Apply Texas Exploratory Report: Second Edition

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January 15, 2019 Report:
Comparative Analysis of Application Systems

- **ApplyTexas** vs Common, Coalition, and Universal College Applications
- Length of application (by word count)
- Length of application (by minutes to completion)
- Length of application (by number of clicks necessary for completion)
- Readability level of the application text (by grade level)
- Presence of translation
- Whether or not the application was mobile-optimized (phone and tablet)
- Whether or not the application was web accessible for students with disabilities
- Other notes which may inform a better understanding of the difficulty of the application
- **All analyses current as of Fall 2018/Spring 2019 Application Season**

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2019 Report:
Comparative Analysis of Application Systems

- Readability levels in English, generated by averaging four common English-language readability measures (Automated Readability Index, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test, Gunning-Fog Index, and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook).
- All applications were completed using a high-speed, 300mbps WIFI connection.
- All applications were analyzed using Tenon.io web accessibility software.
- Used a synthetic student profile assuming McCallum High School (Austin, TX), two married parents, no siblings, no AP/honors/dual enrollment.

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2019 Report Results

Descriptive Statistics:

Application	Word Count	Readability	Clicks	Time (est.)	Translation?	Web Accessibility?	Mobile Optimized?
Apply Texas	14,692	14.6th grade	87	50 minutes	No	No - 97 errors	No
Common Application	7,990	9.7th grade	146	45 minutes	No	No - 325 errors	Yes
Coalition Application	6,407	14.2nd grade	56	45 minutes	No	No - 164 errors	Yes
Universal College Application	3,872	11.9th grade	39	35 minutes	No	No - 135 errors	No

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2019: Other Notes

- Token type ratios:
- **ApplyTexas** = (1760 unique words) / (14,692 total words) = 11.9%
- The Common Application = (1434 unique words) / (7990 total words) = 17.9%
- The Coalition Application = (1282 unique words) / (6407 total words) = 20.0%
- The Universal College App. = (801 unique words) / (3872 total words) = 20.6%
- The Common Application automatically saves your progress by fillable form. All other applications required the user to click in order to save progress.
- An applicant's home/work Internet speed would greatly affect the time it takes to complete the application, especially on mobile devices.
- Apply Texas is not mobile-optimized. The researcher estimated that it would take an additional 120-150 minutes to complete Apply Texas using a mobile device (ex. Phone, tablet e-reader).

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2019: Possible Future Research

- Access/copies of all institutional questions/materials = I could measure difficulty and relationships to app completion/ time to completion/stopping out.
- Networking with native Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese speakers, etc. = translate ApplyTexas information.
- Student A/B testing with desktop and mobile application processes and times (usability testing).

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2019 Recommendations

• Mobile optimization
• Translation
• Web accessibility
• Auto saving by fillable form
• Analysis of click rate/hover rate
• Push notifications for uncompleted applications
• Integration with other data systems/applications (Facebook, TASFA)
• ApplyTexas as AppTexas = a smartphone application?
• Voice commands/external app integration.

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2021 Report:
Comparative Analysis of Application Systems

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2021 Report:
Qualitative Analysis of ApplyTexas

- Performed brief, semi-structured interviews with executive leadership from public four-year systems of higher education in Texas.
- Questions focused on ApplyTexas strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for change/no change.
- Exploring/in process of interviewing executive leadership from major Texas community college systems using ApplyTexas.

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2021 Report Results

2021 Update – Descriptive Statistics:

Application	Word Count	Readability	Clicks	Time (est.)	Translation?	Web Accessibility?	Mobile Optimized?
Apply Texas	8,402	12.8th grade	172	70 minutes	No	No – 21 errors	No
Common Application	5,141	13.6th grade	231	90 minutes	No	No – 117 errors	Yes
Coalition Application	8,896	8.3rd grade	458	110 minutes	No	No – 137 errors	Yes
Universal College Application	7,538	14.5th grade	85	60 minutes	No	No – 20 errors	Yes

Notes: Universal App was faster to complete than ApplyTexas as profile registration was much simpler than ApplyTexas (Universal requires 8 fillable forms to create a profile, whereas ApplyTexas requires 55 fillable forms to create a profile).

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2019/2021 Comparative Analysis

- 2021 ApplyTexas now shorter by WC, more readable than 2019 version.
- 2021 ApplyTexas requires more clicks, takes more time than 2019 version.
- ApplyTexas not translated, fully web accessible, and mobile optimized.

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2021: Other Notes

- ApplyTexas still does not autosave (other apps do).
- ApplyTexas did not ask a COVID impact-related question (Coalition, Common apps do).
- ApplyTexas requires 55 fillable forms to create an account.
  - Coalition = 7 fillable forms to create an account
  - Common = 15 fillable forms to create an account
  - Universal = 8 fillable forms to create an account
- Other apps ask for college and then user completes application = ApplyTexas asks for college, then app, and then college again.
- Other apps do not require demographics, parent information, extracurriculars = cuts down on time/clicks.

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2021 Report Results:
Qualitative Analysis of ApplyTexas

- All executive leadership from Texas' public four-year systems agreed that ApplyTexas is:
  - **Strong** because of wide usage, cost effectiveness, being a known entity, and the support team is responsive.
  - **Weak** because it appears archaic, not user friendly, not mobile friendly, and does not provide institutional reporting.
- All executive leadership from Texas' public four-year systems agreed that ApplyTexas should be:
  - Translated into at least Spanish.
  - Mobile optimized.
  - Web accessible for people with disabilities.
  - Auto-savable.
- Leadership disagreed on:
  - How much student information ApplyTexas should require.
  - What information is necessary to make an admissions decision.
  - If students should self-report academics or ApplyTexas should incorporate an automatic transcript upload system for secondary school counselors.

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2021 Recommendations are
2019 Recommendations

- Mobile optimization
- Translation
- Web accessibility
- Auto saving by fillable form
- Analysis of click rate/hover rate
- Push notifications for uncompleted applications
- Integration with other data systems/applications (Facebook, TASFA, HS transcript systems).
- ApplyTexas as AppTexas = a smartphone application?
- Shortening the account creation process (hurdle to access application is too high)

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Questions and Discussion:

Link to 2019 Report

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