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ISU Study Abroad iOS App

Introduction

For my project, I wanted to explore an idea I thought could bring value to other students at Iowa State. After studying abroad in Ireland Spring 2018, I started working for Iowa State's Study Abroad Office. It was there I got the idea to research and prototype the possibility of a Study Abroad App. The idea behind the app is to make studying abroad more accessible and tangible for students. This project has combined my love for travel with the joy of learning new software technologies.

Objectives

- To create a basic prototype as a proof of concept and initial design aesthetic.
- Ideate possible uses of an app in this context
- Keep practicality in mind while designing and implementing

Methods

Mobile applications can be created using a variety of tools, and the selected tool changes the possible operating system and functionality your app can support. While discussing with a mobile developer from Iowa State, they revealed that the majority of students at Iowa State use iPhones. Because this was my target audience, I chose to develop the app using Apple's mobile development application and programming language, Xcode and Swift respectively. Also, I decided to learn and use SwiftUI, the newest user interface library in order to keep up with the latest software tools. When it came to data management, I wanted to keep the prototype consistent with my practical design principle, so in order to keep the app functioning with up-to-date information without adding another database to manage, I decided to use the already available ISUAbroad website APIs to retrieve program data for the app. Unfortunately, the images were not cleanly provided, so in my prototype I pulled in example images to produce a realistic prototype.

Conclusions

There is definite potential for a study abroad type app to be used by universities. While a website redesign could help accessibility, having a supplementary app produces unique advantages in promoting accessibility for students wanting to study abroad. Additionally, because I used the existing database, many integrations presented themselves. Extrapolating certain program information was convoluted as the user and data base design were not in sync leading to nonexistent formatting constraints, difficult data manipulation, and missing details obscured in documents.

