



FROM INFORMATION OVERLOAD TO CONFIDENT DECISIONS: LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS REIMAGINES STUDY ABROAD DISCOVERY



Summary

NAME:

Loyola University New Orleans

LOCATION:

New Orleans, LA

OF STUDENTS:

- 4,300+ total students
- 3,000+ undergraduate students
- ~200 international students
- 50 countries across the student body

For Loyola University New Orleans, global engagement is woven into the student experience. The private Jesuit university offers students a wide range of ways to study abroad, from faculty-led programs and exchanges to direct enrollment and third-party opportunities.

That flexibility is a strength. But for students encountering international education for the first time, more choice can also mean more questions.

Loyola's Center for International Education (CIE) manages more than 300 study abroad programs, alongside international student services and the university's English language program. For Josi Guidry, Study Abroad Advisor at Loyola University New Orleans, making those opportunities easier to navigate was personal. She had studied abroad in Ireland as a Loyola student, returned to the CIE as a student worker, and eventually joined the team full-time. She knew firsthand where students could get stuck. "The information was there, but it was hard to navigate," says Guidry.

With a new website built with Terra Dotta Site Builder and supported by Dottan Designer, Loyola set out to change that experience.

300+

programs organized through a single guided discovery quiz

2 weeks post-launch

noticeable reduction in routine pre-decision inquiries

Reclaimed capacity

for international events, marketing, administration, office, and program planning



But terms such as exchange, non-exchange, and direct enrollment can be unfamiliar to someone considering their first international experience.

Opportunities

300+

global study abroad programs across 60+ countries

100+

student organizations, clubs, and intramural sports

99%

of incoming freshmen receive financial aid

60+

majors and minors

6

colleges

Turning a complex catalog into a clear starting point

Loyola's study abroad portfolio is intentionally flexible. But terms such as exchange, non-exchange, and direct enrollment can be unfamiliar to someone considering their first international experience. Add questions about academics, financial aid, costs, scholarships, and eligibility, and the decision can quickly feel complicated.

The previous site required students to do much of the interpretation themselves. Students had to understand the terminology, find the right sections, and connect program information to practical questions about academics, financial aid, and eligibility. Guidry wanted the new experience to truly focus on the student experience.

One of the redesign's central features became a program discovery quiz. Instead of asking students to work their way through hundreds of possibilities, the quiz helps them narrow their options based on their interests and circumstances.

The team also reorganized Loyola's program models and created clearer connections between program categories and individual opportunities. The homepage was redesigned to surface essential information immediately, giving students a clear path forward even if they arrived with little knowledge of studying abroad.

That shift from presenting information to guiding decisions became the foundation for the redesign.

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Pairing institutional knowledge with design expertise

The project was not an overnight decision. Guidry began exploring the possibilities nearly two years before the redesigned site launched. She attended Terra Dotta University (TDU), participated in Site Builder training, and worked through individual sessions to understand what she could manage herself. The experience gave her a strong foundation, but Loyola's existing site had accumulated years of content, structure, and pre-programmed elements. Guidry realized that knowing how to edit a website was different from having the capacity to rethink an entire digital experience. "To speed it up, we needed some additional expertise," Guidry says.

Through conversations at a national event hosted by NAFSA (Association of International Educators), Guidry learned about Dottan Designer. The service gave her access to specialized design expertise while allowing her to remain closely involved in the decisions shaping the student experience. The collaboration began with Loyola's priorities: making the site easier to use, modernizing its visual experience, and organizing information around the questions students actually ask.

Guidry brought the student and advisor perspective. She provided branding materials, photography, content priorities, and examples of where students typically needed guidance. The Terra Dotta team contributed experience from working with other universities and helped translate those priorities into the site's structure and design. Looking at peer institutions was particularly valuable.

"One of the things that helped me the most was looking through other universities that had gone through this process," Guidry says. "I could compare the websites, see what I liked, and figure out what we wanted to prioritize."

The process also had to fit Loyola's resources. The CIE had a specific budget in mind and spent months weighing whether a full redesign was realistic.



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Once the university committed, the project scope was adjusted to accommodate that budget. "If we had just given up because it wasn't in the budget for us, we probably would not have done the design by ourselves at all," says Guidry.

For a small office, the combination of specialized support, training, and a manageable project scope made the redesign achievable.

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Giving students a better starting point for advising

The goal was never to remove the advisor from the student's journey. It was to make sure students arrived at advising appointments ready to have a more productive conversation.

The new site places resources and appointment pathways throughout the student experience. Students can learn about program models, explore relevant opportunities, review costs, find scholarships, and then connect with Guidry when they need individualized guidance.

The difference was already emerging within the first two weeks of launch. "Usually, it would be a lot more very basic questioning," Guidry says. "That has been eliminated."

Instead of spending as much time explaining foundational concepts or directing students to information they could find themselves, Guidry was beginning to see students arrive with a better understanding of their options. "Just in a few weeks, it makes advising 10 times easier," Guidry says.

That gives the CIE a more intentional role in the student journey. The website helps students build their foundation, while advising can focus on the questions that require context and professional judgment: application strategy, timelines, visas, program fit, and individual circumstances.

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Making scholarship information easier to navigate

Affordability is another important part of Loyola's study abroad decision-making process.

The CIE has long provided program-specific budget sheets, but scholarship information presented a different challenge. Loyola offers a broad range of funding opportunities, including study abroad scholarships, national scholarships, and opportunities tied to specific programs or areas of study.

Previously, Guidry often helped students identify relevant scholarships individually. She would review a student's background and program, determine which opportunities might apply, and then direct the student to them.

The redesigned site gives students more control over that first step. Scholarship opportunities are organized into sections that make it easier to filter and identify relevant options.

The change doesn't replace scholarship advising. Instead, it moves some of the discovery process into the student's hands, giving Guidry more opportunity to help students think strategically about how to fund their experience.

It's a useful example of what Loyola was trying to accomplish across the site: make important information easier to access without making the overall experience less personal.

Creating capacity for the work beyond advising

The impact of the redesign extends beyond student appointments. With fewer routine questions coming through, Guidry has been able to redirect time toward work that had previously competed with advising for attention. The CIE recently moved offices, and she has had more capacity to manage the administrative details of that transition.



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She's also been able to focus on planning the university's fall international events, marketing upcoming programs, and preparing for the semester ahead. "Our office specifically hosts all of the events on campus related to international activities," Guidry explains. "I can focus my time and energy on that and planning for the fall."

For a five-person office, that reclaimed capacity creates real possibilities. "The cost is time that we don't have," Guidry says. "With a small office, it's just the gift of time."

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Bringing the study abroad experience back into the Loyola brand

The redesign also allowed Loyola to bring its study abroad experience into closer visual alignment with the university.

Loyola's main website had already received a more recent visual update, while the study abroad site still reflected older fonts, imagery, and design conventions. Aligning the two experiences gave the CIE a more cohesive presence. "For me personally, having consistent branding for the university was really important," says Guidry.

The updated experience also gives Guidry another reason to bring students, parents, and faculty back to the site. She can point students toward a resource that feels current and easy to navigate. She can use it during advising appointments and Zoom conversations. And she can share it more confidently when introducing study abroad to people who may not have engaged with the program before.

Early faculty feedback has been positive too, with faculty describing the new site as more accessible. Loyola has not yet completed a full application cycle on the redesigned site, so the CIE is waiting for longer-term data before concluding application volume or completion rates. Those measures will become an important part of the next phase of the project.

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What Loyola would tell other international education teams

For institutions with an older, content-heavy website, the hardest part of a redesign may be knowing where to begin. Guidry's advice is straightforward: don't let the size of the project stop you from starting the conversation with the Dottan Designer team. "They probably have experienced a similar situation with another university and can kind of lead you that way," says Guidry.

Her own experience also changed her expectations about how much of the redesign she would have to manage herself. "I thought I would be doing the bulk of the redesign, and that's actually not what happened at all," Guidry says. "They were there to help me more than I thought."

For peer institutions, she recommends using other universities as a source of practical inspiration, taking advantage of training and learning resources, and breaking a large redesign into clear priorities rather than trying to solve everything at once.

The lesson from Loyola is that the process becomes more manageable when teams start by identifying what students need to understand, where they get stuck, and which parts of the experience can be made clearer.



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A stronger foundation for the next chapter

Now that the foundation is in place, the CIE can turn its attention to improving the program catalog itself.

The next priority is program cleanup: reviewing the 300-plus programs, retiring inactive options, and making active program pages even clearer and easier to use. Guidry also plans to monitor future application cycles more closely, particularly cycles in which students have experienced the redesigned website from the beginning.

The CIE is continuing to explore other opportunities, too, including a highly specialized course approval process that does not yet fit its current technology requirements.

For now, the most important transformation is already visible. The redesigned experience helps students move from exploration to asking informed questions, while giving the CIE more capacity to advise, program, and do the work that strengthens Loyola's global community.

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