

# WAY ILLUMINATION

**CLIENT** *Spring 2014 Senior Exhibition, George Mason University School of Art*

**BACKGROUND** *On the GMU campus, is successful wayfinding an exclusive, student-only experience?*

We spoke with enrolled students across campus and found confidence. Our campus awareness study revealed that online maps, mobile applications, and informal word-of-mouth direction (based upon visual references) have enabled successful navigation amongst the majority of students, instilling spatial faith even in first-year students.

However, the physical layout of the campus has produced many lost, frustrated visitors. Misdirection is complicated by the absence of recognizable identification on buildings, and a vague, poorly visible signage system that is often inaccurate. One such confused visitor unfavorably compared the GMU campus to other schools of higher education, where

**GOAL** *Successful user-specific navigation*

For visitors, we will design an interactive, wayfinding experience, featuring digital navigation tools and environmental guidance designed for increased visibility. At the heart of our digital experience is a website/app featuring interactive maps with location-pinpointing capability.

To ensure that all visitors are successfully directed from parking lots to the SOA Gallery and Mason Hall Atrium, we will also utilize student volunteers to guide visitors. Volunteers will be able to correctly sync a visitor's physical location to a visitor's app, using specific QR codes. No visitor will be left in the dark.

Strategically, our wayfinding experience will build upon deficient areas in the GMU campus design, addressing the lack of clear identification and vague, inaccurate signage. We will provide interactive solutions, allowing visitors to customize their own way. We will also ensure the experience is optimized for accessibility, making it as easy as possible for **everyone** to find the exhibition.

letters and numbers were used to identify buildings from multiple vantage points and simplify navigation.

Students adept at moving about GMU, have done so through trial-and-error, translating the deficient system into their own user-specific compromise, often using knowledge of landmarks not featured on any campus maps. A new visitor, however, can't count on pre-existing familiarity with the campus Starbucks.

Visitors exploring GMU for the first time, who have been unfortunately overlooked in the past, represent our core audience. When we asked students how they would give a friend or family member directions, the answers varied, from vaguely pointing to blatantly stating, "they had no clue."

**tone and message** *illumination*

The peak of activity for the Senior Exhibition is at night, further impairing visibility and increasing confusion. Much like the illumination found within the hard work of designers and fine artists featured within the exhibition, our wayfinding experience will be shaped to represent a light in the darkness. With a helpful and inviting attitude, we will give visitors confidence.

**LIST OF DELIVERABLES** *Collateral will include new images of the GMU campus, landmarks, and strong visual cues to guide visitors to their destination.*

- 1) App
- 2) Website
- 3) **Interactive, printable map** with location-pinpointing capability. Map will emphasize visual navigation.
- 4) **Temporary Signage System**, deployment includes branded attire on student volunteers
- 5) **Promotional Poster**
- 6) **Banner**