

HOME PAGE UPGRADE FOR WCMS 3

DECEMBER 2, 2021

University Relations



THE OPPORTUNITY

- We have an opportunity to review the performance and design of the current home page, ensuring it will continue to serve our core business objectives and audience needs while providing a sector-leading user experience.
- The IST-led WCMS 3 project requires a redevelopment of the University of Waterloo homepage to fully migrate Waterloo's website to the next generation of our content management system.
- Current homepage no longer represents best-in-sector design or user experience as indicated by:
 - A 2020 environmental scan of U15 and Ivy League institutions
 - 2 years of comprehensive visitor engagement data
 - Analysis of user journeys compared to current home page content
- Our goal: share information on our research and analysis and promote collaboration as we develop a new homepage for the University

OUR 8-MONTH JOURNEY AHEAD

PROPOSED TIMELINE

2019-2021

2021

Fall '21-
Winter '22

Jan-Feb
2022

March -
April 2022

April -June
2022

Summer
2022

- **Research and analysis:** Environmental scan and visitor engagement data collected to identify opportunities for improving the University home page
- **Requirement development:** Interviews with campus partner who actively maintain the home page and provide regular content updates to identify functional requirements
- **Initial design concepts and consultations:** Proposed design based on research and shared with campus partners for input and update (**current**)
- **Further design and testing:** Designs, updated based on feedback, will go through user testing with students and other audiences identified through earlier research
- **Campus partner update:** Updated designs and results of user testing will be shared broadly with campus partners, including senior leadership
- **Development and testing:** Finalized designs will be developed into a functional web page, ensuring compliance with AODA requirements, pilot testing w/campus partners
- **Launch**

COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION: ONGOING

- Communicators and IT specialists from:
 - All 6 Faculties
 - Advancement
 - Co-operative and Experiential Education
 - Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
 - Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment
 - Office of Research
 - Student Success Office
 - Information Systems and Technology (WCMS team and AODA specialist)
 - WAC and Web Steering

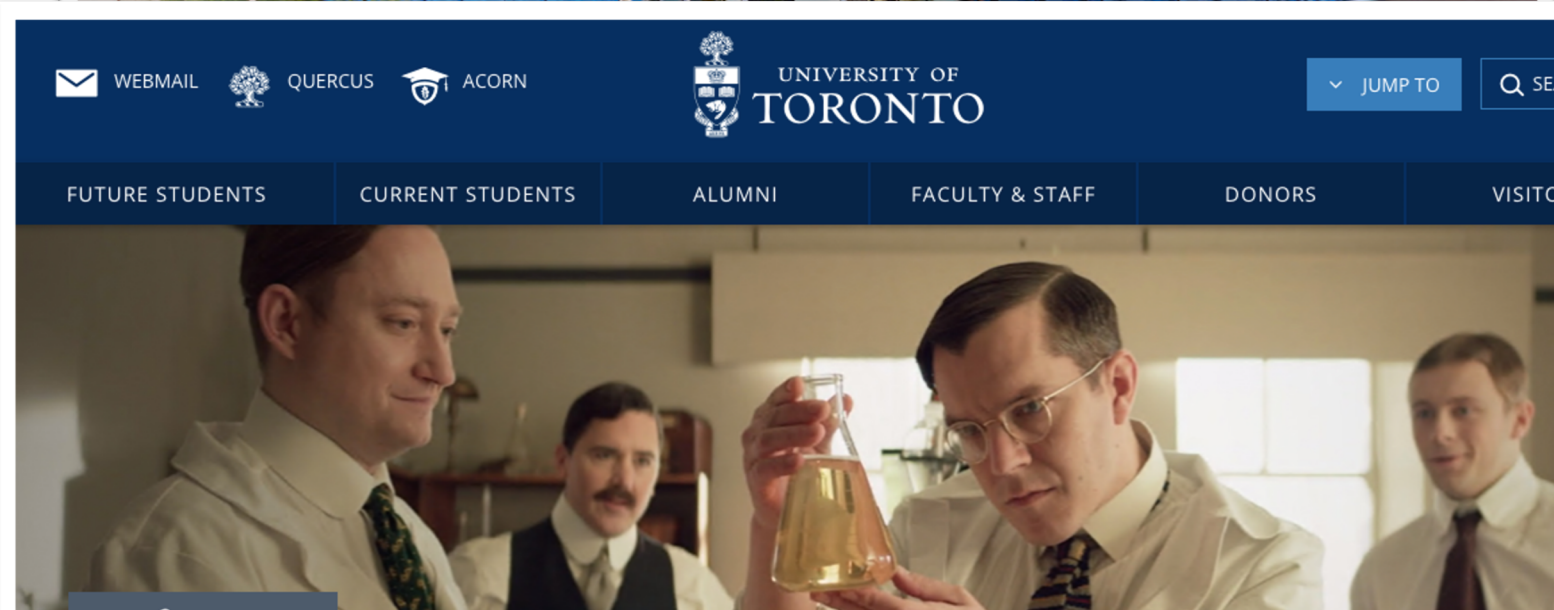
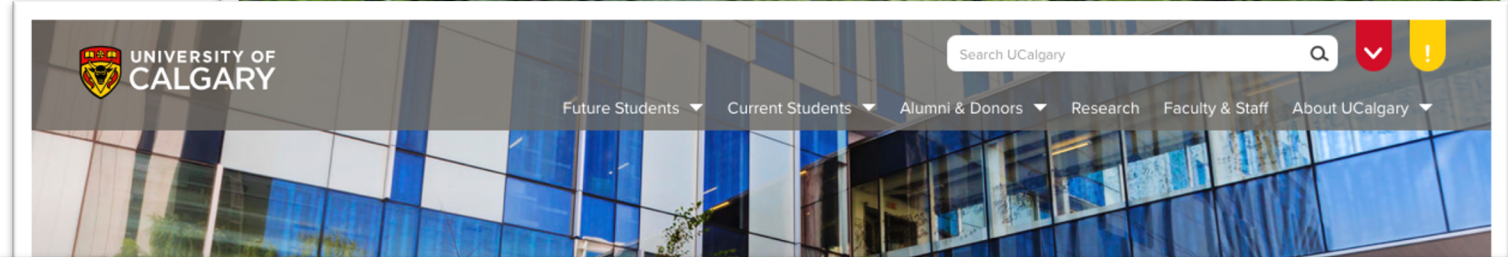
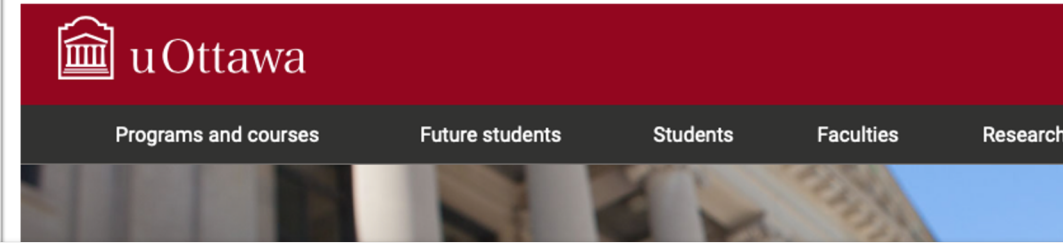
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Environmental scan and user journey analysis

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

UR conducted environmental scan in 2020 of U15 and Ivy Leagues institutions:

- 68% of home pages focused on prospective students
- 48% included audience-centric navigation feature(s)
- 84% included multiple navigational elements to get visitors to their destination quickly



CURRENT WATERLOO HOME PAGE ENGAGEMENT

2.5 million

UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS

2020

70%

HOME PAGE VIEWS
RESULT IN FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

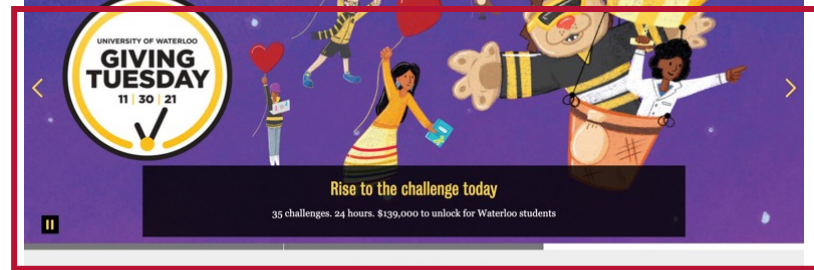
2020

CURRENT HOME PAGE - NOMENCLATURE

Top of Homepage

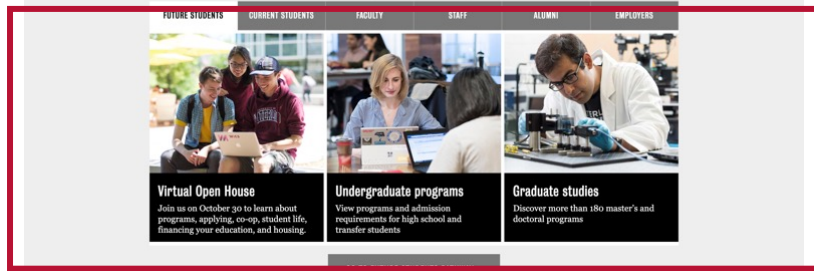


← Main navigation, menu and search



News →

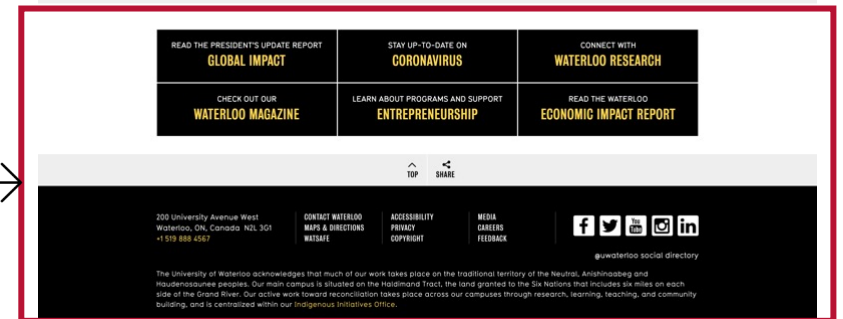
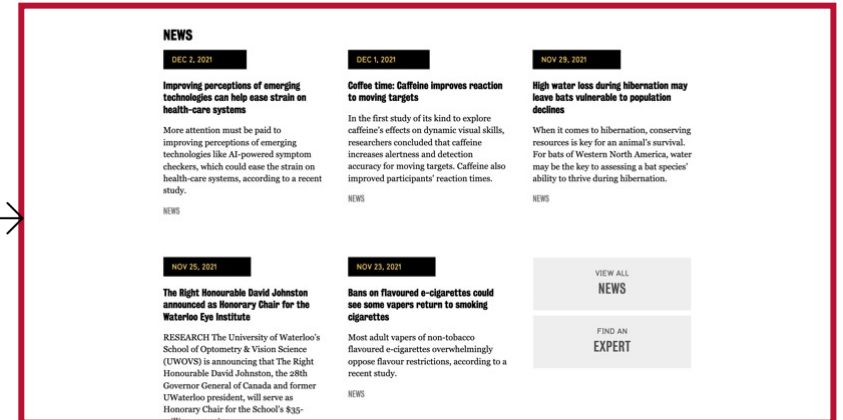
← Banner carousel (links to news)



Events →

← Audience pathways

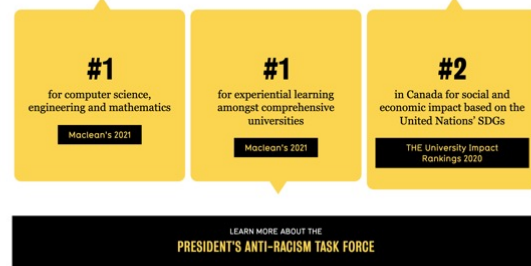
Bottom of Homepage



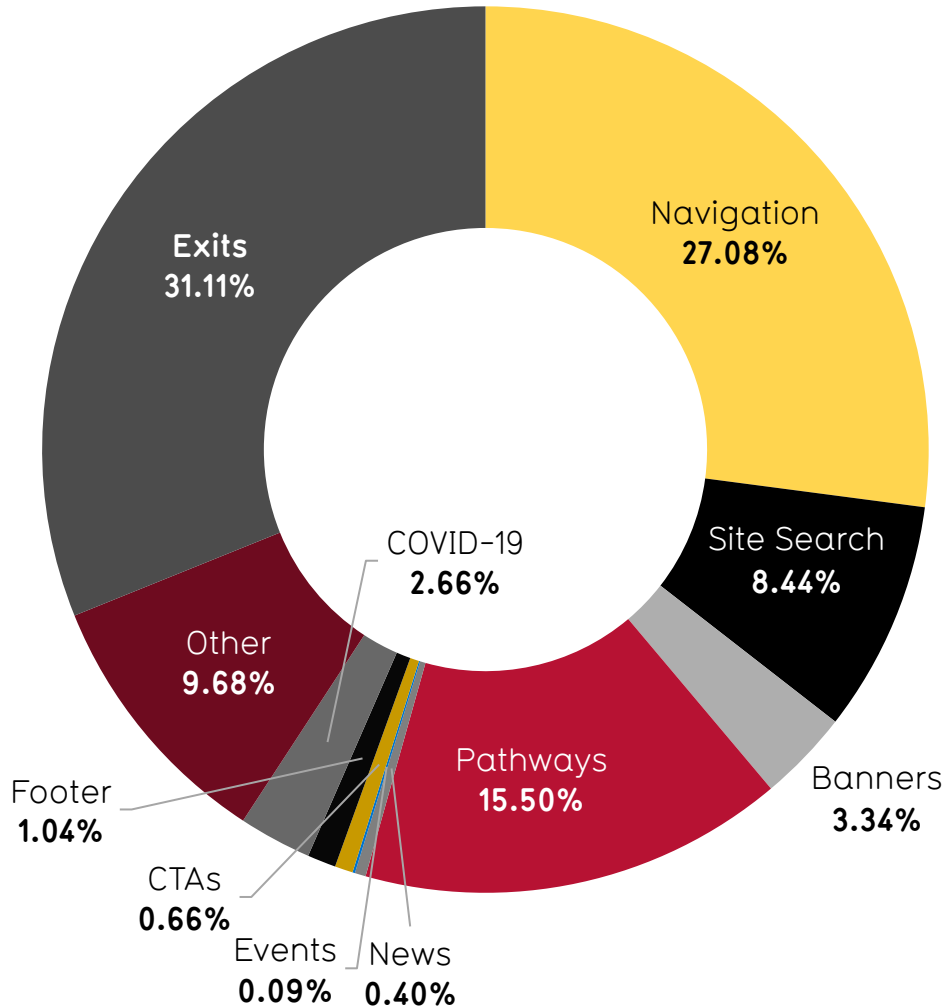
Site footer →

← Facts and figures

WATERLOO FACTS

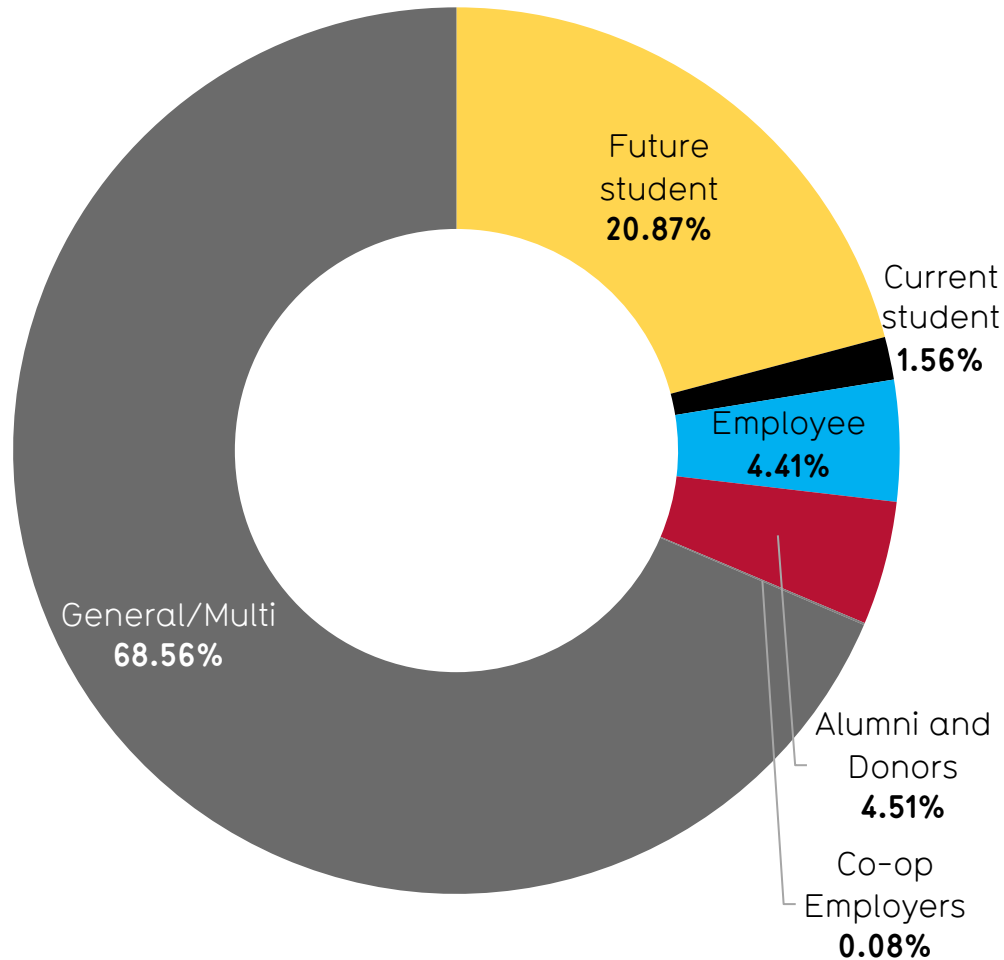


CURRENT HOME PAGE USER JOURNEY - BY SECTION



- Half of all visitors who proceed from the home page use the main navigation links or site search
- Pathway panel items and links (primarily those for future students) are second in terms of use
- Facts and figures were visible in 7% of unique page views
- “Other” pages are generally not directly available as links from the home page and indicate the use of bookmarks or intermediary pages that are not tracked

CURRENT HOME PAGE USER JOURNEY - BY AUDIENCE



- Approximately 1/3 of home page content is targeted at a specific audience.
- 2/3 of clicked, attributable content is geared towards future students.
- A similar pattern is observed when following visitors through "general" links such as directory pages or site search.

MAIN NAVIGATION USE ON HOME PAGE



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

ADMISSIONS

ABOUT WATERLOO

FACULTIES & ACADEMICS

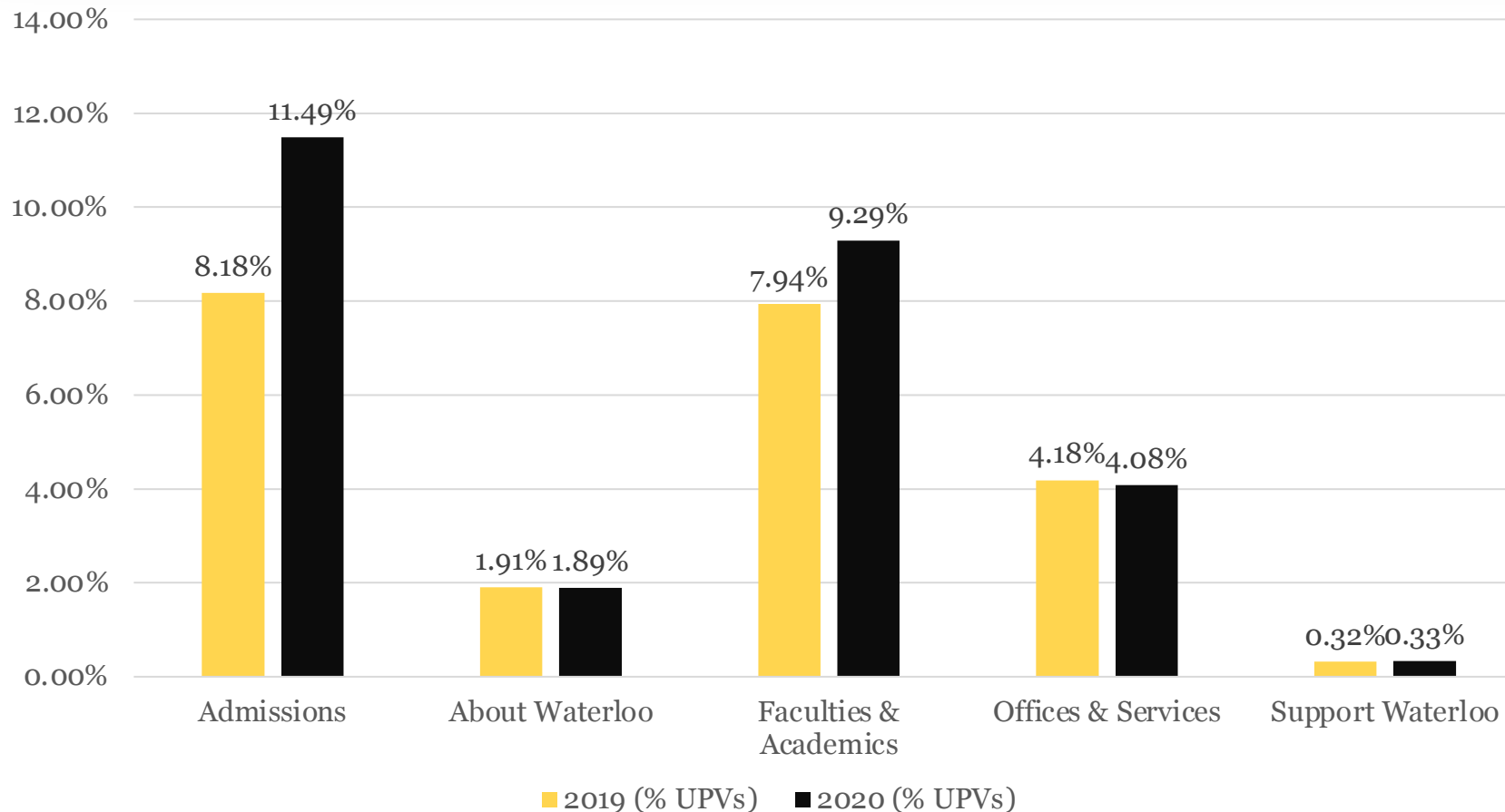
OFFICES & SERVICES

SUPPORT WATERLOO

COVID-19



SEARCH



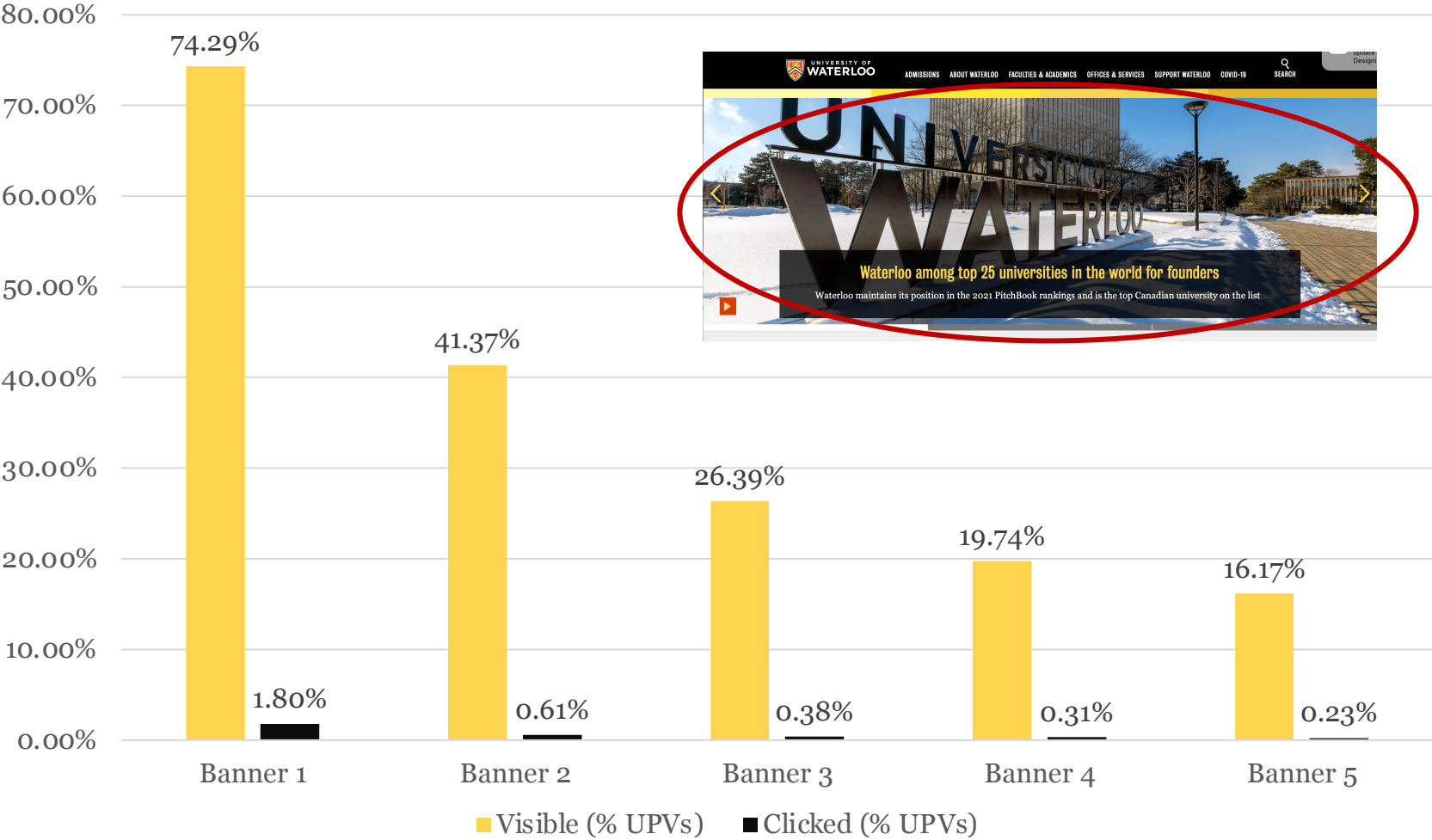
- The main navigation, pictured above, receives the most engagement of any home page region
- **Findings:** Keeping this menu will be a priority

(COVID-19 link was added recently and is not included in this dataset)



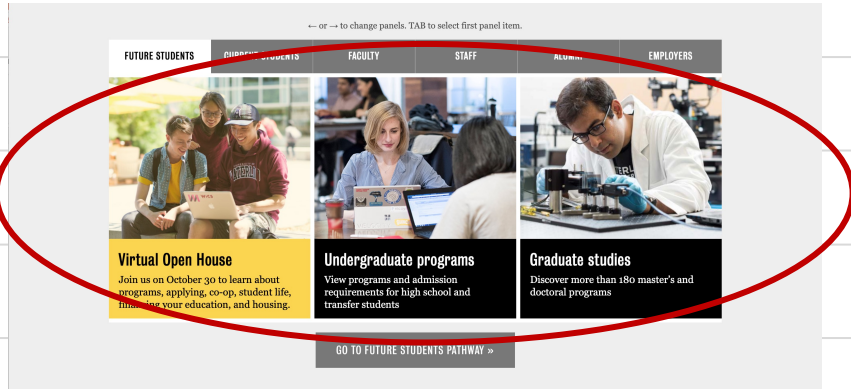
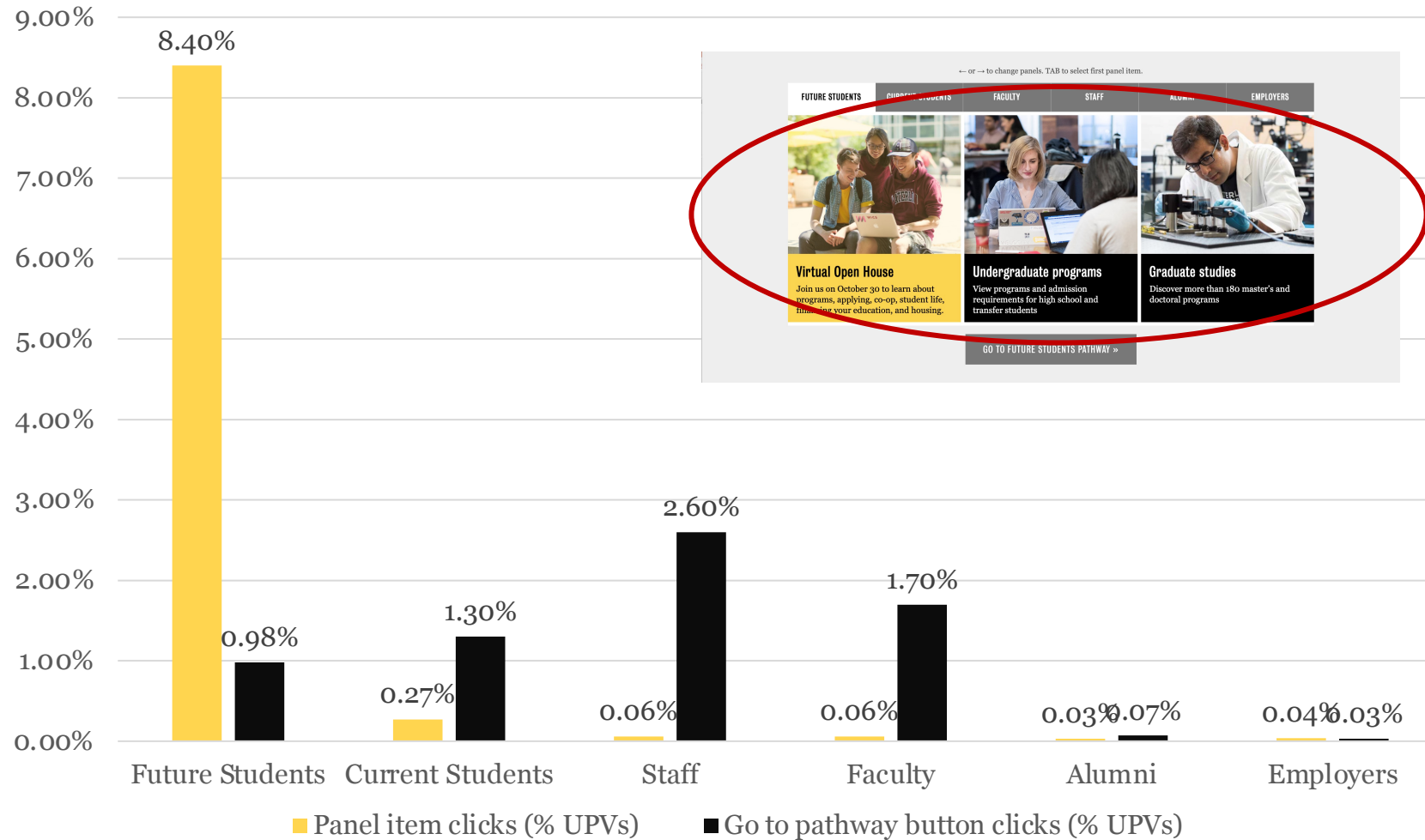
UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

HOME PAGE BANNER VISIBILITY AND CLICKS



- Less the half of all users to the homepage see more than the first banner in the rotating carousel
- Together, the banner area receives a 3.3% click-rate
- **Findings:** Limiting carousel use and presenting additional content as the user scrolls will increase content visibility

AUDIENCE PATHWAYS



- The future students pathway receives, by far, the most engagement in this region
- Other pathways are nearly exclusively used as a button to their respective pathway page
- **Findings:** We will explore options to provide pathway links more efficiently

RECOMMENDED HOMEPAGE AUDIENCES AND GOALS

AUDIENCES

1. Prospective and current students:

- Research has indicated content and links related to prospective students receives the highest level of engagement
- Approximately **1/3** of home page users are between the ages of **18 and 24** (web analytics does not provide demographic data for users below the age of 18 for privacy reasons)

2. Alumni, donors and general public

- As Waterloo's virtual "front door", the home page is of particular importance to external audiences who may be less familiar the university

3. Faculty and staff

- Many internal audiences use the home page habitually to navigate to their respective pathway pages or departmental sites

GOALS

- **Focus on our content priorities while remaining relevant to our primary home page audiences:**
 - Waterloo's key differentiators
 - Waterloo's community
 - Waterloo's student life and experience
- **Create a stronger sense of student life and community**
 - Expanded use of photography will showcase Waterloo's community, talent and research
- **Modern, modular design system:**
 - A layout with more visual hierarchy to guide site visits and communicate prestige.
 - A flexible layout will allow the home page to meet the strategic needs of the university at any given moment.

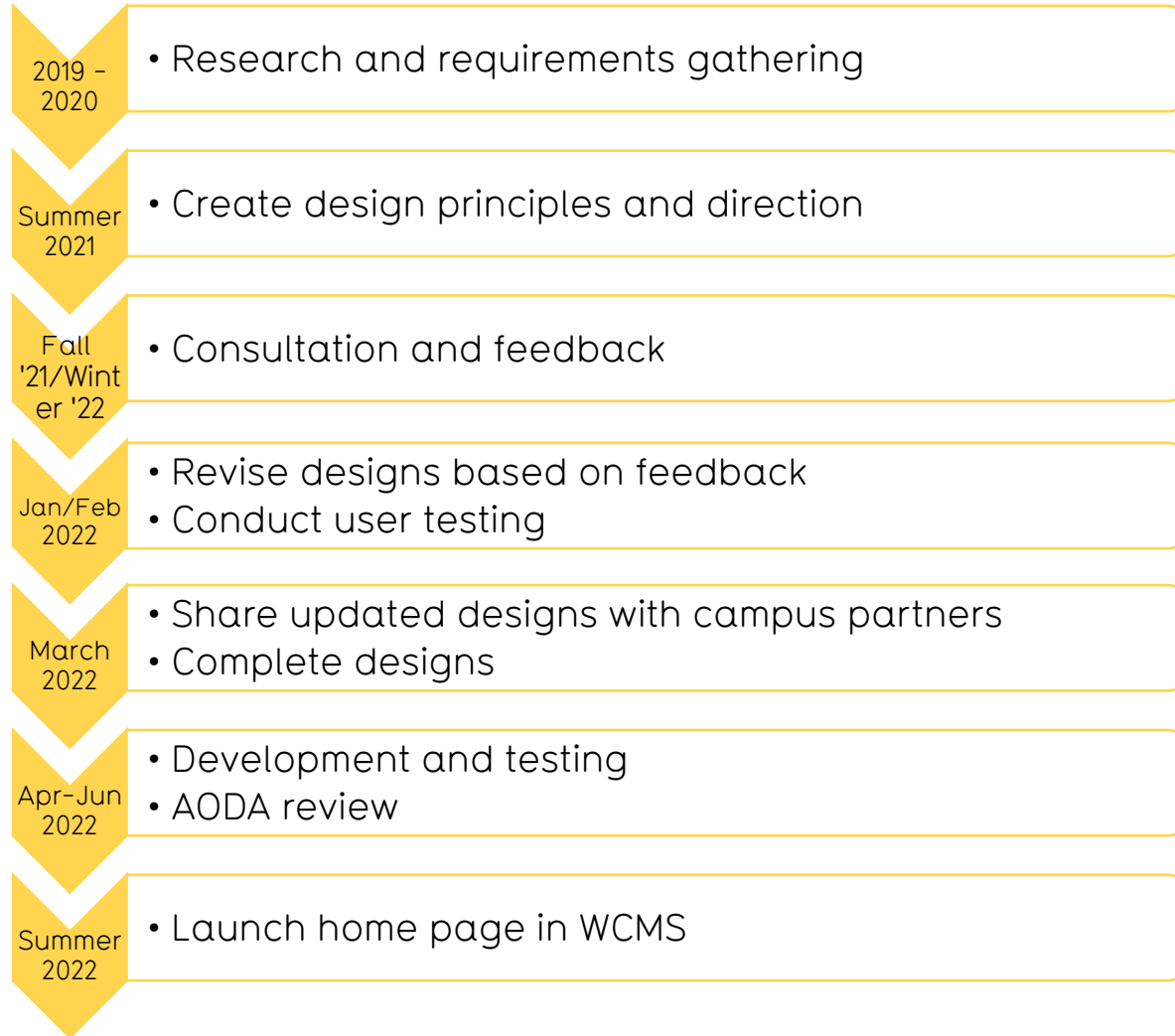
PROPOSED TIMELINE

TIMELINE PRINCIPLES

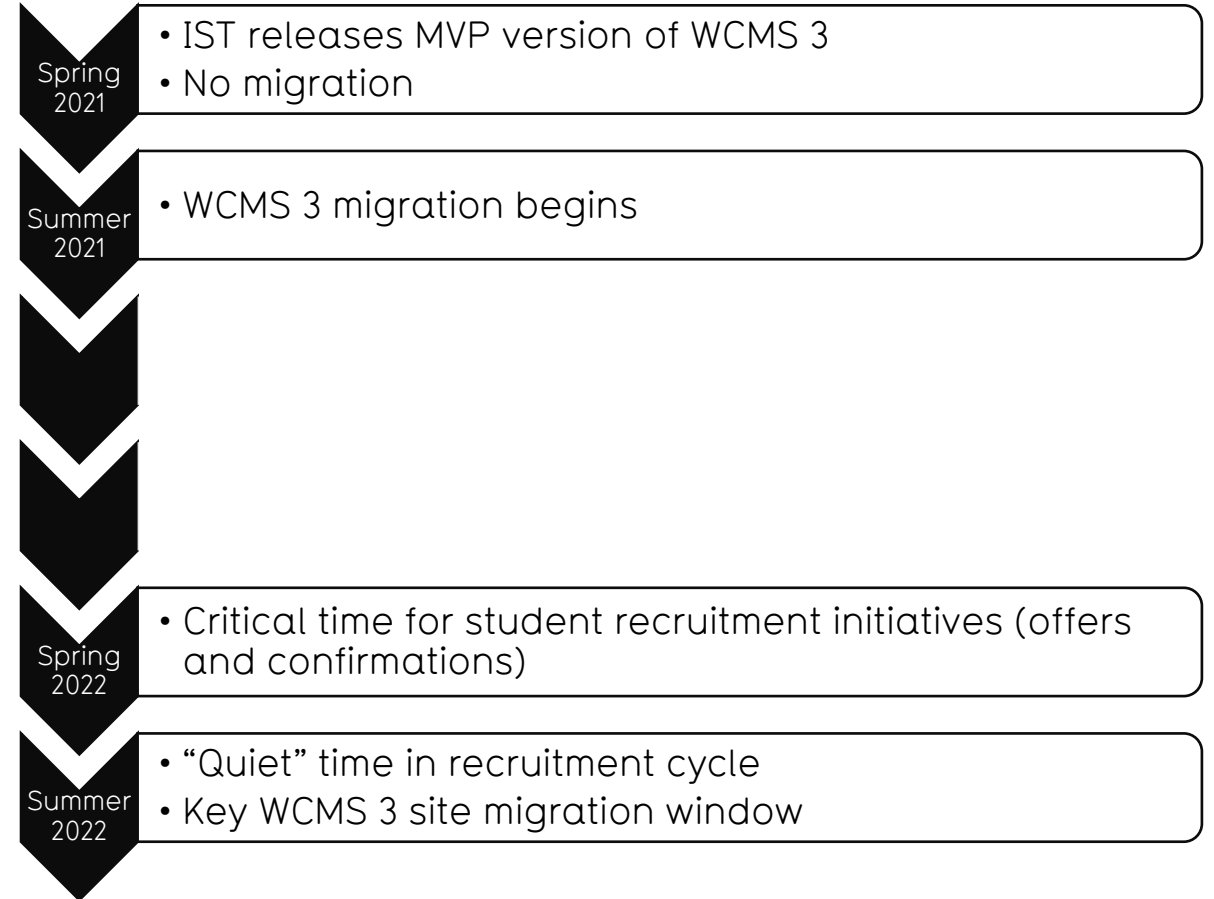
- Home page project should not interfere or delay the main, IST-led WCMS 3 development project
- Home page changeover must be timed to minimize impact to student recruitment
 - July and August are the best months due to the change in student recruitment cycles
- Timing of home page migration should align with broader WCMS 3 migration process
 - Significant migration work is expected during the summer of 2022
- **RECOMMENDATION**
 - July or August 2022 would provide the most ideal window for home page migration

OPTIMAL TIMELINE

HOME PAGE REDESIGN



DEPENDENCY/OPPORTUNITY



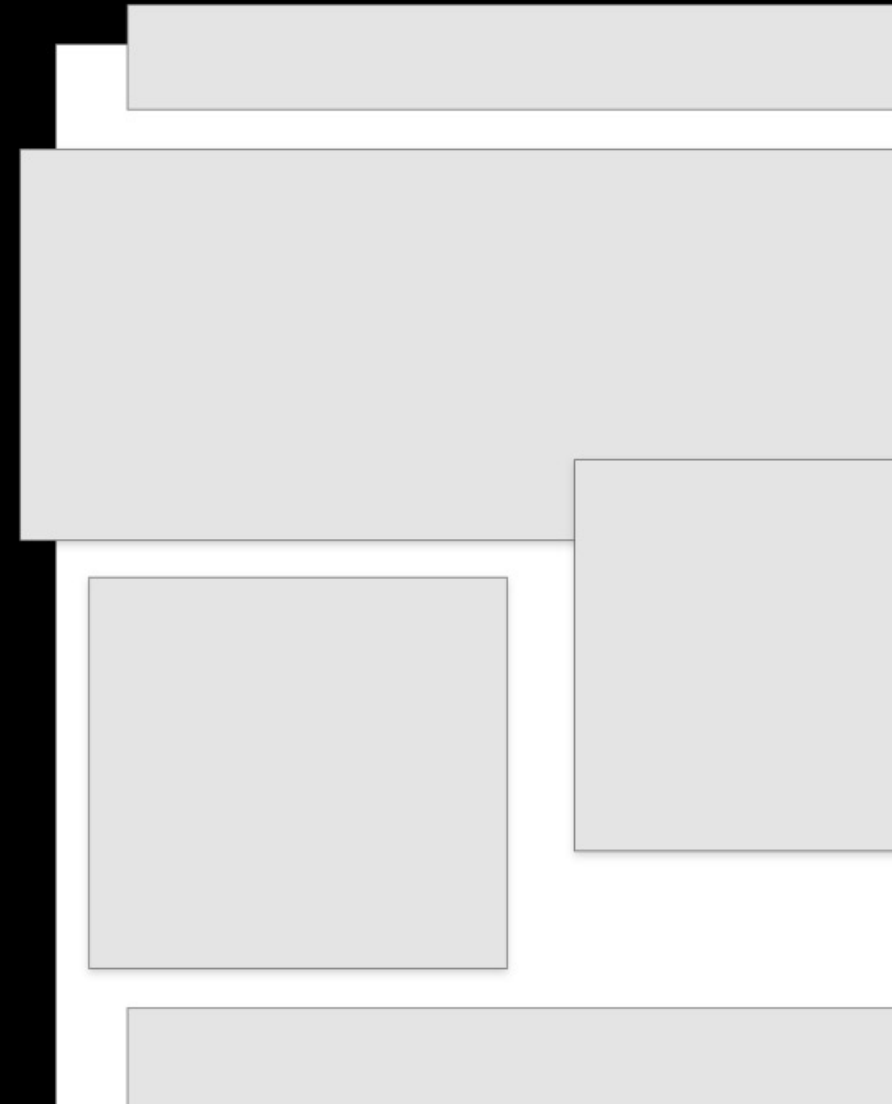
ALTERNATIVE TIMELINES

- If project changes necessitate a delay in launching the new University of Waterloo homepage, we will have two additional windows of opportunity (ranked by feasibility):
 1. **Summer 2023:** As previously stated, the summer timeframe is ideal for launching a new home page, however, delaying to the summer of 2023 would represent a significant project delay and could be significantly misaligned with other migration efforts.
 2. **December 2022:** A change at this time of year is less desirable as it would significantly change the user experience of the Waterloo website in the middle of the academic and student recruitment cycles. The holiday break could provide a window to make the change if needed

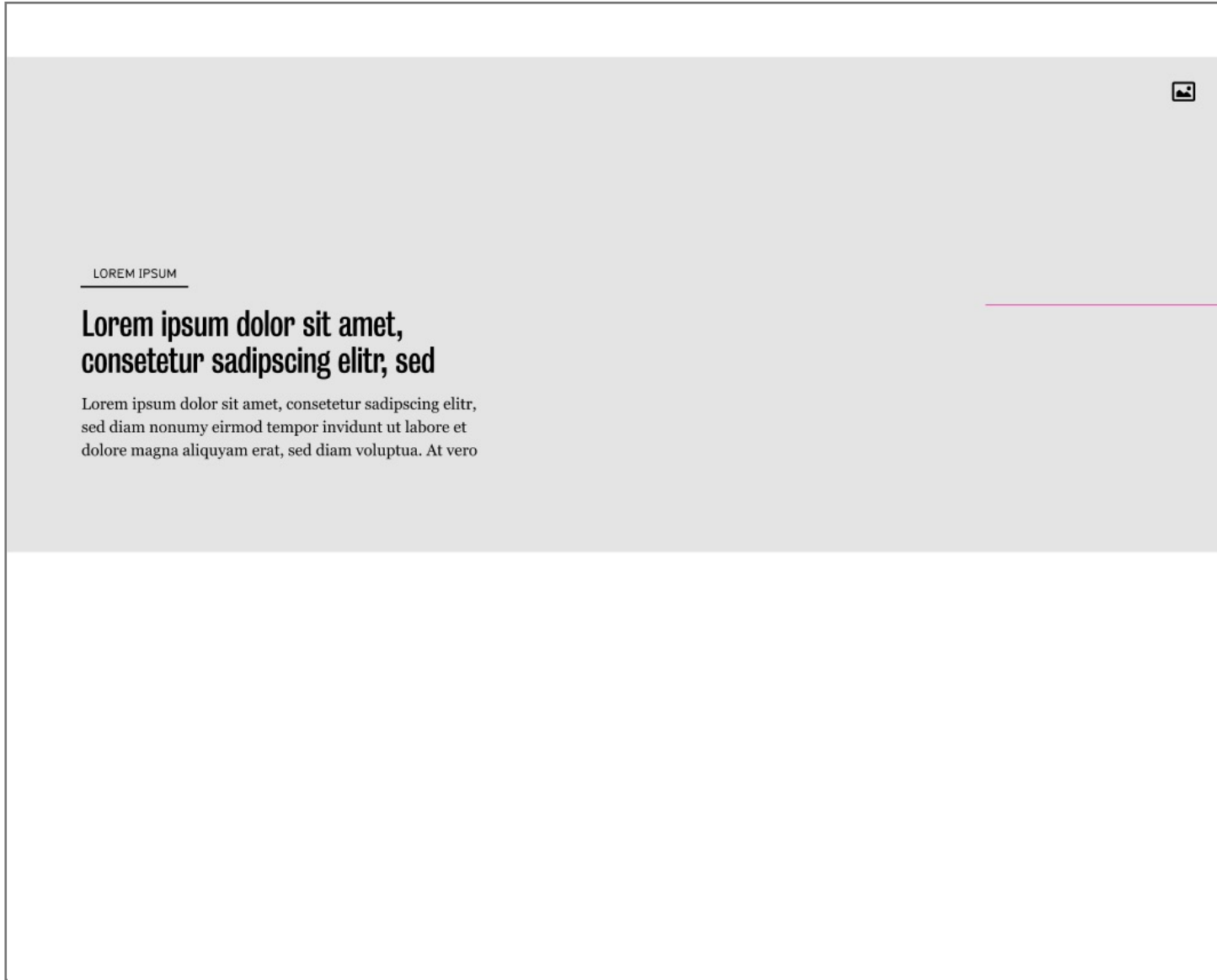
EARLY DESIGN OPTIONS FOR FEEDBACK

MODERN, MODULAR DESIGN SYSTEM

- Bring more, high-quality images to home page layout
- Limit carousel and tabbed content areas
- Stronger calls to action for better conversion and user-experience across all devices
- Develop content priorities utilizing a visual information hierarchy
- Present a full-width layout that is flexible and highly visual to maximize impact and allow for flexibility



HOME PAGE COMPONENT: FULL-WIDTH BANNER

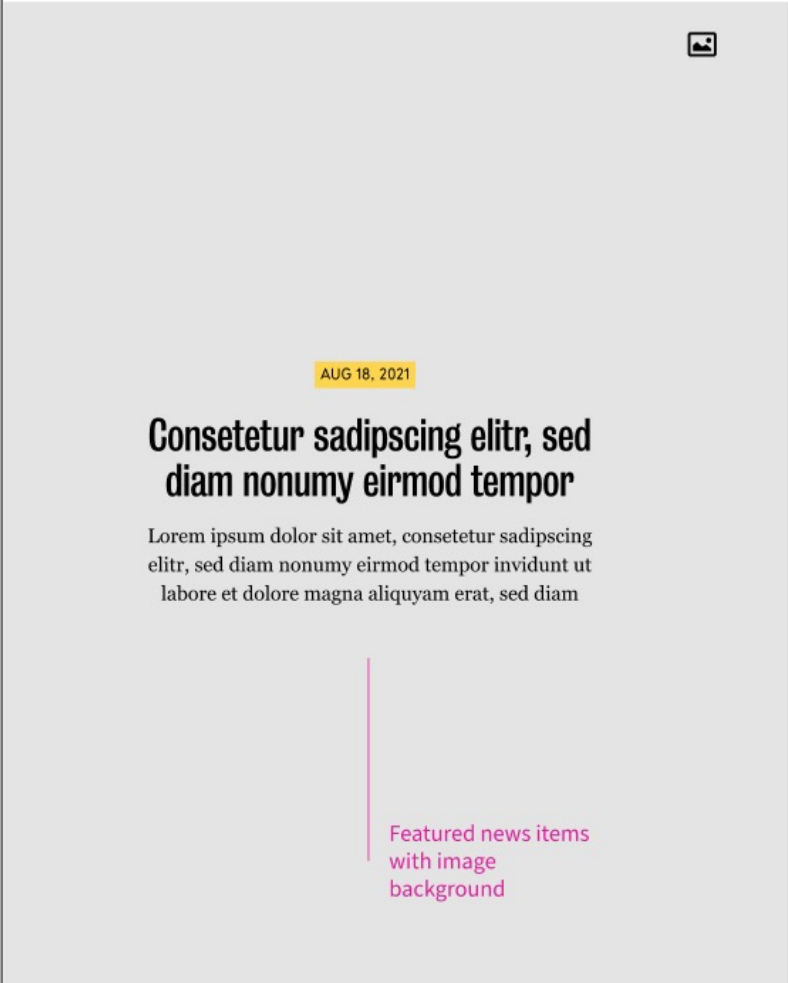


Full-width image/video banners with updated heading styles

- A single, static image or video
- Larger, more modern, natural photography will elevate the quality of our institutions home page and improve visitors' first impressions
- Eliminating the carousel while utilizing a modular, flexible layout will improve content hierarchy

HOME PAGE COMPONENT: MOVABLE NEWS BLOCK

Latest news View all news



AUG 18, 2021

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AUG 18, 2021

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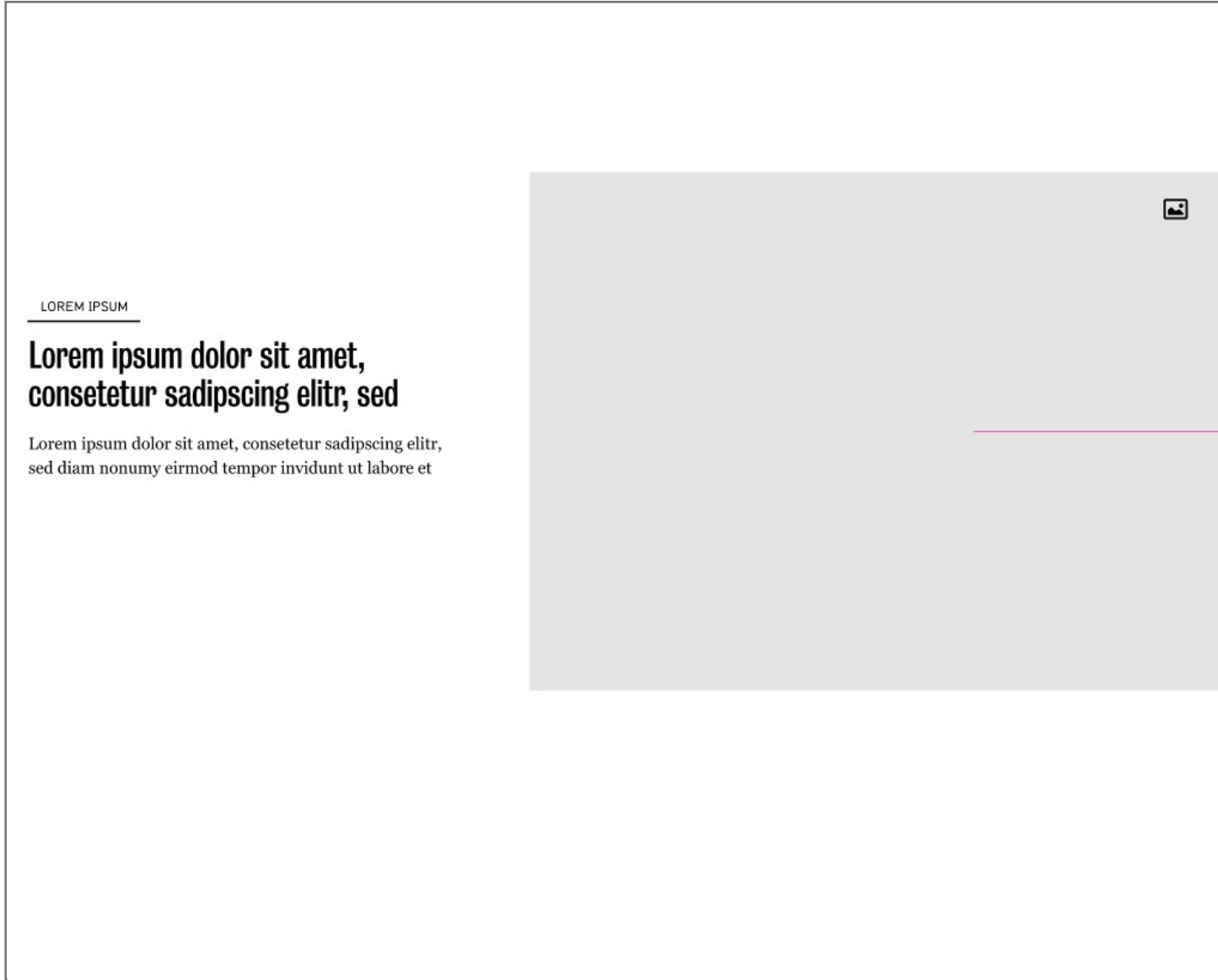
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Featured news items
with image
background

- The “latest news” area will be able to move higher up or lower down the page based on the priorities of a given moment
- The featured news area will include another opportunity to use photography, further elevating the quality of Waterloo’s content

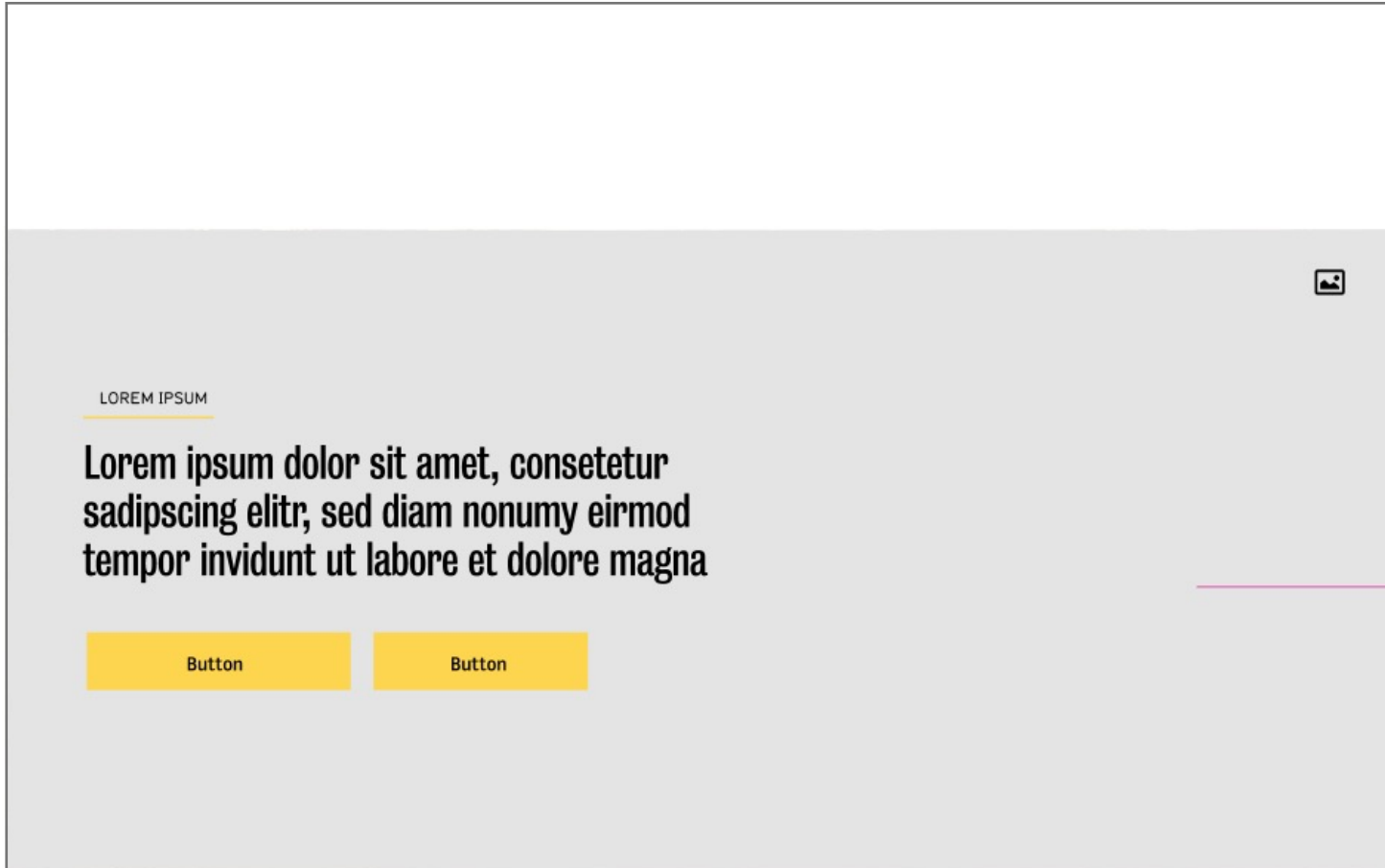
HOME PAGE COMPONENT: FLEXIBLE BANNER OPTIONS



half-width banners
with updated
heading styles

- A series of flexible banner options, for use throughout the home page, provides several options to promote admissions, events, campaigns, or recent publications
- Utilizing full-width layouts that are flexible and highly visual will make a larger impact while allowing variations in layout to meet the strategic needs of the university at any given moment

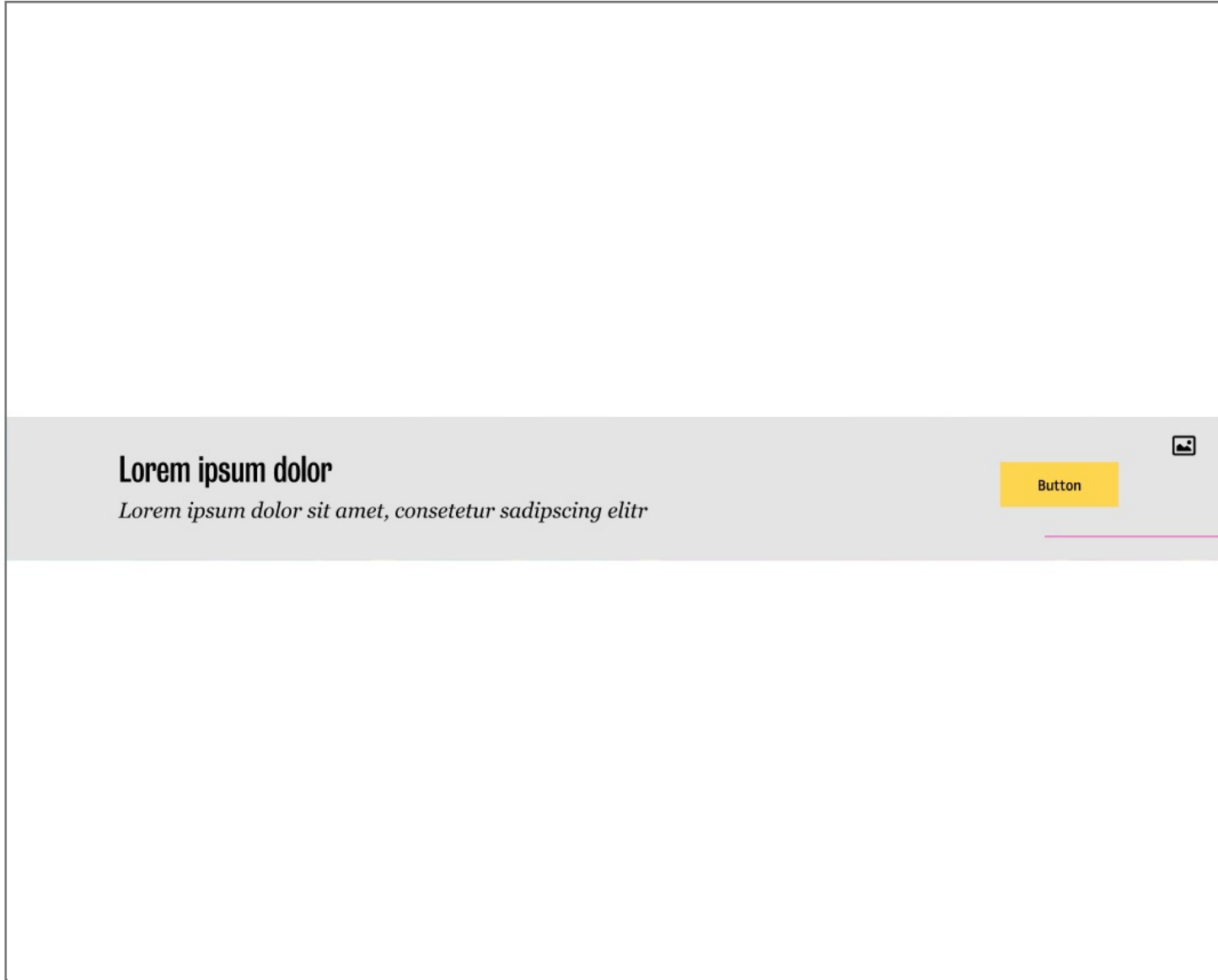
HOME PAGE COMPONENT: FLEXIBLE BANNER OPTIONS



Full or contained-width image/video banners with updated heading styles and ability to add one or two CTAs

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Slim full-width banner areas with ability to add CTA

HOME PAGE COMPONENT: MOVABLE EVENTS BLOCK

Upcoming events View all events

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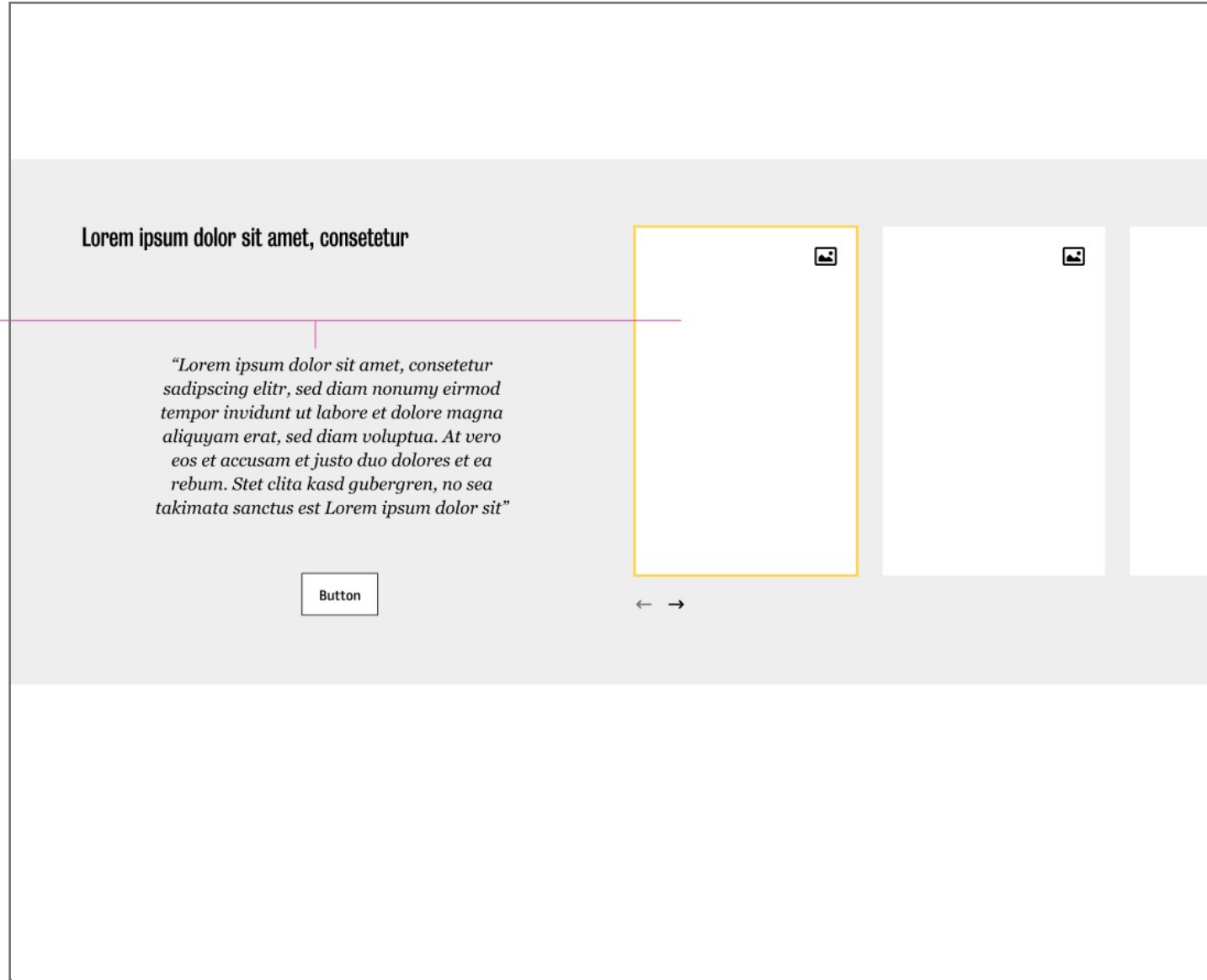
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- Updated, modern design for upcoming events
- The “upcoming events” area will have the ability to move higher up or lower down as needed

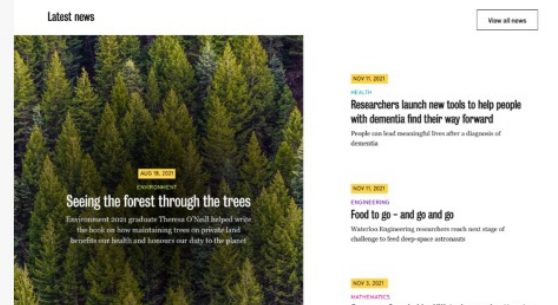
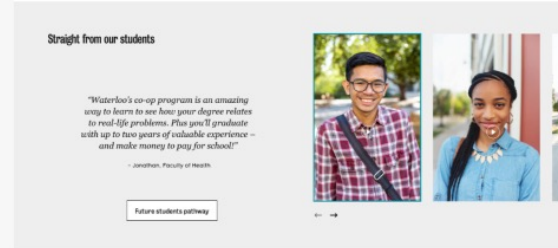
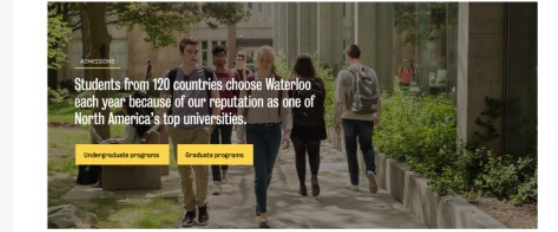
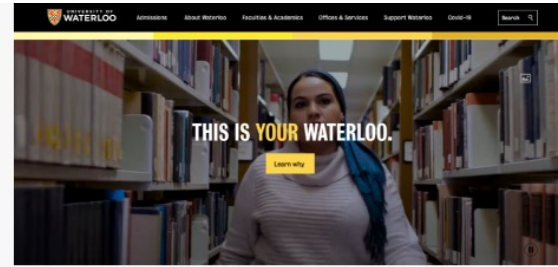
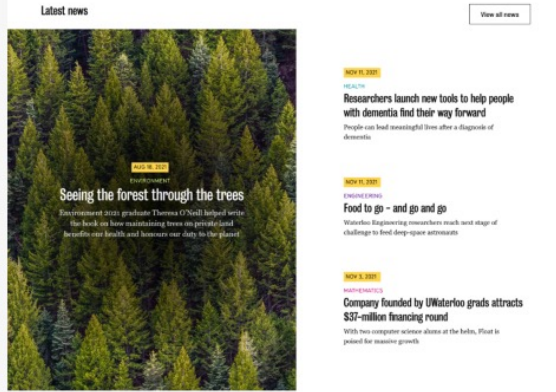
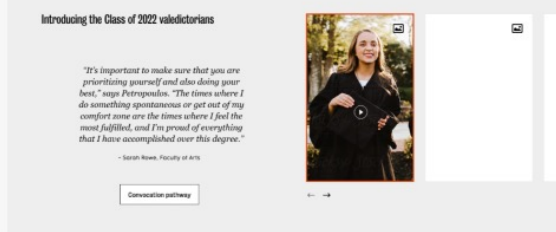
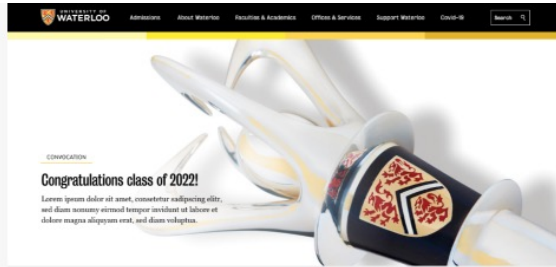
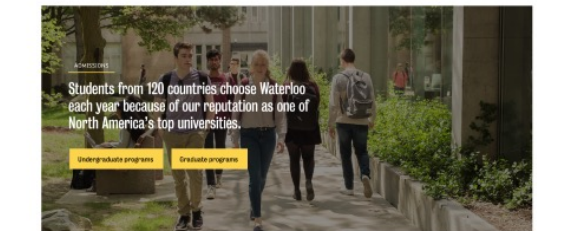
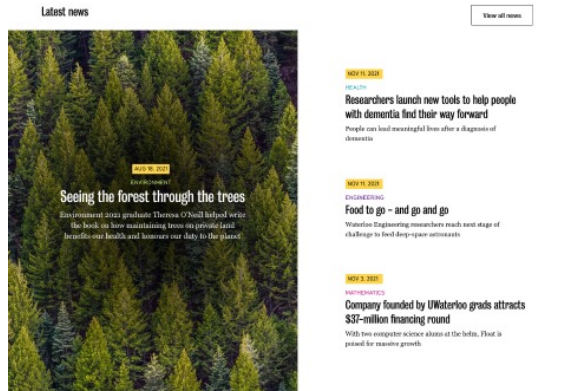
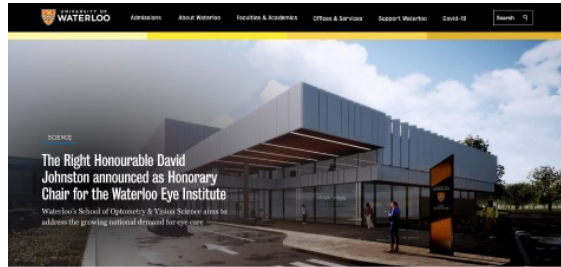
Updated events styling

HOME PAGE COMPONENT: TESTIMONIALS AND MESSAGES



- A new area to share the voice of students and other community members
- Options include a written quote, embedded videos or messages, and a button to take the visitor to related content

EARLY SAMPLE LAYOUTS



View full sample layouts online:

- [Neutral \(left\)](#)
- [Convocation \(center\)](#)
- [Student recruitment \(right\)](#)

There will be additional layouts for:

- Emergency communications
- Breaking news



NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER WORK

NEXT STEPS FOR HOME PAGE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

December
2021

- Gather additional feedback from campus partners, including university web committees
- Refine plan for UX testing phase of project

Winter
2022

- Update designs and create mobile/responsive prototypes
- Conduct UX testing with students
- Share goals and objectives with University leaders
- Share updated design prototypes with campus partners, including senior university leaders

Spring
2022

- Finalize designs
- Begin development of new features and functionality
- Conduct AODA review of working home page

Summer
2022

- Launch new home page

CONTENT STRATEGY

- In addition to the design and development project, it will be imperative to collaboratively develop a home page content strategy.
- Working together with our campus partners, we will identify the process through which content priorities will be identified as well as the specific news, information and events to feature on the home page at any given moment.
- This process will occur in parallel with the design and development project and conclude prior to the launch of the new home page.