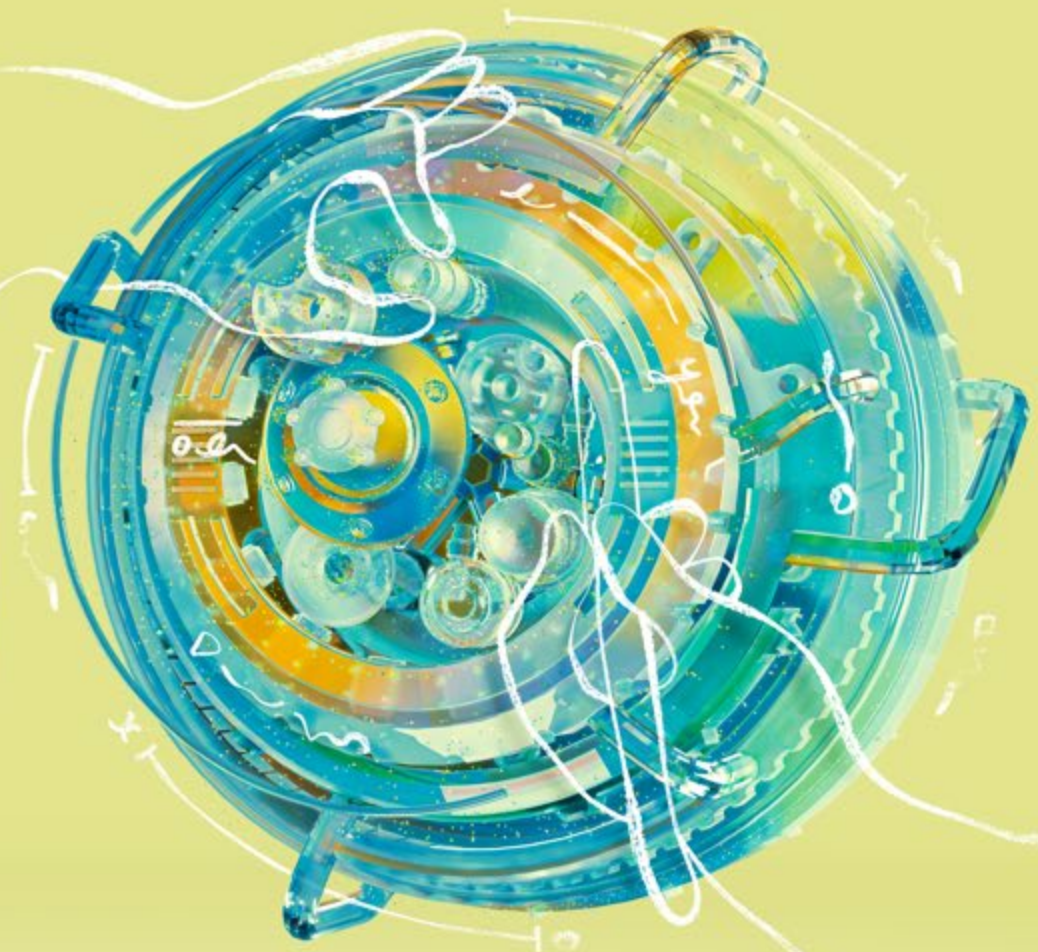




# ApplyTexas Update: TACRAO Summer Session

July 11, 2023



**Deloitte.**  
Digital

**Texas Higher  
Education**  
COORDINATING BOARD

# Introductions



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# ApplyTexas Redesign Current Status

The redesigned experience will go live in Spring 2024! ApplyTexas will continue to support the ongoing application cycle for the academic year 2024-2025 in addition to the new cycle for academic year 2025-2026.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is excited to provide updates on the progress of the ApplyTexas project and what comes next.



## Migration

The ApplyTexas team has migrated the existing system from an Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud environment managed by UT Austin to a Microsoft Azure cloud environment managed by THECB. Team has to migrate revised UT code to sync up with functional enhancements made since previous version of code and conduct E2E testing of migrated code.



## Human-centered design

Concurrently, the team has conducted user-focused research to identify and understand ways to improve the experience. This research has powered our redesign, and we have continued to conduct usability testing with users to validate our designs as we go.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

# Better serve students, IHEs, and K-12 partners through a centralized application process

## PROJECT GOALS

Our goal is to make it easy for students to begin their post-secondary educational journey by:

- Migrating ApplyTexas into THECB's My Texas Future ecosystem to provide a centralized application experience
- Delivering equitable, accessible, and clear content that drives completion of quality applications
- Providing the means for K-12 partners to track ApplyTexas and financial aid application status
- Allowing IHEs to effectively monitor student applications and manage application data
- Setting the foundation for a seamless experience for students transitioning from exploration to application

We took a human-centered design (HCD) approach to improving the existing ApplyTexas website and tools while identifying opportunities for the future evolution of ApplyTexas based on user needs.

# Guiding Design Principles

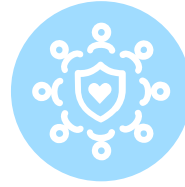
Today, the digital platforms and tools we design have transformed almost every aspect of our lives.

**ApplyTexas will impact millions of Texans by streamlining and improving their experience of applying to college, eventually influencing their educational and degree futures.**

As designers of this platform, we have a responsibility to our users to make ethical choices that center their needs and serve them in the best way possible. As we engage in the Discover, Define, Design, and Develop phases of the project, we need to constantly ask ourselves:

- Who are we prioritizing?
- How are we engaging in the work?

These principles reflect the foundational values of our product and serve as decision making guardrails if conflicting needs emerge between different stakeholder groups (user and service providers).



## Inclusivity

We will center the needs of those directly impacted by the portal and actively reduce barriers for historically underrepresented communities.

*Example: Identifying the specific demographics and identities (Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, LGBTQIA+, Disabled, etc.) of the target audience to focus our design and research efforts.*



## Care

We will foster a sense of care in users' interactions with the platform stakeholders and services and empower people to achieve their goals.

*Example: Making the interactions between users and advisors relational rather than transactional.*



## Empowerment

We will maximize the freedom of those affected by the platform while minimizing the burden on the users in determining their future pathways.

*Example: Research participants are given the opportunity to share insights that inform the design of the platform and provide feedback on prototypes to ensure they cater to the user needs.*

# Qualitative Research Recap

Over the course of 3 weeks, we conducted stakeholder and user research to gain insight into the opportunities and pain points that adult learners, post-undergraduate applicants and high school students encounter when applying to college

**16 Stakeholders interviewed in focus groups**

*Members of the ApplyTexas Advisory Council, IHE Advisors*

**18 Users interviewed in ideation sessions**

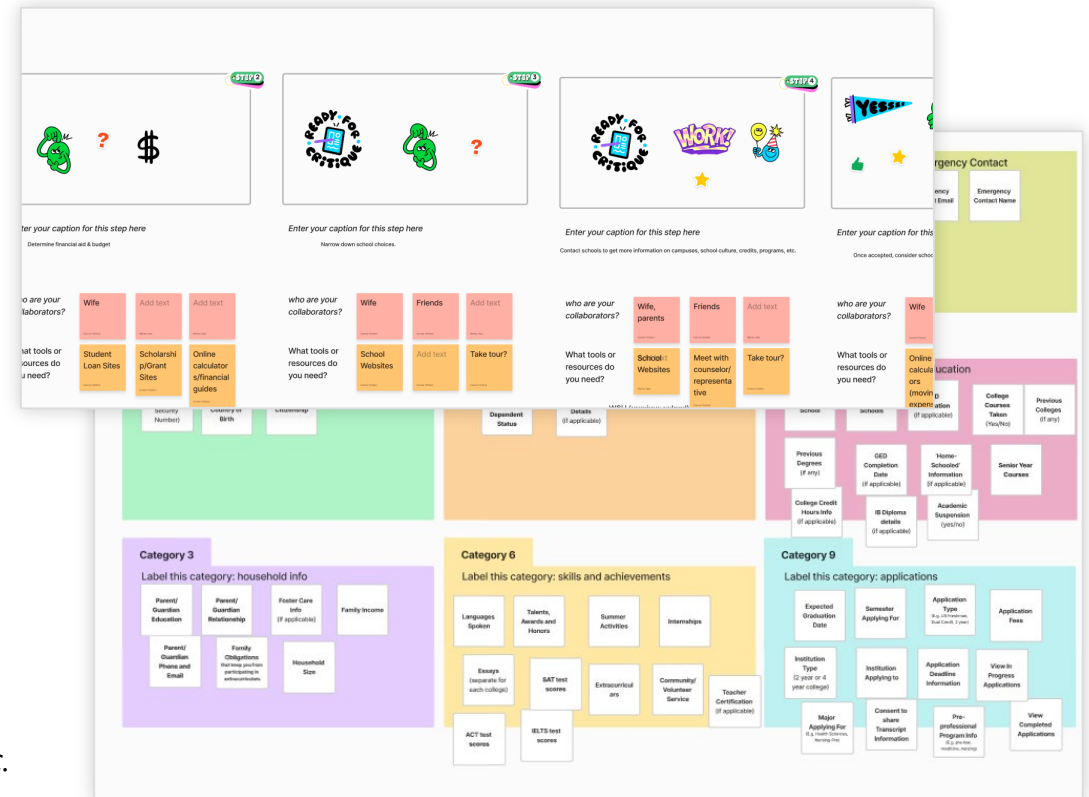
*High school students, adult learners, post-undergraduate applicants (in state and out of state), high school counselors*

**20+ Hours of interviews and focus groups**

**Vidlet videos synthesized**

*Playlists covered: Application Dislikes, Profile Creation Flow, Top Ten - Navigating the App, Contextual Guidance, UI Upgrades, etc.*

**350+**



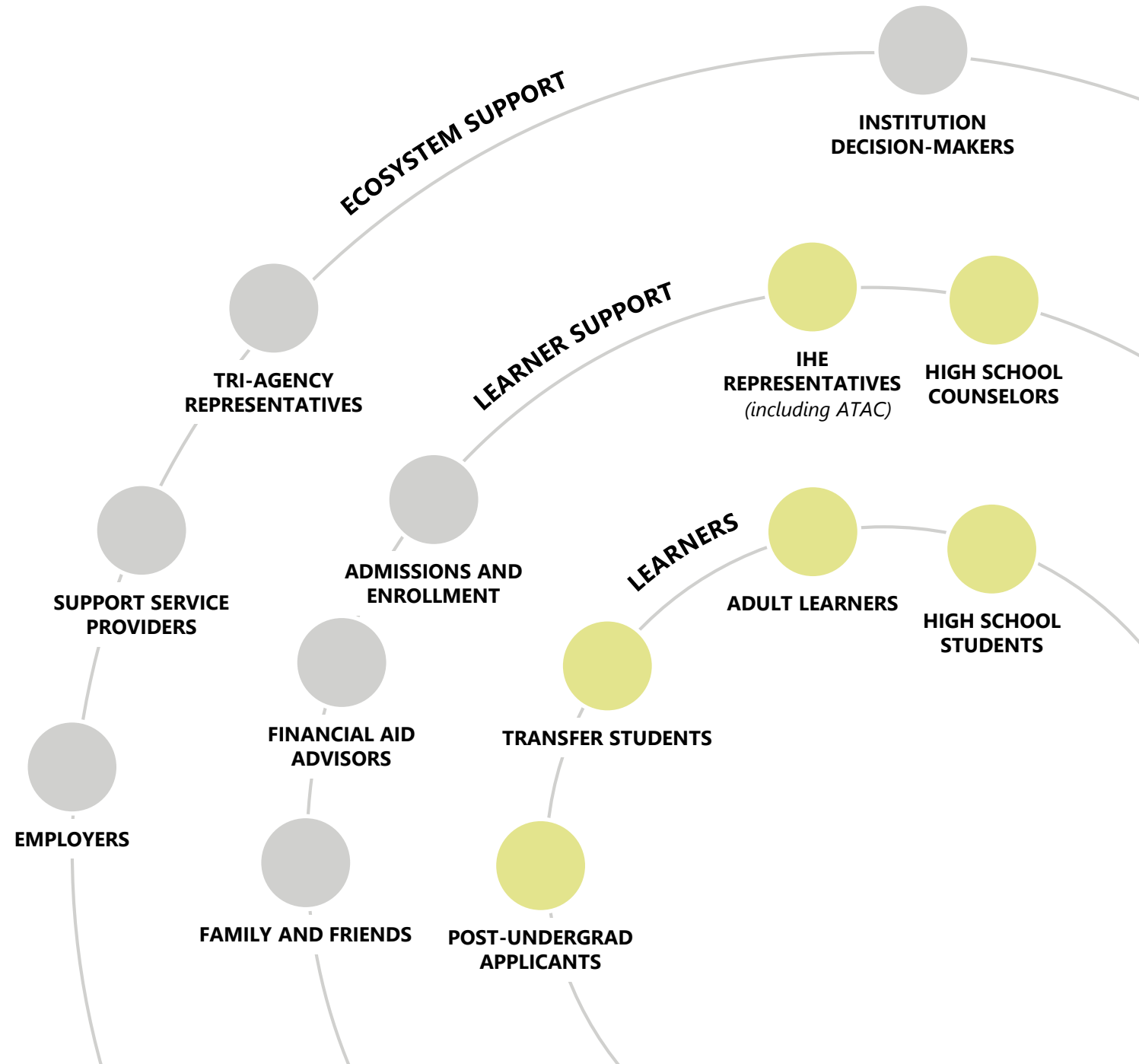
*Generative research activities with applicants*

# ApplyTexas Ecosystem map

This ecosystem map displays the broad range of groups that are important for the success of ApplyTexas. The ecosystem map captures the various groups as **role-based personas** that can help drive the vision for the first iteration of the feature and inform the research and strategy for future iterations.

**Key:**

- Primary role-based personas
- Secondary role-based personas
- Additional roles (outside of and in coordination with ApplyTexas)



# ApplyTexas

## Modes & Mindsets

### **Modes & mindsets transform attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors into meaningful, user-centered patterns and relationships.**

Modes and mindsets are not intended to be a static representation of students, but a dynamic one. Students can embody any of the modes and mindsets depending on their context and environment.

This methodology not only translates the findings obtained during the existing and new research phase into opportunity-driven, user-focused insights, but it also scales to depict the potential behaviors and motivations of future student groups.



### **Modes**

Modes are collections of tasks and actions that students perform in the course of navigating a change or return to higher education.

Modes help us identify and prioritize epics, feature sets, and user stories for design and development. They also help the team ensure we're building the functionality that students need.



### **Mindsets**

Mindsets are the outlooks and approaches that users bring to the modes they are acting in. Mindsets can shift over time based on the context the student is working in.

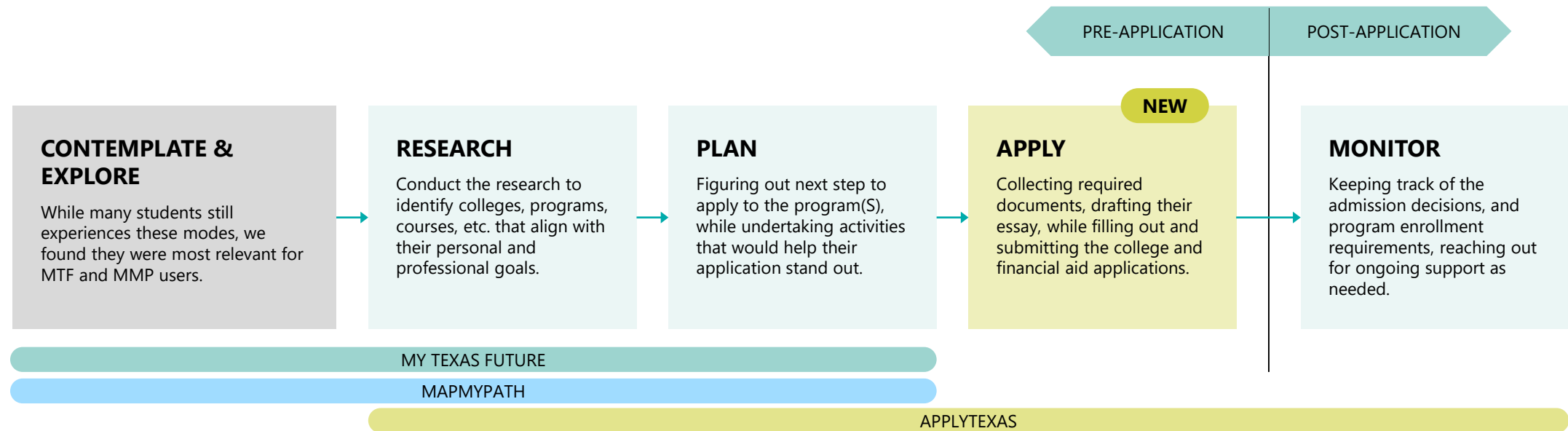
Mindsets help the team design UX, UI, and content catered to the most common approaches students take as they interact with ApplyTexas. When combined with role-based personas, they provide a fluid and dynamic way to understand users.



# Modes

While most learners generally follow a loose forward path, the order one student might move through could be distinct from another student with a very different situation, goal, or approach. ApplyTexas aims to allow for applicants to move from one mode to another on the portal, as fit for their own personal process.

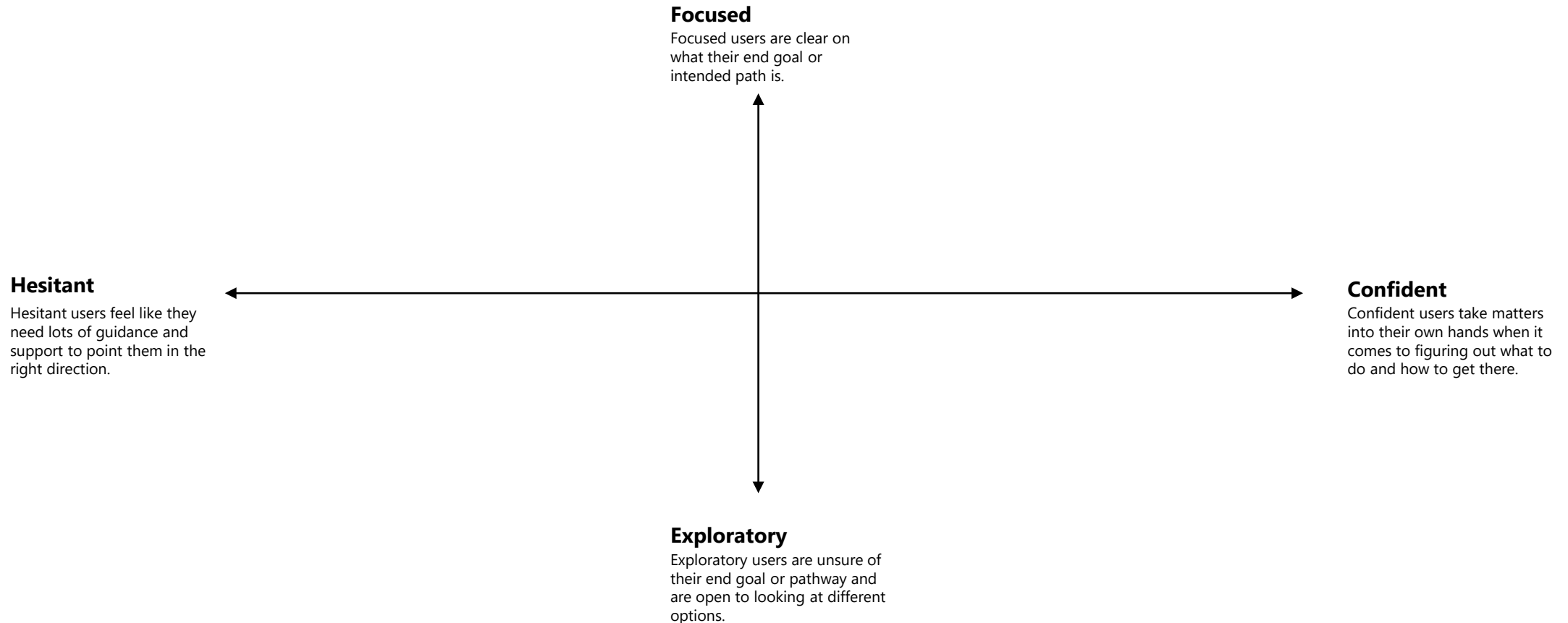
**Through generative discovery research, we have validated four broad modes that most applicants (high school, adult learners, and post-undergraduate) engage in while applying to a higher educational program.**



While many learners will begin in the Research mode, others will “on-ramp” within the mode that is most relevant to them.

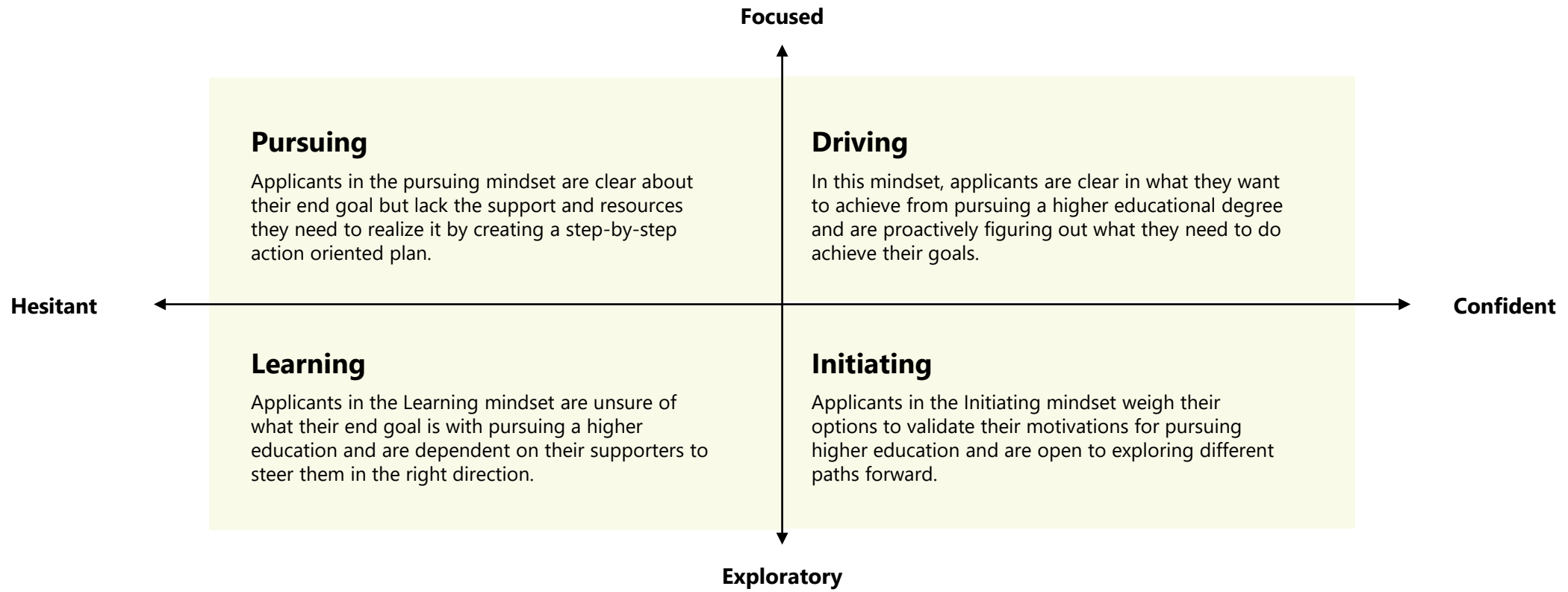
# Forming the Mindsets: Spectrums

Applicants are from all circumstances and backgrounds, and their behaviors fluctuate based on their situations and experience. As identified in the research conducted for MapMyPath, **we validated the two spectrums that best captured the range of approaches** that students adopt when completing a college application. Even with the variety of factors that shape a student's life **these spectrums still apply to ApplyTexas, though nuance is found and expanded upon in each mindset.**



# Mindsets

Applicants are from all circumstances and backgrounds, and their behaviors fluctuate based on their situations and experience. As identified in the research conducted for MapMyPath, **we validated the two spectrums that best captured the range of approaches** that students adopt when completing a college application. Even with the variety of factors that shape a student's life **these spectrums still apply to ApplyTexas, though nuance is found and expanded upon in each mindset.**



# Visual Design Discovery Recap

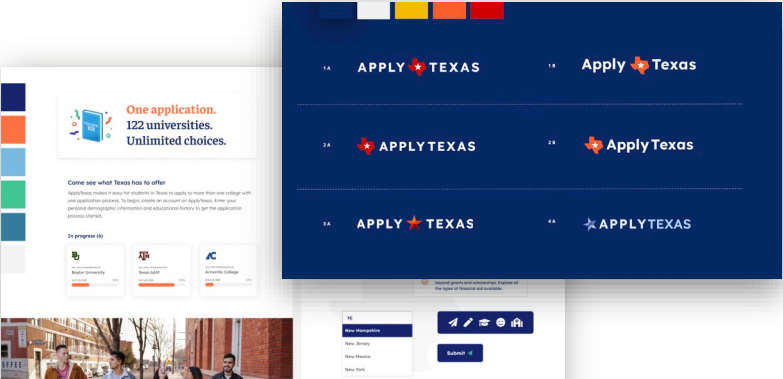
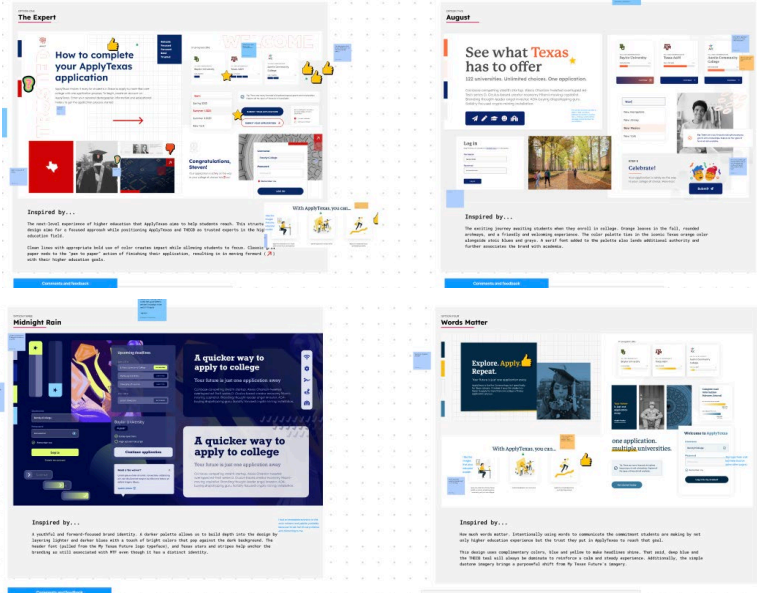
Over the past 4 weeks, we worked diligently to define the new brand direction for ApplyTexas that reflects the mission, values, and goals of the organization. We listened to your needs and together we created a new brand that positions ApplyTexas as a leader and expert in the higher education space.

**4 Weeks of defining the new ApplyTexas Brand**  
*During this time we discovered how ApplyTexas will relate to My Texas Future, developed key brand elements, and set our path for the next phase of design*

**3 Collaborative sessions together**  
*In these sessions we shared our work early and often, allowing for iterative feedback and input early in the design process*

**9+ Iterations of brand style tiles considered**  
*Split into multiple session, we listened to your feedback and concerns. Joining ideas together and iterating on aspects of the brand character.*

**70+ Iterations of new logos for ApplyTexas**  
*The evolution of the ApplyTexas logo had multiple rounds of iteration to decide on structure, font, and color.*



# Logo development

Multiple rounds of iteration and reviews led to the development of the final ApplyTexas logo.

The selected logo pulls inspiration from both the existing ApplyTexas logo as well as the Texas State flag. The color gradient shows a range of the new colors selected for the ApplyTexas brand and symbolize a hopeful feeling and a bright future.

INITIAL  
SKETCHES



ROUND ONE

APPLY  TEXAS

 APPLY TEXAS

APPLY  TEXAS

 APPLY  
TEXAS 

APPLY  
 TEXAS

APPLY  TX

ROUND TWO

APPLY  TEXAS

APPLY  TEXAS

Apply  Texas

 APPLY TEXAS

 APPLY TEXAS

 Apply Texas

 APPLY TEXAS

 APPLY TEXAS

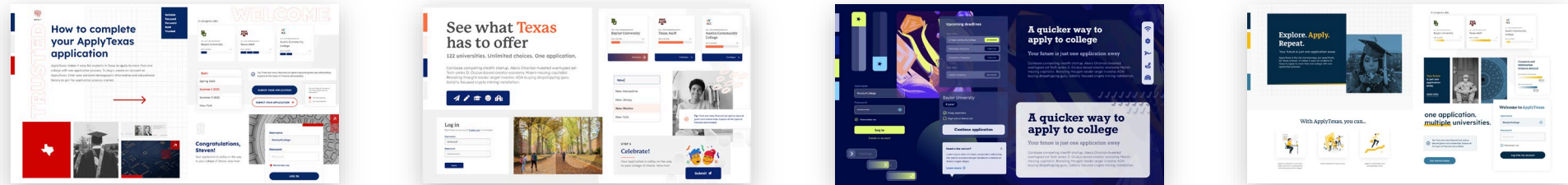
# Logo Selection

**APPLY**  **TEXAS**

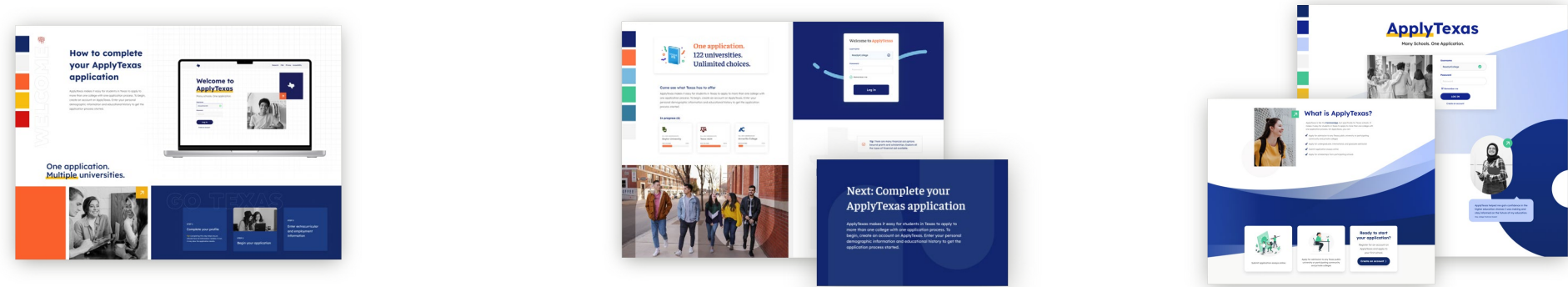
**APPLY**  **TEXAS**

# Our Style Tile Journey

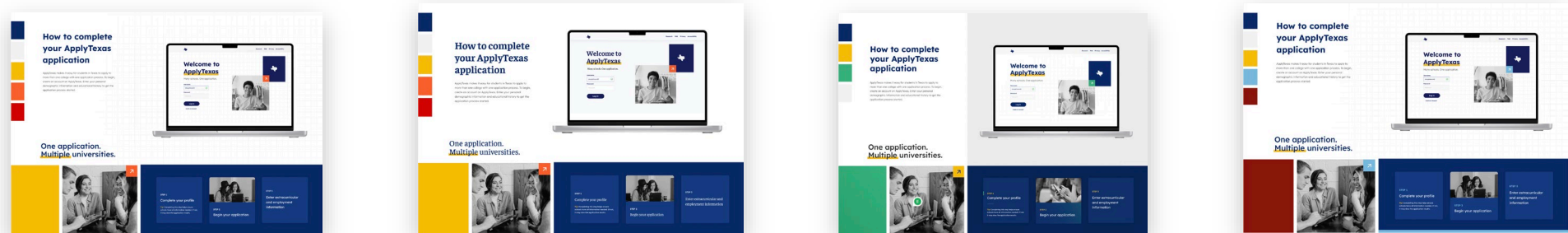
Iteration 1



Iteration 2



Iteration 3



# Style Tile Selection

## The Expert

Our goal is to position ApplyTexas as trusted experts in the higher education field through a balance of boldness and approachability.

**APPLY TEXAS** Research FAQ Privacy Accessib

### How to complete your ApplyTexas application

ApplyTexas makes it easy for students in Texas to apply to more than one college with one application process. To begin, create an account on ApplyTexas. Enter your personal demographic information and educational history to get the application process started.

### Welcome to ApplyTexas

Many schools. One application.

Username: stacyjohnson02 ✓

Password: Password

Log in

Create an Account

### One application. Multiple universities.

STEP 1: Complete your profile  
Tip! Completing this step helps ensure schools have all information needed. If not, it may slow the application results.

STEP 2: Begin your application


STEP 3: Enter extracurricular and employment information



Business administration and management

Texas A&M

Other School of Texas City



FALL 2023 UNDERGRADUATE

Texas A&M

DUE 1/21/2023 85%

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

- Sum
- Spring 2023
- Summer I 2023
- Summer II 2023
- New York

Are you looking for two-year or four-year college/university information?

Two Year Institution

Four Year Institution




Tip: There are many financial aid options beyond grants and scholarships. Explore all the types of financial aid available.

One application. Multiple universities.

# Great job!

You successfully completed your ApplyTexas profile. Ready for the next step?

→ Begin applying to your target university or college!



## Choose Your Adventure

Select your adventure (the school you are applying to)! Complete this step for each Texas school you want to apply to. Thankfully, you can use your earlier application so that you don't have to re-enter every piece of information.

FALL 2023 UNDERGRADUATE

Baylor University

DUE 6/21/2023 25%

FALL 2023 UNDERGRADUATE

Texas A&M

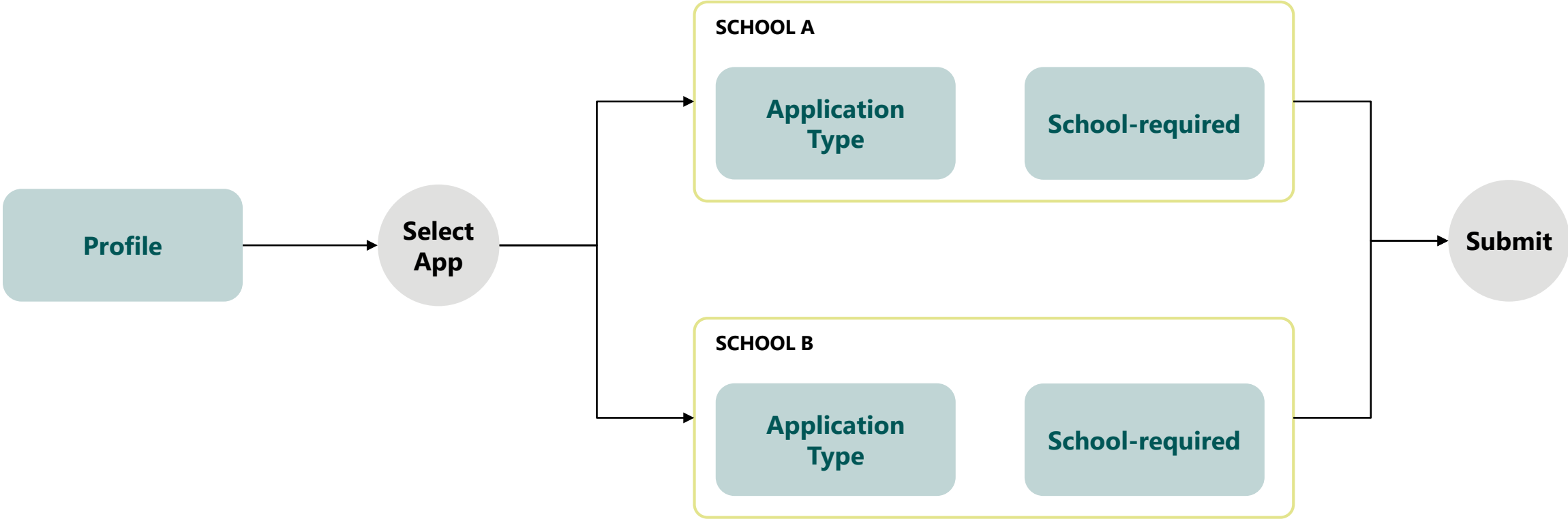
DUE 6/21/2023 98%

FALL 2023 UNDERGRADUATE

Austin Community College

DUE 9/21/2023

# Current ApplyTexas Flow



# Common Fields Across Core Application Types

Common fields are fields that appear in multiple Core US applications, but are not included in the Profile. This includes fields about parent/guardians, residency, military status, and property. Including these common fields in the profile instead of under each application type will help to reduce redundancy and improve the logic of the application.

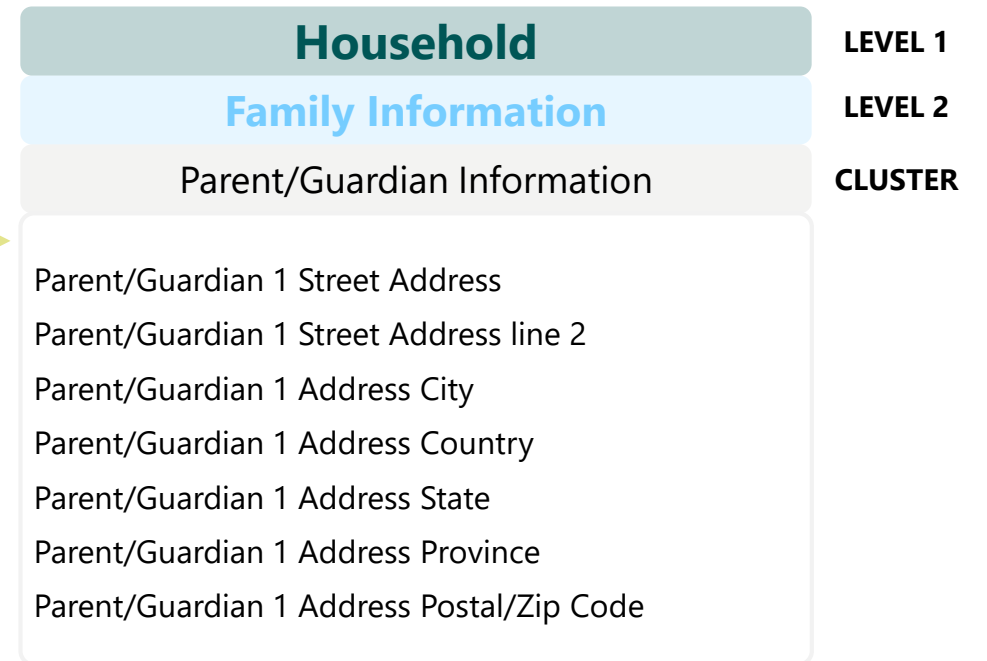
## EXAMPLES OF COMMON FIELDS

Profile	US Freshman	US Transfer	Two Year	US Graduate	Transient	Readmission
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 2	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 3	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 2	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 2	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 2	Parent/Guardian 1 Street Address line 2
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City	Parent/Guardian 1 Address City
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Country
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State	Parent/Guardian 1 Address State
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Province
N/A - Not Found	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code	Parent/Guardian 1 Address Postal/Zip Code
N/A - Not Found	Do you currently live in Texas?	Do you currently live in Texas?	Do you currently live in Texas?	Do you currently live in Texas?	Do you currently live in Texas?	Do you currently live in Texas?
N/A - Not Found	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?	If you currently live in Texas, how many years have you been living here?
N/A - Not Found	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?	If you currently live in Texas, what is your main purpose for being in the state?
N/A - Not Found	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?	If you are a member of the U.S. military, is Texas your Home of Record?

96

Fields included in all application types, but not included in the profile

## (PROPOSED) COMMON FIELDS IN PROFILE



# Core Questions Example

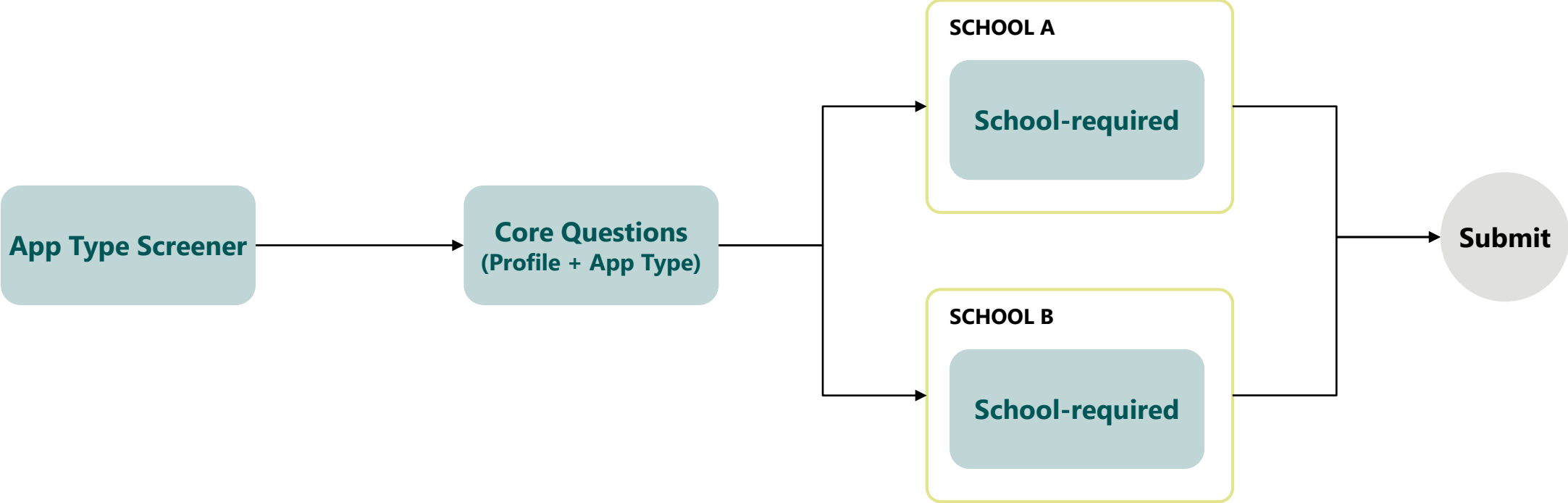
The restructured "Core Questions" section contains the same information as the previous "Profile" section.

We've added in common questions from across the application types, resulting in new sections such as:

- Household
- Education and testing
- Activities and achievements

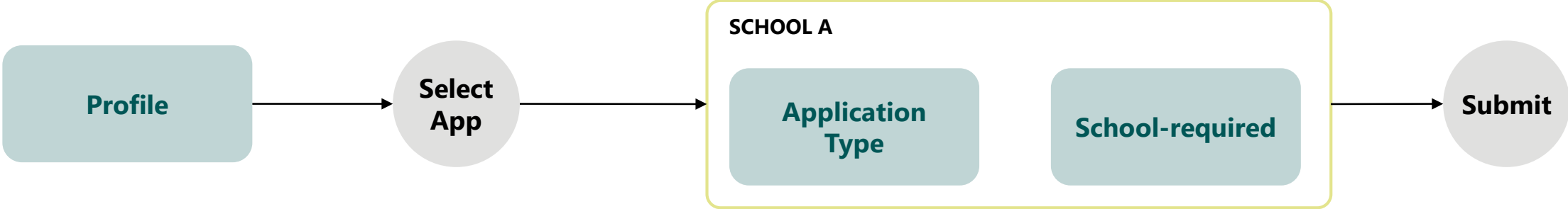
The screenshot displays the 'APPLY TEXAS' interface. At the top, the logo and 'Welcome, Syl' are visible. The main content area is titled 'Section overview' under the 'About you' category. A left-hand navigation menu lists sections: 'About you', 'Section overview' (highlighted with a green circle and a right-pointing arrow), 'Your name', 'Contact', 'Background', 'Military status', 'Foster care', and 'Language'. Below this, a larger list includes 'Household', 'Education and testing', and 'Activities and achievements'. The main content area features a 'Here's what to expect:' section with a numbered list of six items: 1. Your name, 2. Contact, 3. Background, 4. Military status, 5. Foster care, and 6. Language. To the right, an icon of a graduation cap and books is accompanied by a 'Here's what you might need:' section listing birth date, legal name, social security number, and military status. At the bottom, there are 'Back', 'Save for later', and 'Next' buttons. The footer contains the 'APPLY TEXAS' logo, copyright information for 2022, and social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

# Proposed ApplyTexas Flow

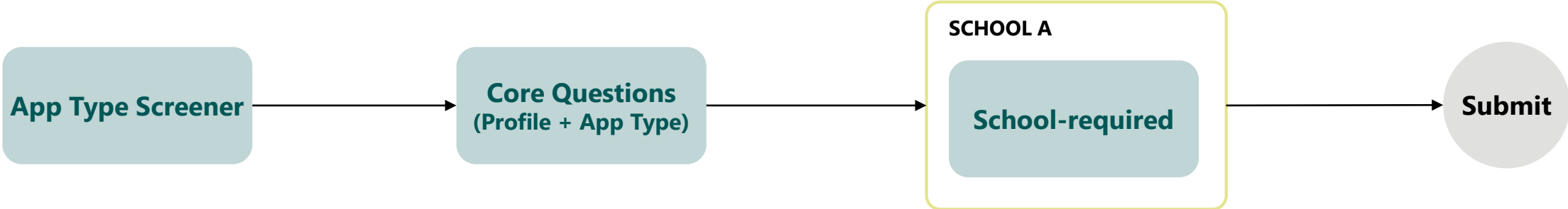


# Side-by-Side Comparison

## Current Flow



## Proposed Flow



# Overview of Application Question Updates

Following our discovery phase, we've worked with all teams to improve which questions are being asked and how they are being asked.

# 130

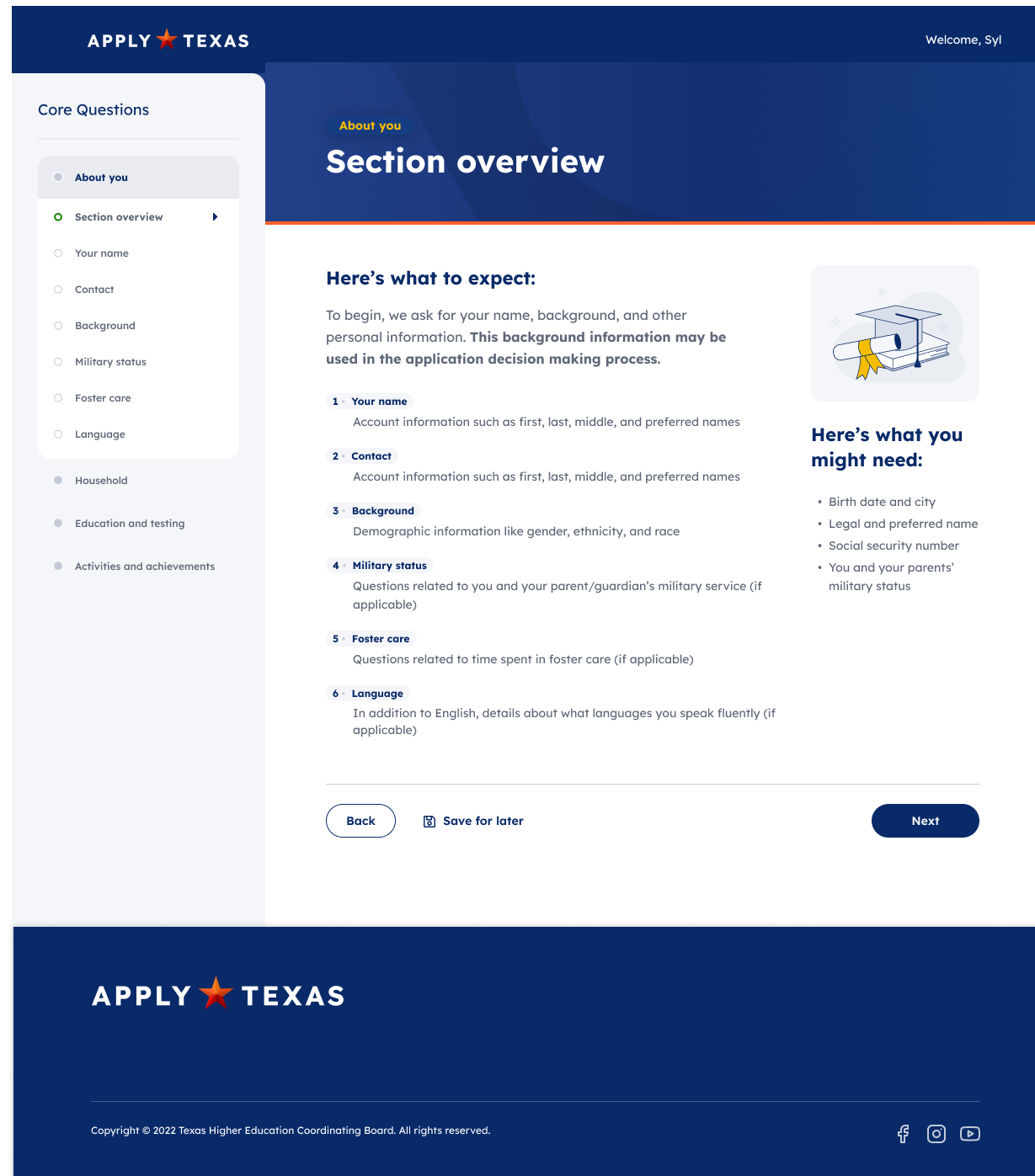
## Structural changes

Common questions across all application types have been migrated into our "Core Questions" and re-organized into more intuitive sub-sections.

# 40

## Language updates

We've updated how we're asking certain questions to improve clarity, remove redundancy, improve scannability for users navigating each cluster of questions.



### Core Questions

- About you
- Section overview
- Your name
- Contact
- Background
- Military status
- Foster care
- Language
- Household
- Education and testing
- Activities and achievements

## About you

### Section overview

#### Here's what to expect:

To begin, we ask for your name, background, and other personal information. **This background information may be used in the application decision making process.**

- Your name**  
Account information such as first, last, middle, and preferred names
- Contact**  
Account information such as first, last, middle, and preferred names
- Background**  
Demographic information like gender, ethnicity, and race
- Military status**  
Questions related to you and your parent/guardian's military service (if applicable)
- Foster care**  
Questions related to time spent in foster care (if applicable)
- Language**  
In addition to English, details about what languages you speak fluently (if applicable)



#### Here's what you might need:

- Birth date and city
- Legal and preferred name
- Social security number
- You and your parents' military status

Back Save for later Next

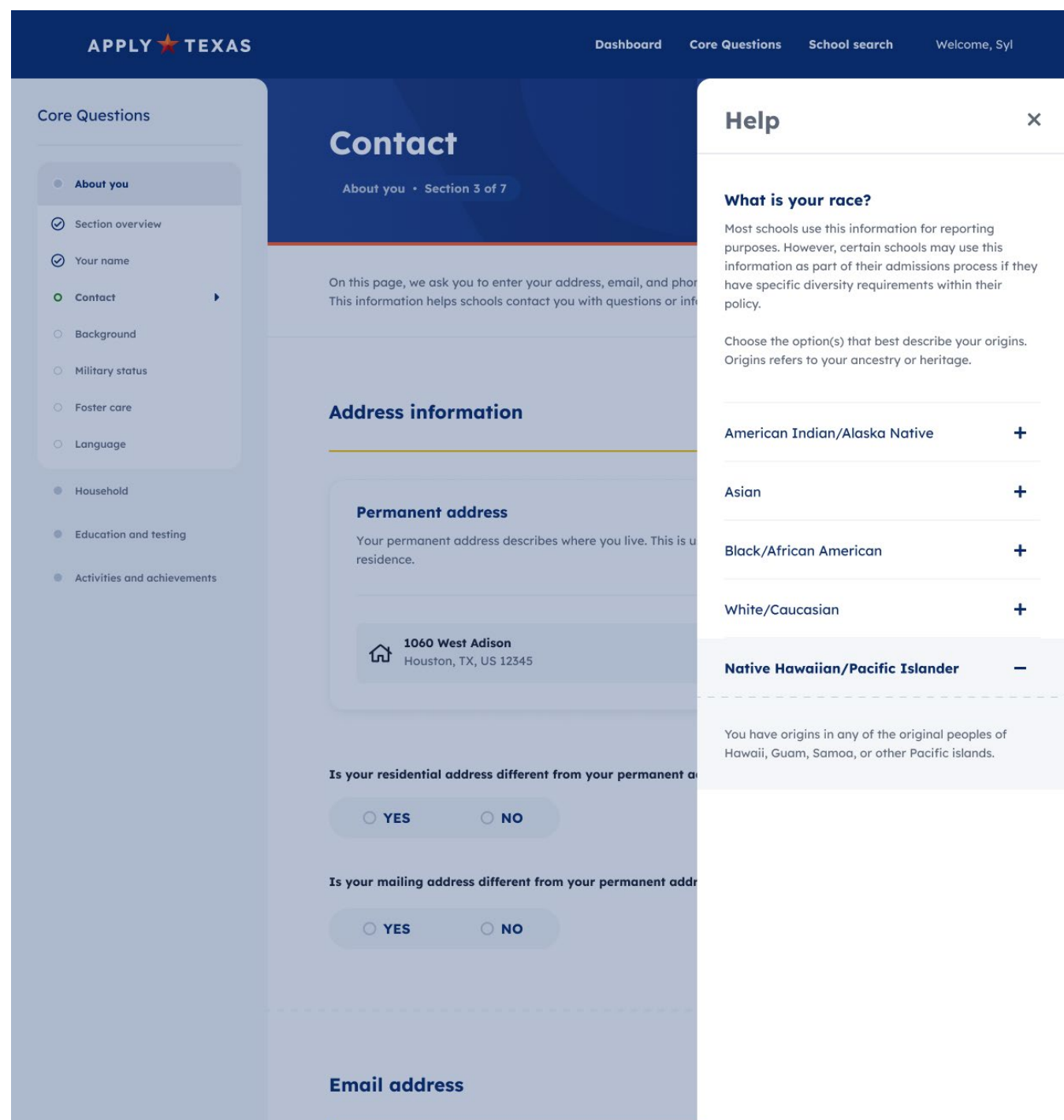
# Overview of Application Question Updates

Following our discovery phase, we've worked with all teams to improve which questions are being asked and how they are being asked.

# 30

## Help articles drafted

Following user and stakeholder interviews, our team flagged questions that held a higher risk of confusion for students. Our teams have worked to draft help articles that can be displayed in-page for users to clarify questions and even provide examples.





## What's next for us?



Conducting end-to-end testing of the migrated system with real data to ensure a solid foundation for a reliable, backwards compatible, and improved ApplyTexas system



Partnering with members of the ApplyTexas Advisory Committee to finalize recommended updates to profile and core application questions



Continuing to collaborate with users and stakeholders to iterate on design updates

## What should you expect?

**JUL  
2023**

THECB will present at TACRAO and materials will be shared with stakeholders for a comment period.

**FALL  
2023**

Institutions will receive a slide deck of the new ApplyTexas to demonstrate to prospective applicants what to expect next year when applying.

**EARLY  
2024**

Institutions will be provided with updated technical requirements for integration and launch prep.

**SPRING  
2024**

Student-facing launch of new ApplyTexas for all open applications.

**JUL 1  
2024**

Student-facing launch of new ApplyTexas for all new applications.