opportunities and insights for decision making and resource allocation related to your website.

Worksheet content developed by SmallBox.

Talk Aloud Test

INTRO (PURPOSE + BENEFIT)

A process of collecting information about usability and overall user experience from actual users during the design process.

PROCESS

● **Identify opportunities to learn**

Return to insight statements to find tasks that we would like to validate with through testing.
  ○ What is our level of confidence with the proposed solution regarding this statement?
  ○ How important is this statement to our site's success?
  ○ Can we test this statement with someone that matches a specific persona?

● **Contact participants**

If possible, reach out to people that fit within our identified personas.
Always offer a reciprocal benefit. This will serve as an incentive but also acknowledges that we value the time and energy that our participants share with us.

● **Build a prototype**

Create a basic prototype that we can use to test our solutions. The level of detail in the prototype should be determined by what we hope to learn. If we are testing a user experience, then we can use a simplified, low-fidelity mockup. If we are testing our visual brand or key messaging, we may need something more refined. Regardless, we want to limit our investment at this stage so we can make proper adjustments before taking on the time and cost involved in building the final product.

● **Create a scenario**

For each situation we want to test, put yourself in the corresponding persona's position and describe the mindset and motivation for accomplishing this task.
Example:
You are interested in changing careers to one with more upward mobility than your current job. Between childcare and work you have very limited time so you would prefer to schedule a meeting with someone who can help you understand how you might pursue a new degree.

● **Describe the task**

In one simple sentence, provide the task to complete.
Example:
Schedule an appointment with an advisor.

- **Write a repeatable introduction**

  At the start of each testing session, help the participant feel at ease and set expectations for the process. Remind the participant that we are not testing them but rather our solutions. Kindly request that they share their thoughts as they are accomplishing the task.

- **Build the testing team**

  Ideally, select two individuals: a moderator and observer.
  The moderator will engage with the participant throughout the process.
  The observer will capture information as the participant completes each task.
  This can be done by one person but doing both tasks is a challenge.

  ### For Moderators

  Continue to coax the participant to speak their thoughts. This can be unnatural for people and they may forget. Avoid directing the participant. Provide open-ended prompts when they appear to be stuck or ask for help. For example: Do you see any other options that might help you complete the task?

  When the task is complete, take the opportunity to ask some follow up questions like:
  - Rate the complexity of completing the task on a scale (1-5)
  - What would you improve?
  - Was there anything you particularly liked or disliked?

  ### For Observers

  While the participant is actively completing the task, document the steps they take. Listen carefully and capture the thoughts they share along the way. We can often derive insights from decisions participants don't make but acknowledge verbally.

  After each task is complete, listen along with the moderator to the participant's answers to follow up questions and document their responses.

- **Regroup**

  After each test, review the results and ensure the documentation is thorough. We will likely forget details over time so it is important to capture our observations immediately following each test if possible.

- **Generate insights**

  After all tests have been completed, review the results and look for patterns. Did the participants encounter common obstacles? Are there aspects of the prototype that participants enjoyed that could be expanded? Did multiple participants share similar sentiments? Summarize the findings.

  Note: Be careful not to overreact to observations made by a single participant. Each of us brings a certain amount of bias and habit to using the web. Most often significant areas of concern will be shared by multiple participants to some extent.

- **Revise**

  Prioritize the potential changes then return to the solution to make adjustments based on the data we have collected and processed. If the changes are significant, we may consider re-testing using our updated version.

Participant Name:

Date of Session:

INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you very much for participating in this evaluation.

Today, we're asking you to complete normal tasks on a prototype of a new website. Approach these as you would while normally using a website – there is no right or wrong action. While you complete the tasks, we ask that you narrate any action you are taking so that we can take comprehensive notes.

Your participation will help ensure that we design a user-friendly website experience – so thank you in advance for taking time out of your day.

To begin, please load the following website link!

Scenario:

Task:

Goal:

Steps taken:
Amount of time to complete task:
Observations & Challenges:

On a scale of 1-5 (one being confusing and 5 being very clear), how would you rate your experience in completing this task?	1 2 3 4 5

What worked well/didn't work well when executing this task?

What would you improve?