Citizen Scholars Website Resign: Development Plan
24-25 School Year

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Navigation

Abstract

Before we get started modifying or re-arranging any content, we want to make sure there is a home for everything to live in. This is why we will start with building out the navigation bar, which serves as the overarching structure of the site. This step will include the creation of new pages, which can then be referenced in later work.

Structure

The resulting navigation bar structure should read as follows, with the secondary bullet points being the pages nested within an overarching drop-down. The underlined words/phrases should be linked to their respective pages, and the bolded words/phrases are the ones that need to be updated and/or added from the current structure.

- Home
- Program
    - **Information**
    - **Experiences**
    - **Apply**
- People
    - **Leadership**
    - **Students**
- Student Stories
- News
- Contact
- Ways to Give

Interface

This structure will be worked into the current user interface, utilizing the existing accordion UI dropdowns. For further visual understanding on how this structure will be implemented, please refer to the mockup below.

Stagnant

Hover: Program

Hover: People

Navigation bar, summer 2024 update. Source: [Canva file](#), page 1

Back end

Abstract

Next, the back end processes will need to be updated, and have new processes created. We want to make sure that the software is fleshed out before we move into the visual elements. This will provide a solid structure of working code upon which we can apply styles and visual elements.

Media Queries

Currently, there is a desktop and mobile version of the website. These are separated by media queries that state the properties at different width sizes of the screen/window. There is an issue with the search bar though. It seems to operate on its own media queries, which have a rather large gap where the search bar is not defined. This means the function is not visible and the user has no ability to search within this gap. Here are the perceived width markers, and what occurs at each one:

1080px → Search bar disappears

960px → Hamburger menu appears, but without search bar within

768px → Search bar appears within hamburger menu

Based on these observations, the search bar should be implemented within the hamburger menu from 768 to 960 px, and should be implemented above the nav bar from 960 to 1080 px.
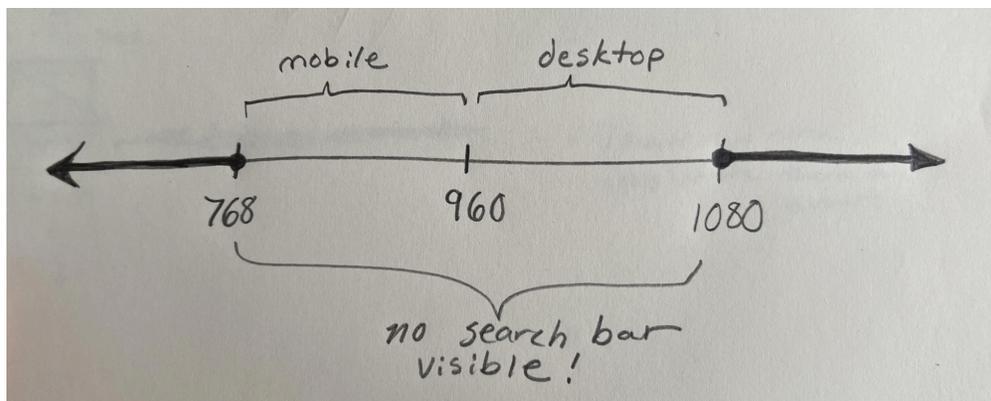
The media queries should be updated to cover all screen sizes. An easy fix may be to just incorporate the search bar within the larger media queries for mobile and desktop, which are already covering the whole width spectrum.

Forms

Apply

The "Apply" page on the site will house the application form that students will fill out to apply for the program. The current site design has a button that takes the user to the application, which is in the form of a qualtrics survey. In the new version of the site, the qualtrics survey should be embedded into the site, so that users can see and/or complete the application right there on the Citizen Scholars website.

As far as how to accomplish this feat, I recommend starting with an iframe, or inline frame. From my own trials, Qualtrics works in an iframe; although, I have not actually tried to submit a test application yet. This will need to be tested out with the receiving end in the loop. If it works, I think an iframe is a viable option to make this work. Here is a helpful reference for iframes.
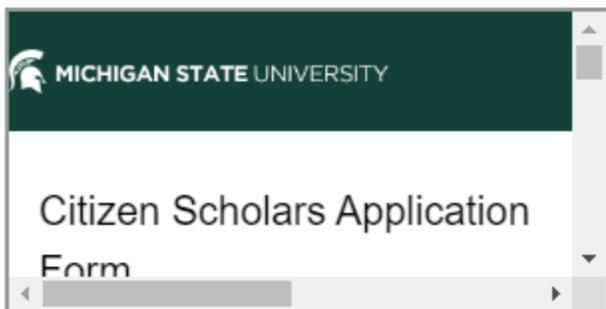

```html
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width,
    initial-scale=1.0">
    <title>Document</title>
</head>
<body>
    <h1>Here is the qualtrics embed:</h1>
    <iframe class="responsive-iframe" src="https://msu.co1.qualtrics.
    com/jfe/form/SV_6h7WpKlt0jpvxgG"></iframe>
</body>
</html>
```

Trial run with Qualtrics iframe embed. Chrome and VS Code pictured.

Results: maintains the ability to click and type in text boxes and to press buttons, but will need testing to be sure submission works, and will need final resizing and styling before implementation.

Contact
There will also be a contact form, which needs to be created. This will be the main component to the "Contact" page on the site.
The form requires the following 3 fields for the user to fill in:
- Their name
- Their email address
- Their message

There will be a "Send message" button at the bottom of this component. This button will automatically send an email with this information to the Citizen Scholars's support email (to be created— see **Content** section below).

File structuring
The "Student Stories" section (Home>Student Stories) is in need of an updated file structure. As it stands today, the structure is not known for certain, but it seems that the stories are categorized into these folders in the list below. Each category is linked to its respective page on the current website.
- Immersion
- People Stories
- Project Spotlights
- Get Involved
- Program Stories
- Student Resources
- Exploration

In order to restructure, we will need to create all new folders, while leaving the current ones in place for now. These newly-created folders will act as our categories for the student stories to be sorted into. The new categories will be titled and nested as follows.
- All Stories
  - Study Away
  - Study Abroad
  - Internship
  - Community Project
  - Research

- ○ Citizen Scholars
- ○ Reflective Work
- ● Archive

This step does not yet take place in the development process, but for further understanding please note that the archive category will not be displayed on the website. Rather, this category will simply exist on the back end, where it can be accessed at a later date if necessary.

With these new categories created, we can begin to sort through each of the current folders and re-sort each pre-existing story page into the new folders. In the sorting stage, keep in mind these key notes.

1. A story should be sorted into the categories nested under "All Stories," not in the "All Stories" folder itself.
2. An individual story can be sorted into multiple different categories.
3. A story that does not fit into any of the categories nested within "All Stories" should be put into the "Archive" category.

Automatic Sort/Group

There are two sorting algorithms that will need to be created for the new structuring of the website.

By recent

Now that we have our file system for Student Stories made up, let's look at automatically sorting the order they are going to be presented in. The categories themselves will be set in the order that they are listed out above. The stories within each category will be sorted by most to least recently edited or created. This means that each story needs to have a last-edited date attributed to it, by which we can sort the feed. The stories edited most recently should go to the top of the page feed, with those edited least recently at the bottom. This algorithm should be applied to every category page, including "All stories."

Another page will use this same algorithm: the "Students" page (Home>People>Students). This page will have a feed of students which will need to be sorted from most to least recent by the last-edited date, same as the student stories. The Leadership page (Home>People>Leadership)

By year

The "Students" page will be able to be filtered by cohort. The students will need to be automatically categorized and sorted by their graduating year.

This filtering process will need to have checkboxes for four years (current students' years), which will determine if a category is shown or not shown. If none are selected, then all students will be shown. This will be the default state of this page. The header will also need to

automatically update to match whatever is being shown. The default will read "ALL STUDENTS," and if a year is selected it will read, "CLASS OF {insert year}." For multiple year selected, the header should read "CLASS OF {year}, {year}" and so on.

Each summer, the years available in the select should shift down the line— which means, there will be a new graduating class added on, and the oldest group(or, smallest number year) will be moved to a new folder that is not presented on the page. There will need to be an "Alumni" folder created, which will store all of these graduated students from this page. See the **Next Steps** section at the end of this document to see how we may include the alumni on the site in the future.

Tab Feature

The "Student Stories" page (Home>Student Stories) has a grouping system, set up in the file structures section above. The groups will be displayed in a tab UI feature. To set this up in the back end, we need a simple sidebar with 8 vertical tabs. Each tab should have a spot for an icon and a short description. The very top tab will be "All stories," so this tab will show all of the student stories. Going down the line, each tab will represent a group, and that respective folder of stories will be displayed within the tab.

When a story is clicked on, the sidebar will become smaller, and no tab will be open. The categories will no longer have a description, but will still have their icon. Please see the UI section for reference. When the user clicks on a category, they will be taken back to the Student Stories screen, and be in the tab of the category that they selected.

Content

Abstract

There are some areas on the site that need content written or gathered for them. These will later be input into the site structure we have already set up. The following is a list of everything that needs to be written/gathered, and where it will be going. Note the purpose and audience for each piece of content, and maintain a consistent voice through all the pieces.

Page: Home
Navigation: Home
Content: Captions

The home page's section entitled "Mission" contains three photos that are not self-explanatory, and would greatly benefit from captioning. The photos are pictured below.

Mission photos, [Citizen Scholars](#) homepage.

These photos may be too old for anyone to be able to provide accurate captioning. In this case, I recommend the photos be replaced and captioned.

Page: Information
Navigation: Home>Program>Information
Content: Article

This page will house an informative article that needs to be written in its entirety. It will be an overview of information about the Citizen Scholars program, aimed at an audience of incoming and/or prospective students. It should cover the following areas of the program:

- Qualifications
- Requirements
- Opportunities

These subjects are currently covered on the website's "Program Structure" page (Home>Program>Program Structure). This could be a good place to start, as much of the information will transfer over to the article. That said, be careful of non-applicable and/or outdated information.

Page: Experiences

Navigation: Home>Program>Experiences

Content: Article

This page will house an informative article that needs to be written in its entirety. The article will be an overview of all the different experiences that are possible for Citizen Scholar students. This article will be aimed at an audience of both prospective and current students, seeking to explore their options with the program. This is a great place to add in images and videos of real student experiences, to get people excited about them. This article should cover the following areas of the program:

- Coursework
- Immersive experiences
- Co-curriculars
- Student projects

These subjects are currently covered at the bottom on the website's "Program Structure" page (Home>Program>Program Structure). This could be a good place to start, as much of the information will transfer over to the article. That said, be careful of non-applicable and/or outdated information.

Page: Apply

Navigation: Home>Program>Apply

Content: Paragraph/bulleted list

This page will house the application information and form. It needs a small section entitled "Before you apply" to be written. This section will be the information portion of the page, which will be placed above the application form. This should cover important information that students should know before applying. The audience for this section is students who may not have read, or may have just skimmed, the "Information" page (Home>Program>Information).

Page: Students

Navigation: Home>People>Students

Content: Instructions

There will need to be instructions written to give to students in order to make sure they submit the proper information for their section on the "Students" page. Most importantly, this should include the student's express consent to be displayed on the public website. Being featured on this page will be completely optional if they choose not to be. Each student who wishes to be included needs an image and a one-paragraph-long biography. The image should be cropped as a square or a circle, and of acceptable quality. The student's biography is able to be rather personalized. Required information could just be their name and connection to the program.

Other than that, their bio could include things like the student's major, academic standing, their experience with the Citizen Scholars program, and more. It should be made clear to the students in these instructions that their writing should not "age." For example, they could say "I joined the program in 2021" instead of saying "I am a junior in the program," because the latter will not be true after the passage of a year. This bio will last them for their whole time in the program. Apart from the bio, we will also need to get their expected graduation date, in order to categorize them with their proper cohort.

Page: Leadership
Navigation: Home>People>Leadership
Content: Instructions
Please see the above student instructions, as these leadership instructions will be almost identical. Leadership will also need to submit a square or circular image and a short biography. The only additional piece of information is an email to contact the leader. This is completely optional though, if a leader is not comfortable with including their contact information.

Page: Contact
Navigation: Home>Contact
Content: Hyperlinks
The links to the Citizen Scholars social media pages will need to be secured. These will later be linked to the contact page, and updated on the home page if need be. Consider, should any new social media accounts be created? Maybe a Youtube account could be set up for Citizen Scholars for any video content. Also, consider a LinkedIn page to connect with students and faculty.
A citizen scholars support email account will also need to be created. Users will be able to use this email as a point of contact for any questions or concerns, and it will be the receiving email of all messages coming from the website's contact form.

Page: Student Stories
Navigation: Home>Student Stories
Content: Description
The "Student Stories" section is to be organized into categories, which can be selected from a sidebar menu. Each category on the menu will have a very short, one-sentence description. If at all possible, it'd be advisable to keep descriptions all on two lines, which means not exceeding 65-70 characters. The description should concisely communicate to the user further what type of content is in the specified category. These are all of the student stories categories, which will need descriptions:

- All Stories
- Study Away
- Study Abroad
- Internship
- Community Project
- Research
- Citizen Scholars
- Reflective Work

Check out page 1 of the Canva document, linked [here](#). The first UI mockup here includes example descriptions. These examples are pulled from the current site, and will need to be revisited to reflect the new direction of the Citizen Scholars student stories. However, they may be a good reference, and will give an idea of how the description will look.

Content: Template

There will also need to be a template made up to send to students in order for them to submit the proper information for a post to the "Student Stories" section. This should be a walkthrough for students to follow in order to write their story/blog post. It should help students understand the expectations and guidelines associated with the writing, such as consistent titling practices and a preferred word count. The template should include the following question in order to properly categorize the story:

What best describes your experience? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Study Away
- ☐ Study Abroad
- ☐ Internships
- ☐ Community Projects
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Citizen Scholars
- ☐ Reflective Work

The template should also detail these specifications: Each blog post needs at least one image paired with it to be the cover photo, but it can have up to 4 images. The cover photo must be cropped at a square, and specified as the cover photo. All images should be captioned. Total word count for the story should generally be between 500 and 800 words— with this range to be used as a target goal, not a steadfast rule.

Content: Icons

The student stories categories will each have an icon to visually represent them. Consistent, free-to-use icons will need to be quired for each of these categories:

- All Stories
- Study Away

- Study Abroad
- Internship
- Community Project
- Research
- Citizen Scholars
- Reflective Work

Front end

Abstract

The front end development will take the back end structure created and content gathered, and put it all together. This section will address both the user interface and user flow.

User Flow

For seamless use and easy navigation, the site content should link together when applicable. The following are each of the links that will need to be created, and what form they will take.

Page: Students
Link to: A blog the student has written (if applicable)
Form: Button underneath the student's bio

Page: Student Stories>Blog post
Link to: Student bio
Form: Text link applied to the author's name

Page: Student Stories>Blog post
Link to: Student stories category page
Form: Text link applied to the category names

Page: Student Stories>Blog post
Link to: Student stories category page
Form: Back arrow button in the top left corner

User Interface

For the full UI mockup details, refer to the Canva file here.

Page: Apply
Navigation: Home>Program>Apply
For this page, use the image from the current contact page. Next to this will be the paragraph on content from the content section above. And finally, under all of this will be the qualtrics embedded survey. Here is a quick mockup of the prospective layout for this page:

Apply page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 2

Page: Leadership

Navigation: Home>People>Leadership

The leadership page will pull together the gathered content from Citizen Scholar's leaders, in a form that will match well with the Students page. Note that the square photos gathered will need to be cropped as circles. Here is a UI mockup of the prospective layout for this page:

Leadership page, summer 2024 update. Source: [Canva file](#), page 3

Note: The header should read "Leadership," not "Administration."

Page: Students

Navigation: Home>People>Students

The students page will look very similar to the Leadership page. The main difference here is the incorporation of the header and filter at the top right. Here is a UI mockup of the prospective layout for this page:

Students page, summer 2024 update. Source: [Canva file](), page 3. Default view

Students page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 3. Filter dropdown view

Students page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 3. Years selected view

Page: Student Stories

Navigation: Home>Student Stories

The layout of the student stories page will utilize the tab feature built in the Back End section. The tabs will house the icons and descriptions gathered in the Content section. One thing to note as this screen is put together: "All Stories" will be the default tab open when the "Student stories" page is accessed. Also, the cover photos should all be cropped to be square for uniformity on this page.
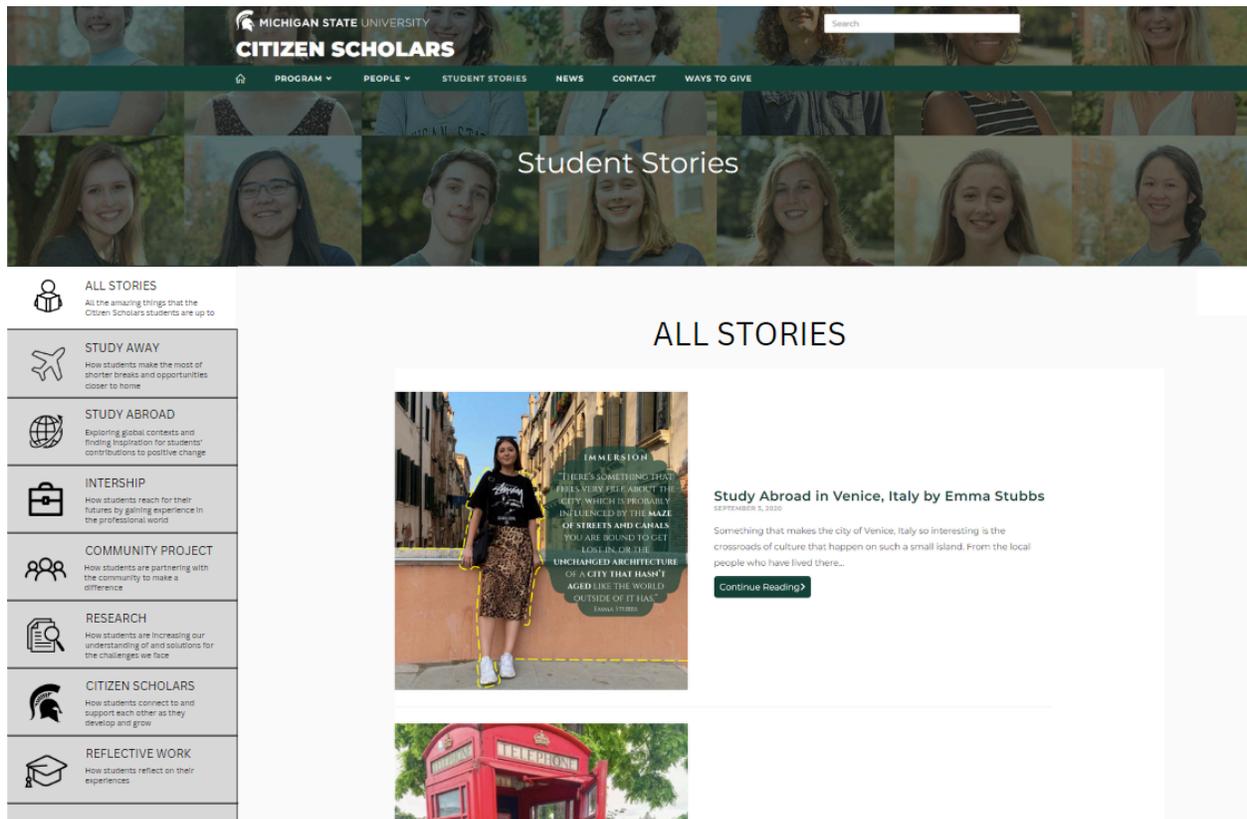
Student Stories page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 4

Not pictured: when the user scrolls down on the page, a "back to top" arrow will appear– same as the current home page.

Page: Blog post

Navigation: Home>Student Stories>Blog post

Once the user selects a blog post, the screen will update to the smaller version of the vertical tabs. New additions to this screen include: a back arrow button in the top left, the author's name (hyperlinked), the updated category(s) the post is a part of (hyperlinked), and the updated category(s) listed at the bottom of the post (hyperlinked).
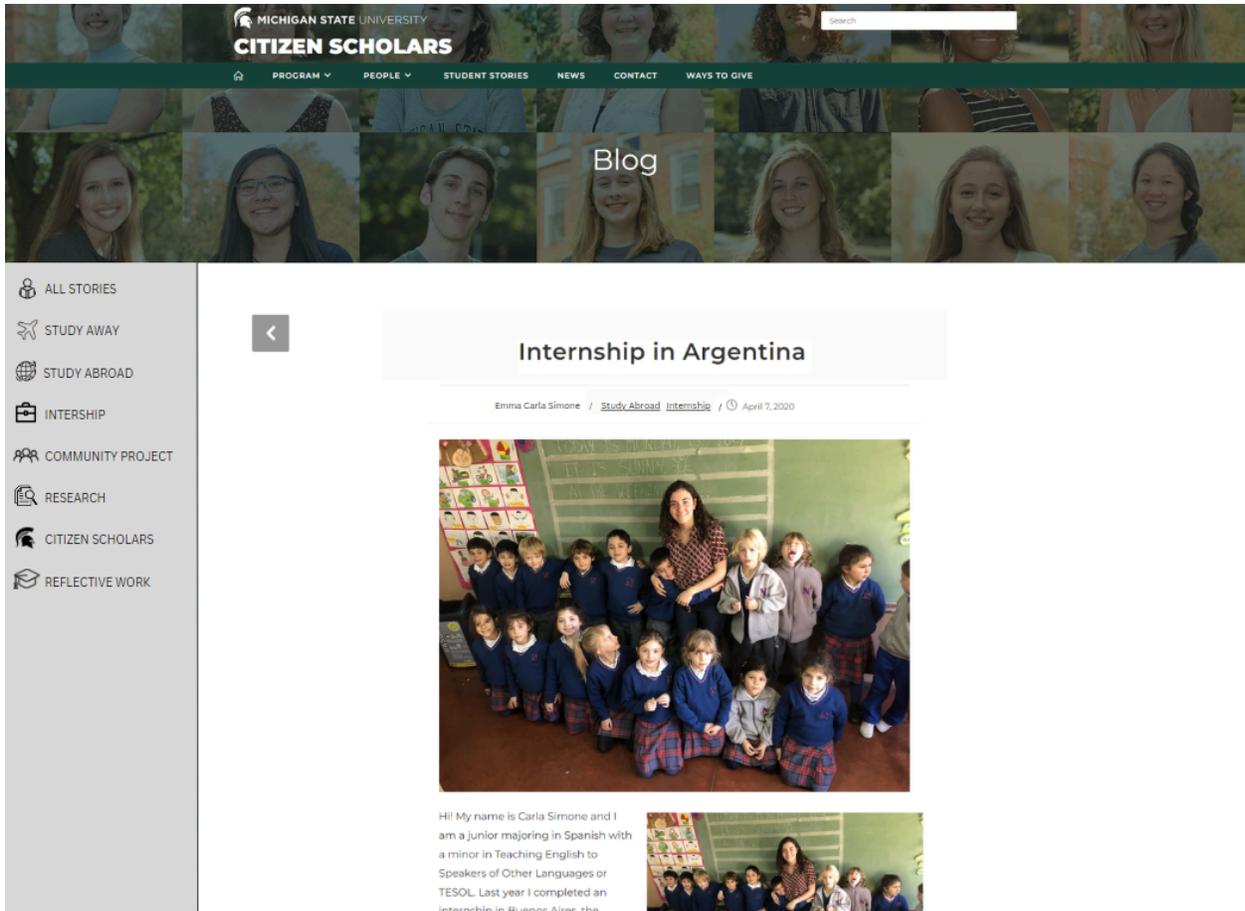
Student Stories blog post page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 4

Students Stories blog page, summer 2024 update. Source: Canva file, page 4. Bottom of page view

Page: Contact

Navigation: Home>Contact

The contact page will require the current information to be displayed differently, and the newly gathered information to be added on. The main focus on this page will be the contact form. The other new information will be the social media account links. These should be linked to their icons; note that the old Twitter logo needs to be changed to the X logo.
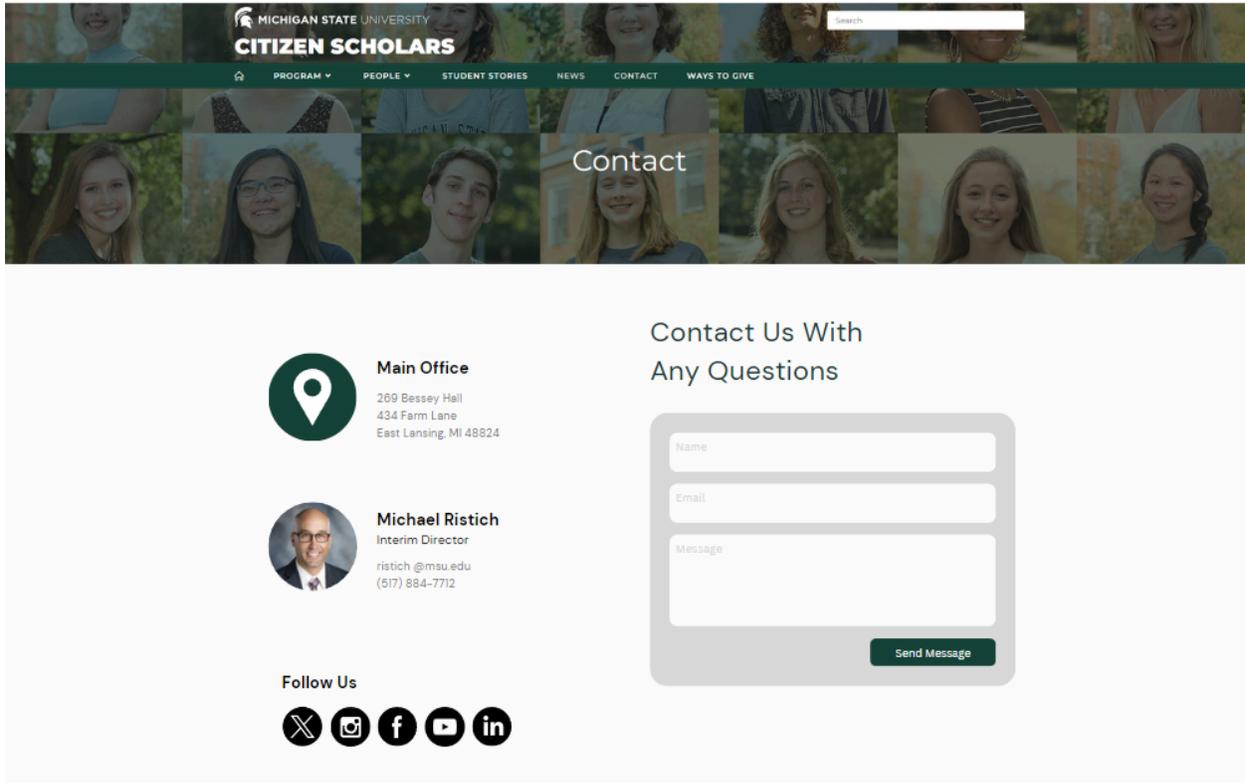
Contact page, summer 2024 update. Source: [Canva file](#), page 5

Page: Home
Navigation: Home
The text in the "Mission" section of the home page needs to have padding applied to it. The left and right padding should be increased so that it matches the section above it, or the header.

Mission section, [Citizen Scholars](#) homepage.

The social links at the bottom of the homepage will also need to be updated. They should match with the ones on the contact page exactly, but while maintaining their current centered alignment.

Next Steps

Abstract

A website is never "finished" though! We want to keep this website from falling back into being dated. Keeping fresh information and continuing to update the site based on user needs will keep up a successful momentum to the program.

Upkeep

Students Stories

As students return from the exciting endeavors that the program has helped them accomplish, we want to make sure that we are reaching out to get blog posts from them to use on the site. A good way to encourage this could be with some sort of incentive, such as having it be an option on the Citizen Scholars certification requirements. Keeping the website up-to-date with fresh stories lets people see that these cool experiences and events are going on all the time.

People

The people section will need to be kept up-to-date in a couple ways. The "Leadership" page will need to be updated whenever a new leader enters the program, or departs. The "Students" section will automatically handle departing students, but it will need each new student to be input into the system. This means that we need to be sending out instructions and collecting bios and images for all accepted students who consent to being displayed on the website. Making sure that we keep up with new student entries will help make sure that there are students to be displayed at all times and for all years/cohorts.

Next Phase

There are some things that we discussed implementing, that I am pushing to future renovations to the website. This is because each of these require content or information we do not yet have. It's good to keep these top-of-mind though, so that we can strive to have the content and information to be able to implement these in the near future.

1. Add more categories to the "People" section (Home>People).
   Let's keep in mind these three future categories that will hopefully be able to be added to the "People" section. As we approach the coming school year, it should be in the back of our minds to collect content for these pages.
   - Donors
   - Community
   - Alumni

2. Revamp the "Ways to Give" page (Home>Ways to Give).
   I have not yet touched the "Ways to Give" page. This page still needs to be updated with more relevant information, once we have it. This is a page where we should rethink how to really make it a place for donors, considering what they may want to see here. We should also nail down what the alumni program should look like, and consider how and where that should be presented on the website.

3. [Student Resources](#) need a home.
   Part of the current "Student Stories" categories is a category called "Student Resources." This is the one category that does not have a location in the new student stories categories. This is because student resources are not student stories, and will need to be included in another section of the website. There are currently only 6 posts under this category, but if we find a need for a category like this, we should think about bringing this back in the future. It could maybe live in the Program section of the site, and be highlighted on the homepage as well, so students know it's there.

4. Revisit UI by conducting user research
   Once school is back in session and students are on campus, it will be much easier to conduct user testing, and I think this is a natural next step for us. Once the new design is in use, we will be able to gauge how effective the current design is based on user feedback. We will have the ability to run user testing on a functioning product, and we can redesign in the future to better suit our user's needs. That said, we should consider how the back end functions, and strike a balance that prioritizes both minimizing changes to the back end while maximizing user experience.