

Enrolment Services Research Report

**User Research and Testing of the Enrolment Services Webpages**

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## **RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT**

### **Service Laurier Enrolment Services**

**January 2025 - March 2025**

**Research Project:** User Research and Testing of the Enrolment Services Webpages

**Researchers:** Cora Galowski, Angelina Janicas, Reshmi Akanda, Laura Peters.  
User Experience Design Students.

#### **Introduction**

The Service Laurier Enrolment Services webpages on Laurier's websites for current students face many issues that include navigation, an overload of information, and unclear labelling. This results in students being unable to quickly and efficiently find the information they are looking for with many getting frustrated and unsatisfied. Our goal is to improve the website's navigation structure and increase user satisfaction.

#### **Design Thinking Process**

Empathize (Understand User Needs): As undergraduate students, we understand our users firsthand. We know the struggles they face when searching for information. We also:

- Conducted user research
- Use journey and empathy maps to better understand the users
- Gathered feedback from testing like difficulty finding how to become a part-time student due to unclear navigation (Prototype and testing)

Define (Understand the core problem):

- With our research, we pinpointed the main issue: students have a difficult time finding information deep within the navigational structure.

Ideate (Possible Solutions): We brainstormed ways to improve the structural layout.

- Merging pages

- Adding a newsboard
- Renaming confusing labels

Prototype (Creating something we can test): We continued with our research where we could test the site structure.

- Testing on other topics we didn't cover before
- Using different research methods like interviews

Test (Refining through feedback):

- Conducted usability tests on the actual websites
- Collected more feedback on what students thought

### **Design of the Study**

For our research, we conducted a tree test and a card sort before we performed usability tests with interviews. We ensured all of our participants were current Laurier undergraduate students to learn from our target users. For each research method, we collected data about our participants to enhance our knowledge and understand where our research might lack. We used Optimal Workshop for our tree test and card sort. For our usability tests, we used the current (as of March 2025) Enrolment Services web pages, as shown in the figure to the right.

REGISTRATION & FINANCES	SER
Convocation and Graduation	
Enrolment Services	
Financial Aid	
Graduate Funding and Awards	
Money Management	
OneCard	
Course Registration Guide	
Scholarships and Bursaries	
Tuition and Fees	

### **Types of Users**

The target users are current and future Laurier undergraduate students. Based on our research these are the common characteristics:

**High Technological Proficiency** – Most students are comfortable using online platforms and websites but expect intuitive navigation.

**School-Oriented** – They visit the site with specific goals about school, such as registering for courses or checking tuition fees.

**Busy Schedules** – Students often multitask balancing school with work and other extracurriculars and need to find information quickly and efficiently without unnecessary steps.

**Budget-Conscious** – Students often have a limited budget resulting in frequently seeking financial aid, scholarships, and bursary information.

**Short Attention Spans** – If information is difficult and frustrating to find, they are likely to abandon the website and seek help elsewhere (e.g., Google, student forums, or contacting staff).

1. New Students (First-years & Transfer students):

- Needs clear instructions for course registration, tuition payments, and enrollment procedures.
- Often unfamiliar with Laurier's websites and may struggle with site navigation.

2. Current Students (Second-Year and Above):

- Uses the site for course changes, financial aid applications, graduation information and more.
- More experienced but still face confusion due to poor labelling and deep navigation structures.

3. International Students


- May need additional support for immigration-related tasks, fee structures, and program enrollment differences.
- May have language barriers increasing the need for clear labeling.

4. Students with Accessibility Needs

- Rely on screen readers, keyboard navigation, and other assistive technologies, meaning the site must be AODA-compliant.

## User Personas

### Christian Smith



AGE	19
EDUCATION	Bachelors of Arts
STATUS	Single
OCCUPATION	Student
LOCATION	Brantford
TECH LITERATE	Medium

“ All of this information is overwhelming I just want to figure out how to apply for scholarships

#### Personality

Ambitious

Cheap

Busy

Fun

#### Scenario

He has just accepted his place at Laurier and is excited to start! Christian would like some financial help and is looking into scholarships and bursaries. He wants to learn more about the scholarship opportunities at Laurier in hopes of getting one.


#### Core needs

- To find information about what scholarships to apply for and what he is eligible for
- Get financial help to pay for university
- Information can easily be found on a smaller screens

#### Frustrations

- Not familiar with Laurier's website, cant seem to find out where to apply
- Needs to go through multiple different websites in order to apply
- Is overloaded with ne information

#### Platform



Mobile App

## Sara Patel



AGE	30
EDUCATION	Bachelors of Arts
STATUS	Single
OCCUPATION	Student
LOCATION	Waterloo
TECH LITERATE	Medium

“ I know I want to switch majors, but I have no idea where to start. Why isn't all this info in one place?

### Personality

Determined Practical  
Adaptable Anxious

### Scenario

Sara is a mature student that has recently changed her major from Criminology to Psychology at Laurier. She needs guidance on the process of how to do this. She wants to get this done fast so she can continue with her studies.

### Core needs

- Clearly labeled “Changing Programs” section
- Step-by-step guide for how to do this
- Easy way to access Enrolment Services if she needs more help

### Frustrations

- Difficulty finding information on how to transfer
- Unsure of how her completed courses will transfer into this degree
- Too many pages of information to look through

### Platform



Website



Mobile App

## Michael Bluebell



AGE 24  
 EDUCATION Bachelors of Design  
 STATUS Single  
 OCCUPATION Student  
 LOCATION Brantford  
 TECH LITERATE Low

“ I'm stressed about not being able to find information about my graduation. It's frustrating when I have spent so long searching

### Personality

Energetic Independent  
 Clean Visual Learner

### Scenario

Currently living in Brantford Michael is set to graduate in June. He is looking for information about graduation. He has used Laurier's enrolment services before but doesn't know that graduation information falls under it. He is not very tech-savvy and likes having videos tutorials he can rely on.

### Core needs

- To figure out when he is graduating
- Have videos explaining the graduation process
- Information can be accessed through desktop

### Frustrations

- Can't find graduation information because he didn't look under "Registration & Finances"
- There are no other sources telling him about graduation

### Platform



Website



## Lilly Boton



AGE	20
EDUCATION	Bachelors of Arts
STATUS	Single
OCCUPATION	Student
LOCATION	Brantford
TECH LITERATE	High

“ I know how to use technology well, yet I can't seem to find how to register for my third year classes

### Personality

Introvert Thinker Busy  
Tech-savy

### Scenario

She is currently an undergraduate student at Laurier University. Here she studies Criminology and is in her second year. She has heard of Service Laurier before but has never used it. She is very busy working multiple jobs with school, and so she needs to use her time efficiently.

### Core needs

- To find information about registering for classes next year
- To quickly find what she is looking for
- Information is all available and accessible on mobile

### Frustrations

- Too much information on Laurier's website
- Has no time to look through the many pages and now has to call Laurier
- Wishes there was a bot she could use instead of calling

### Platform



Mobile App

### Competitive Analysis

When considering Service Laurier, there aren't many direct competitors as any user is already a Laurier student. Despite this, many other Ontario Universities have similar services to Service Laurier and could be considered a competitor. For our competitive analysis, we looked at the University of Waterloo, McMaster University, Western University, and Brock University.

<b>Feature/ Criteria</b>	<b>University of Waterloo</b>	<b>McMaster University</b>	<b>Western University</b>	<b>Brock University</b>	<b>Service Laurier</b>
<b>Branding</b> (does it match other pages?)	Yes	Yes	Yes & No	Yes	Yes
<b>Functionality</b> (is it easy to use?)	Yes	Yes & No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Accessibility</b> (how easy is it to access the desired information?)	2/5	3/5	4/5	4/5	4/5
<b>User Support</b> (how often is support easily available if any?)	None	Chatbot 24/7 Live Chat Weekdays 1-4 pm	Live Chat Weekdays 10-4 pm	None	Chatbot 24/7
<b>Strengths</b>	Provides lots of information through external links	Desired information is fairly easy to find and access, information is in dropdowns making it feel less overwhelming	Information is clearly labelled with links to specific sections	Branding is very consistent, all pages have a similar layout, lots of dropdowns with clear labels	Branding is very consistent, links to specific sections with clear names

<b>Weaknesses</b>	Feels overbearing and is difficult to find the desired information, not a lot of information on the page	Things look like buttons that aren't, everything is under drop downs with simple names, links open new pages	Branding feels off, certain things are in Western colours but other than that there is little to no branding	No quick user support option, if users have questions, they need to email which could take days for a reply	Not enough information, certain areas feel that they are lacking
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Overall, most of the competitors scored very similarly to Service Laurier. Some areas can be nitpicked and made better across the board, which is what we focused on. For some competitors finding the desired information was more difficult than others, meaning users get annoyed faster and resort to email instead of finding the information. Another common issue was not having enough relevant information on the page. Service Laurier suffers from this on certain pages. The information on the page either isn't ideally organized or doesn't have enough desired information. Some pages have the complete opposite effect, where they overload the user with information so they don't know where to look. A positive from Service Laurier's site is their branding and consistency across their pages. Every page has the same layout with slight differences depending on the content.

### **User Needs Analysis**

Laurier students use the Enrolment Services website for many different reasons, including graduation information, tuition fees, and course registration. Throughout our research, we have learned a lot about how users use the site and their typical practices when trying to find information. Our cart sort and tree test began to show us how many usability challenges there are for users using the site. The primary pain point we discovered from these research methods was that the website has unclear labelling. Many users misinterpret certain category names, leading

them down an incorrect path which results in confusion and a lack of correct information being presented to the user. For example, when we tested using the current navigation, many participants clicked *Course Registration Guide* instead of *Cross Registration* to find the correct answer for our task. The labels of many of the Enrolment Services pages are very similar leading users to click incorrectly more often than desired. For our card sort, we found that many labels were not clear enough, which caused hesitation when trying to create groupings for information. This shows us that students struggle with the website's information structure making it difficult for users to find what they need.

**Design Goals**

Through our research, we want to address some future design goals for the Laurier Enrolment Services. We want to reduce errors in navigation by making labels clearer which will snowball into improving the findability of information and making the site more user friendly. Finally, we hope to address the structure of the content in areas that are too similar or too vague.

**Research Summary**

During our research, we first had to understand the user's current ability with the website. By testing the existing website (March 2025) we were able to focus on what areas were not working for users.

<b><u>Test Type</u></b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Undergraduate Year of Study</b>	<b>Campus Location</b>
<b>Card Sort</b>	11	First Year: 18.2% Second Year: 63.8% Third Year: 18.2%	Laurier Brantford: 100%
<b>Tree Test</b>	23	First Year: 9.5% Second Year: 71.4% Third Year: 14.3% Fourth Year: 4.8%	Laurier Waterloo: 9.5% Laurier Brantford: 90.5%

<b>Interview/Usability Tests</b>	4	Second Year: 100%	Laurier Brantford: 100%
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To begin our research we conducted a tree test and a card sort. Our goal with this research was to understand where users went wrong on the Enrolment Services web pages. We also wanted to learn how users navigate the website to find information. We created the tree test following the exact structure of the current web pages to get a perfect understanding of where students navigated. The card sort was created using the same labels so we could understand what labels users found confusing and how they would organize them. We sent out the card sort and tree test to our classmates and friends who are currently Laurier undergraduate students. From the participants, we have gathered lots of important information regarding the usability of the web pages and how users feel about them.

Starting with the tree test, we created three tasks that allowed users to navigate the tree to some of the deepest parts. Task one was: “You’re a Laurier student interested in taking a course at the University of Waterloo. Where can you find information on how to do this?” The correct destination path was: *Registration and Finances > Enrolment Services > Alternative Registration Procedures > Cross-Registration with UW*. Task two was: “You want to figure out how much a semester will cost you, where would you find this information?” The correct destination path was: *Registration and Finances > Tuition and Fees > Fees Breakdown > Tuition Fees*. Task three was: “You want to determine the time and date for this year's graduation. Where would you find this information?” The correct destination path was: *Registration and Finances > Convocation and Graduation > Ceremony Information*. We created these tasks based on areas of the website we believed some participants could have visited, but others wouldn’t have. For example, regarding graduation, only upper-year students would have ever visited that

part of the website, potentially making it more difficult for some of our participants to navigate. Having a mix of tasks directed at specific Laurier students allowed for varying results to be more accurate for our large audience.

Our first task had the lowest success rate at 24%. Of that percent, only 5% of the participants had direct success. For the first click on this task, the majority of participants clicked on *Course Registration Guide* first instead of the correct click which was *Enrolment Services*. The most common incorrect path was: *Registration and Finances > Course Registration Guide > Step 4: Register for Courses*. A lot of the submissions for this task were indirect. Participants explored multiple parts of the tree to find what they were looking for, however despite digging for the correct answer, they still ended up on the wrong page.

Our second task was much easier than the first, with a success rate of 86%. Of that percent, 48% of participants had direct success. For the first click on this task, 71% of participants clicked on *Tuition and Fees* which is on the correct path. There were only three participants who didn't have success with this task, and each of their paths were different. Approximately half of the submissions for this task were indirect. Participants continued to explore parts of the tree to find what they were looking for, however since they had already seen the tree, they didn't need to explore as far to get to their final destination.

Our third task was the simplest, with a success rate of 86%. Of that percent, 71% of participants had direct success. For the first click on this task, 95% of participants clicked on *Convocation and Graduation* which is on the correct path. This is expected, considering the task had the word "graduation" in it. Of the three participants who didn't have success with this task, two of them shared the same path: *Registration and Finances > Convocation and Graduation > Prepare for Graduation & Convocation*. Although three participants failed, this was the most

successful task. Most of the participants ended up in the correct, or close to the correct part of the website, which is ideal.

We included a pre and post-study questionnaire including questions regarding which campus the participant attends, if they have heard of Service Laurier, and any feedback they would be willing to provide. All of our participants had heard of Service Laurier. We also asked which year of study our participants were in. Finally, we received mixed feedback regarding the tree test. Some participants shared they believed the tree was easy to navigate and didn't need changing, while others thought it could be sorted better and that some of the headings were too similar to others. Overall, there could be work done to improve the navigation based on this data.

Moving on to the card sort. We duplicated the labels from the tree test into the card sort, changing a few unclear titles and removing some that couldn't be changed. In total, we had 58 cards, which participants would sort into as many categories as they decided. There was a range of how many categories participants made, the lowest number being 5 and the highest being 11. Each participant put cards where made the most sense to them, however, there were similarities among the participants. 90% of participants grouped the following:

- *Ceremony Information with Prepare for Graduation & Convocation*
- *Changing or Updating Programs with Program Requirements*
- *Account holds with Payments*
- *Incidental Fees with Miscellaneous Fees*
- *Invoicing and accounts with Invoicing collections*
- *Scholarships and Awards with Milton's Founders' Scholarships, Stay Golden at Laurier Scholarship, and Laurier Scholars Award*
- *Bursaries with Laurier Tuition Bursary Program*

Despite similarities among the participants, there were still several cards that participants were confused about. For example, proxy access, without any other context about what this card means or what the information would be, the participant is confused leading to them putting it in a category labelled something similar to “I don’t know”. Most participants used simple labels, no longer than three words. This could either be positive because of the simple wording, but it could also mean that certain cards could be placed in multiple locations.

We included a similar pre and post-study questionnaire. For our card sort participants, 9.1% of them had never heard of/used Service Laurier before, which was more than our tree test. For written feedback, most participants shared that there were cards they couldn’t place. They felt that they had no real connection with the other cards. Overall, this card sort allowed us to reveal which specific areas of the website participants might be confused about just based on the labels.

After concluding our tree test and card sort, we moved on to interviews and usability tests. We wanted to physically be able to see how participants used the Enrolment Services site. This allowed us to notice their body language, and track exactly what points of the website confused them, and we asked them to think out loud to get even more data. Some of our interviews were done virtually, so we got participants to share their screens and turn on their cameras. We conducted these tests individually so the participants were not influenced by others.

We created three new tasks for participants to complete. These tasks had more detail, as the participants were not focusing on the labelling, but instead the content on the site. Task one was: “You were unable to secure a spot in a class, you want to join the waitlist, where would you find the information on how to do this?” The correct path was: *Course Registration Guide > Step 4: Register for Courses > Scroll down to ‘Add Yourself to a Waitlist’*. Task two was: “You are



currently a part-time student but you want to switch to full-time, where would you find this information?” The correct path was: *Enrolment Services > Changing or Updating Programs*, *Scroll down and click the link to ‘Switching From Part-Time to Full-Time’*. Finally, task three was: “You want to apply to Laurier’s tuition bursary program, where would you find the information on how to do this?” The correct path was: *Scholarships and Bursaries > Bursaries > Laurier Tuition Bursary > Laurier’s Tuition Bursary Program > Scroll down to ‘How to Apply’*.

### **Usability Test Participant Log**

Below is a chart of how each participant did on each task. The difficulty rating is from one to seven, with one being extremely easy, and seven being extremely difficult.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Backtracking</b>	<b>Success/ Failure</b>	<b>Amount of time spent</b>	<b>Difficulty (1-7)</b>
Participant 1	Joining a waitlist for a course	Minimal	Success	Moderate	2
	Switching from part-time to full-time student	Significant	Failure	Long	7
	Applying for a tuition bursary	Minimal	Success	Short	2
Participant 2	Joining a waitlist for a course	Minimal	Success	Moderate	3
	Switching from part-time to full-time student	Significant	Failure	Extremely long	7
	Applying for a	Minimal	Success	Short	2

	tuition bursary				
Participant 3	Joining a waitlist for a course	Minimal	Success	Short	2
	Switching from part-time to full-time student	Extensive	Failure	Long	7
	Applying for a tuition bursary	Minimal	Success	Very short	1
Participant 4	Joining a waitlist for a course	Minimal	Success	Short	3
	Switching from part-time to full-time student	Significant	Failure	Moderate	7
	Applying for a tuition bursary	Minimal	Success	Short	1

Our first three participants decided to use LORIS instead of the Enrolment Services web pages. These participants had greater success when completing our tasks. However, these participants' responses to the interview questions might not be relevant to Enrolment Services. Despite this, all of our participants failed our second task. This means information about switching from part-time to full-time is extremely difficult to find.

We then asked seven interview questions after they completed the tasks. Most of these questions were about how the website is laid out and the content on the pages. For example, one of our questions was: “Would you find it helpful to have video tutorials or interactive guides on

this site?” Half of our participants said yes, while the other half said no. The half that said no, said that the videos would not be useful to them but might be useful to users in different years or with other technological backgrounds.

When analyzing our findings we found several interesting insights. First regarding the navigation and usability, overall most participants found the site somewhat confusing, particularly when trying to switch from part-time to full-time. For the waitlist process, most participants were able to find out how to join a waitlist, though some of our participants opted for going through LORIS instead of Enrolment Services showing that their first choice isn't to use Service Laurier's website. Switching from part-time to full-time was the task that all participants struggled with. Participants searched through many different sections before resorting to Google. For the tuition bursary application, most participants found the correct path showing that this area of the website is clear and straightforward to navigate compared to the rest of the site.

### **Research Findings**

The research we conducted intended to determine the usability challenges within the Service Laurier Enrolment Webpage. This particularly focused on where students struggled to navigate the page and find information. Our evaluations suggested that students had more difficulty understanding the difference between certain labels and page structures.

1. Confusion and misinterpretation between Enrolment Services and Course Registration Guide.

Issue: The participants incorrectly went to the Course Registration Guide for details on Cross Registration.

2. There is effective labelling in certain areas.

High success rates are shown in the second and third tree test tasks indicating some labels are clear and concise.

### 3. Proxy Access

Issue: Vague terms like this forced participants to label them under an “I don't know” category.

### 4. Similar Labelling

Issue: Many labels are too similar, causing students to be confused about where the information they are seeking is. An example is: “Prepare for Graduation and Convocation” and “Ceremony Information”.

Our research indicates areas where the webpage can be improved to make it more user-friendly. Vague terminology, duplicate or similar labels, and confusing labels were barriers to the navigation system. Laurier Enrolment Services can create a more successful navigation by fixing the structure, and layout, and focusing on clarity. This will be beneficial for students looking for enrolment information, making it a more pleasant and easy task.

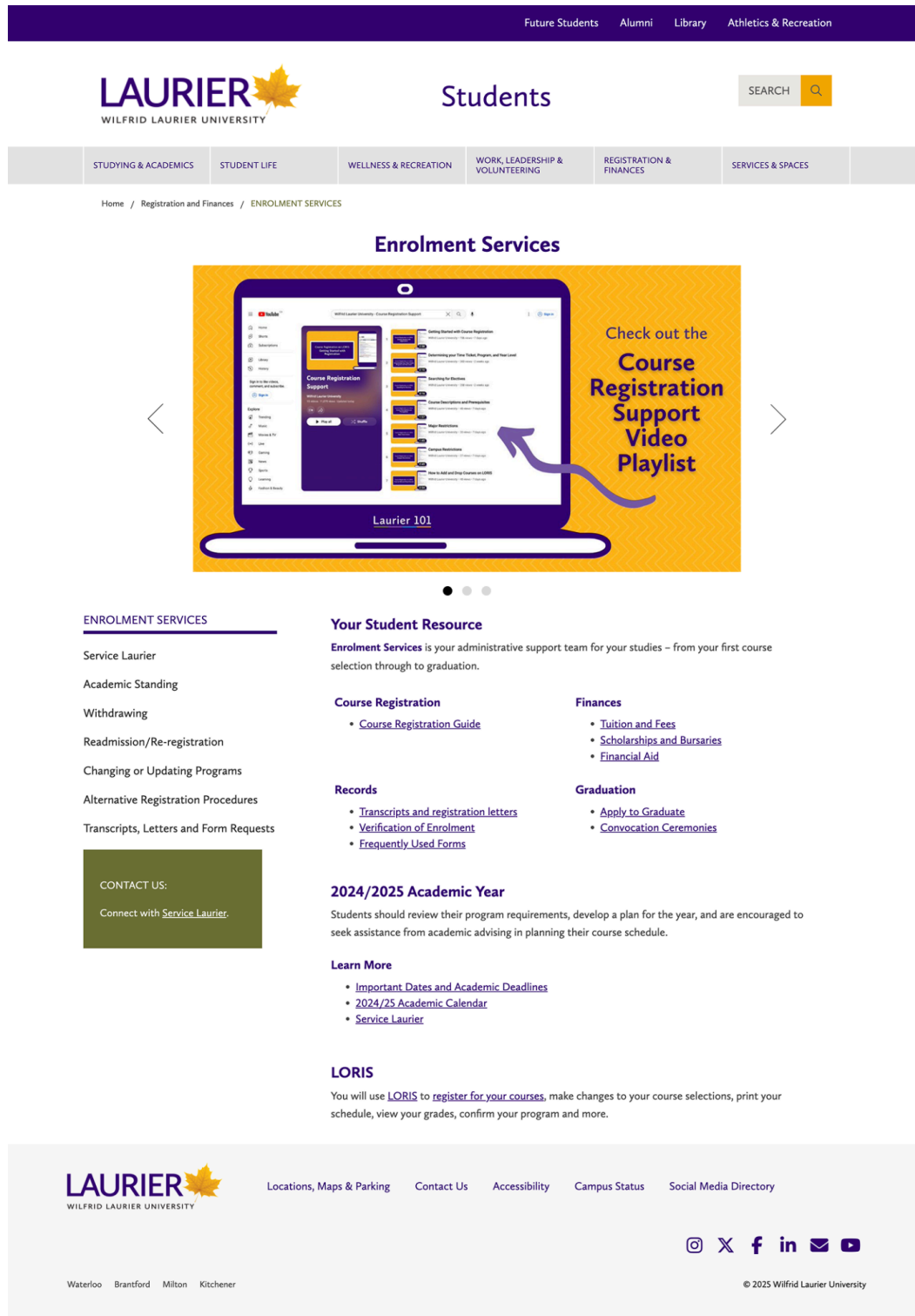
## **Improvement Recommendations**

**Financial Aid:** Some students think that scholarships and bursaries should be included under this label. We recommend changing it to Tuition, Fees & Scholarships. This way we can merge the scholarship category with this, reducing the amount of clicks needed to find all information about money and the school.

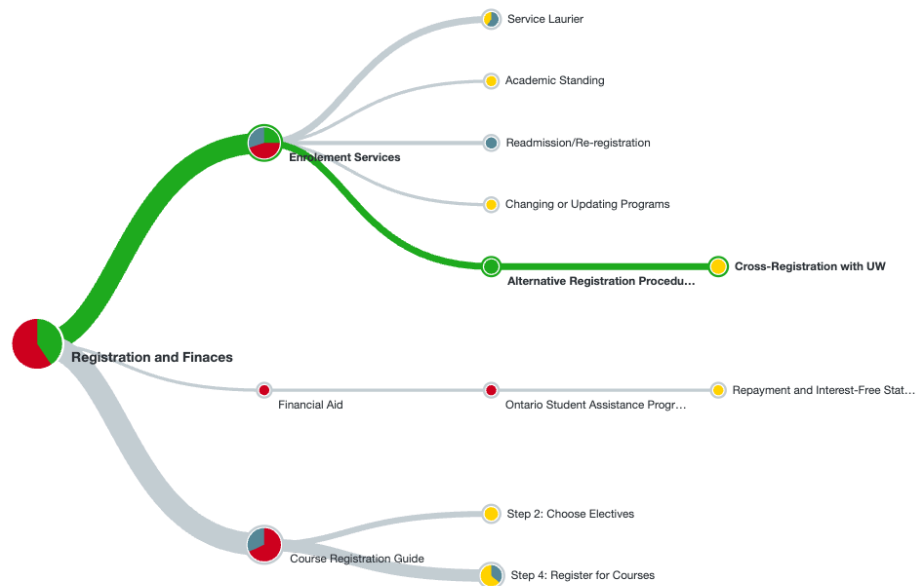
**Proxy Access:** Many students didn't understand what “proxy” meant, we recommend changing it to “Grant someone access to your account”.

**Dynamic newsboard:** Highlights the most frequently searched topics based on the academic calendar (e.g., course registration deadlines in July, financial aid in September). This

way students don't need to click through multiple pages and can access the information they need right away. Here is a mockup of what a potential news board could look like:



Moving “Course Registration Guide” under “Enrolment services”: students mistakenly clicked “Course Registration Guide” when trying to take a course at the University of Waterloo (Tree Test). Our recommendation is to move that under “Enrolment Services”. By placing the guide within “Enrolment Services” they will be able to see the other relevant options and go down the correct path preventing backtracking.



## Next Steps

The next steps would be to send out the tree test and card sort to more undergraduate students across multiple campuses. This could be done by email with incentives like gift cards. After the research has been completed we would need to restructure the website to be approved and for someone to implement the changes. We would have to collaborate with Laurier’s administration to get approval before launching the new system.