



How might we promote the utilization of the Accessible Technology Labs at Radford University?

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DSN 700 Advanced Design Studio III
Project 4

Problem Statement

How might we promote the utilization of the Accessible Technology Labs at Radford University?

For my final project, I decided to expand on the problem statement from Project 1, which involved understanding the underutilization of the Radford University McConnell Library Accessible Technology Lab. In order to gain more information about the problem, I decided it would be appropriate to meet with the Center for Accessibility Services (CAS) since they support and specialize in accessible technology resources on campus and are the primary point of contact for people looking to utilize these services. After interviewing Alyssa Archer, Instruction Librarian, and Beth Johnson, Head of Access Services and Student Engagement at McConnell Library for Project 1, I learned that the library supports CAS in its efforts by offering an Accessible Technology Lab with extended hours within their space but does not have much direct contact with its users as CAS does.

I set up an interview with CAS to share with them the research I had conducted, insights gained from Project 1, and to determine the next steps. I met with Andrea Sharpe-Robinson, Director of CAS, and Kelly Woodward, CAS Coordinator of Accessible Materials. In the meeting, we clarified what the end goals should be regarding the Accessible Technology Labs. One component was to provide education on the tools that are offered in the lab, because those resources can service a diverse population of people, not just those with disabilities. CAS mentioned that their mission or goal is to be accessible for all and to create an accessible learning university experience. I discussed the importance of clarifying the name and role of the Accessible Technology Labs because of the discrepancies I found in my Walk-a-Mile Immersion from Project 1 with regard to its name and location. I also emphasized the importance of identifying all who access the labs as well as the people and things that help navigate to it. I mentioned this issue was a bigger problem that may resurface when trying to promote the utilization of the spaces and should be addressed. CAS and McConnell Library have action items to immediately address this and will be working together to make sure the name and location of the labs are consistent across all collateral material and the Radford University website.

I asked Sharpe-Robinson and Woodward similar questions, with regard to the labs, as I had with Archer and Johnson from McConnell Library in Project 1. I learned that CAS currently promotes Accessible Technology Labs through their website and in-person interactions by way of departmental meetings/trainings and new faculty orientations. Students register with CAS to receive special accommodations for their disability. Anyone on campus can refer students who might need accessible services to CAS. CAS does not currently have any marketing materials promoting the Accessible Technology Labs, specifically, but there are materials advertising the CAS office.

Out of the interview, it was decided that we should broaden and restructure the problem statement to include the Russell Hall location because both Accessible Technology Labs are essentially the same in two different locations. Hence, the problem statement was revised.

The challenge with the McConnell Library location, from CAS's perspective, is not being able to monitor who is using the space and making sure technology isn't being damaged. As stated in Project 1, Johnson said it is hard for the library to come up with best solutions for that location because they do not know how to go about helping CAS promote the lab. The nature of the services CAS provides are not necessarily in their skill set and maintaining student confidentiality is a concern. CAS also mentioned the McConnell Library location has challenges in its size and aesthetics. CAS believes the McConnell Library location is more of an afterthought, whereas the Russell Hall location is in a visible, heavy traffic area of campus. I found out that one of the big reasons for having two different locations is driven by Radford University's mission to provide access to accessible tools, which both labs provide; this meets legal obligations for the university and reaches not only the students, faculty and staff, but also the community. It was mentioned that there is a need for disability awareness in our culture as a whole. Disability is more often accommodated in order to meet legal obligations. It is believed if the mentality of our culture shifts, this would trickle down and help bring more awareness to accessible services. The challenges facing both the McConnell Library and Russell Hall Accessible Technology Labs involve finding ways to promote the labs to everyone, not only those with a disability, and educating people on how and why they may want to utilize the technology offered in the spaces.

In order to inform the best solutions for this problem I stressed the importance of obtaining firsthand experience from a student, or any user of the Accessible Technology Labs, to understand why the ideal user isn't currently using the space and to find out how might we inform them or encourage their use of it. So, we brainstormed ways to go about obtaining and identifying those users. Woodward actually maintains a database of all students registered with CAS, but due to student confidentiality that information cannot be released. In order to



maintain student privacy, although surveys are not a preferred method of obtaining information and getting feedback, it was ultimately determined to be the most appropriate way to go about reaching users of the space. In order to maintain the student's privacy, we decided to email an anonymous survey to registered CAS students asking for feedback and their experience using the Accessible Technology Labs.

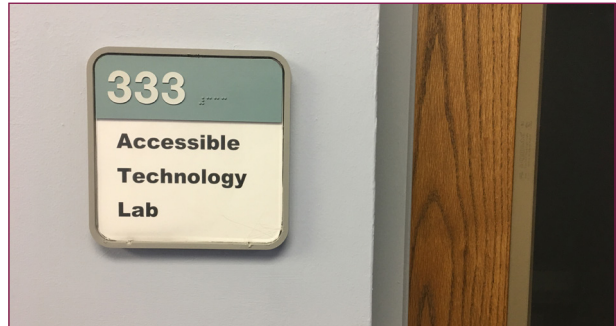
Andrea Sharpe-Robinson (left) and Kelly Woodward (right) pictured reviewing the information presented at the meeting.

I created a Google Form survey and drafted an email that Woodward sent out to the CAS student listserv, which stated the following: “The Center for Accessibility Services wants to promote the utilization of the Accessible Technology Labs at Radford University and is looking to take steps to make this resource more useful to our students and the campus community. Please share your experience accessing and using the Accessible Technology Labs on campus by taking this brief survey by Tuesday, November 27, 2018: <https://goo.gl/forms/WTYfsR2EvRLMmFC2>.” I made sure to include questions that elicited information that could be used in the methods we would be implementing in a design thinking workshop. I also created a flier that CAS and McConnell Library posted in their spaces to promote survey participation.

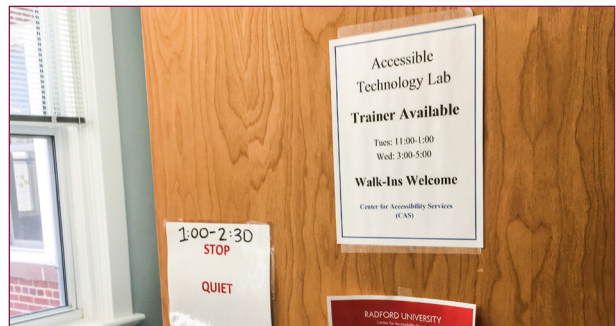


*Survey flier posted in the Russell Hall Accessible Technology Lab location.
A close-up of the flier can be viewed at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g66Xp5psMDV1bH0QNXiyWQEz2V5eQiik/view?usp=sharing>.*

McConnell Library Accessible Technology Lab



Russell Hall Accessible Technology Lab



Research Participants

Students were given two weeks to fill out the survey. I included a question at the end of the survey asking for their contact information if they were willing to further assist in our efforts to improve the utilization of the Accessible Technology Labs. Six students responded to the survey and one indicated they would be willing to be contacted but did not provide their information. However, I was able to incorporate the information gathered from the survey into methods selected for this project.

I facilitated a design thinking workshop and selected the following methods to expand our understanding about the problem: Experience Diagramming; Concept Mapping; Rose, Thorn, Bud with Affinity Clustering; and Importance/Difficulty Matrix. I created an Experience Diagram of my Walk-a-Mile-Immersion from Project 1, as suggested, and a Concept Map of key findings from the survey to share with participants during the workshop. Participants in the design thinking workshop were Andrea Sharpe-Robinson, Director of CAS; Kate Daby, Assistant Director of CAS; Kelly Woodward, CAS Coordinator of Accessible Materials; Beth Johnson, Head of Access Services and Student Engagement at McConnell Library; Karen Montgomery, McConnell Library Administrative Assistant; and Alyssa Archer, Instruction Librarian.



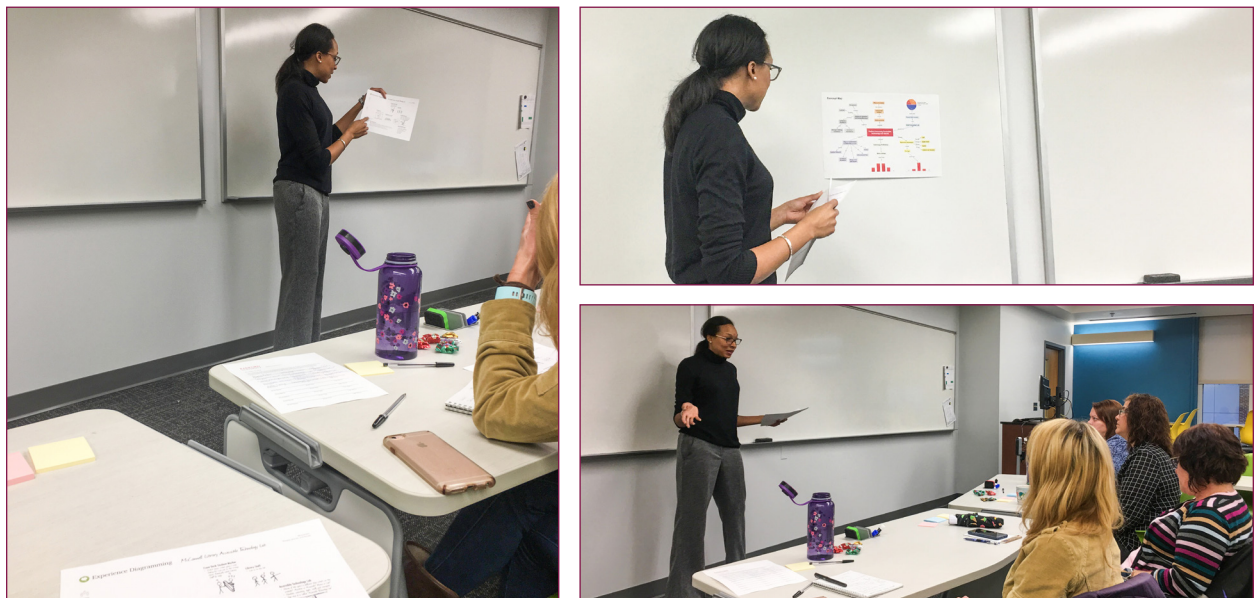
Research participants from left to right: Beth Johnson, Karen Montgomery, Kelly Woodward, Kate Daby, Alyssa Archer and Andrea Sharpe-Robinson.

Documentation of Process & Final Method Implementations

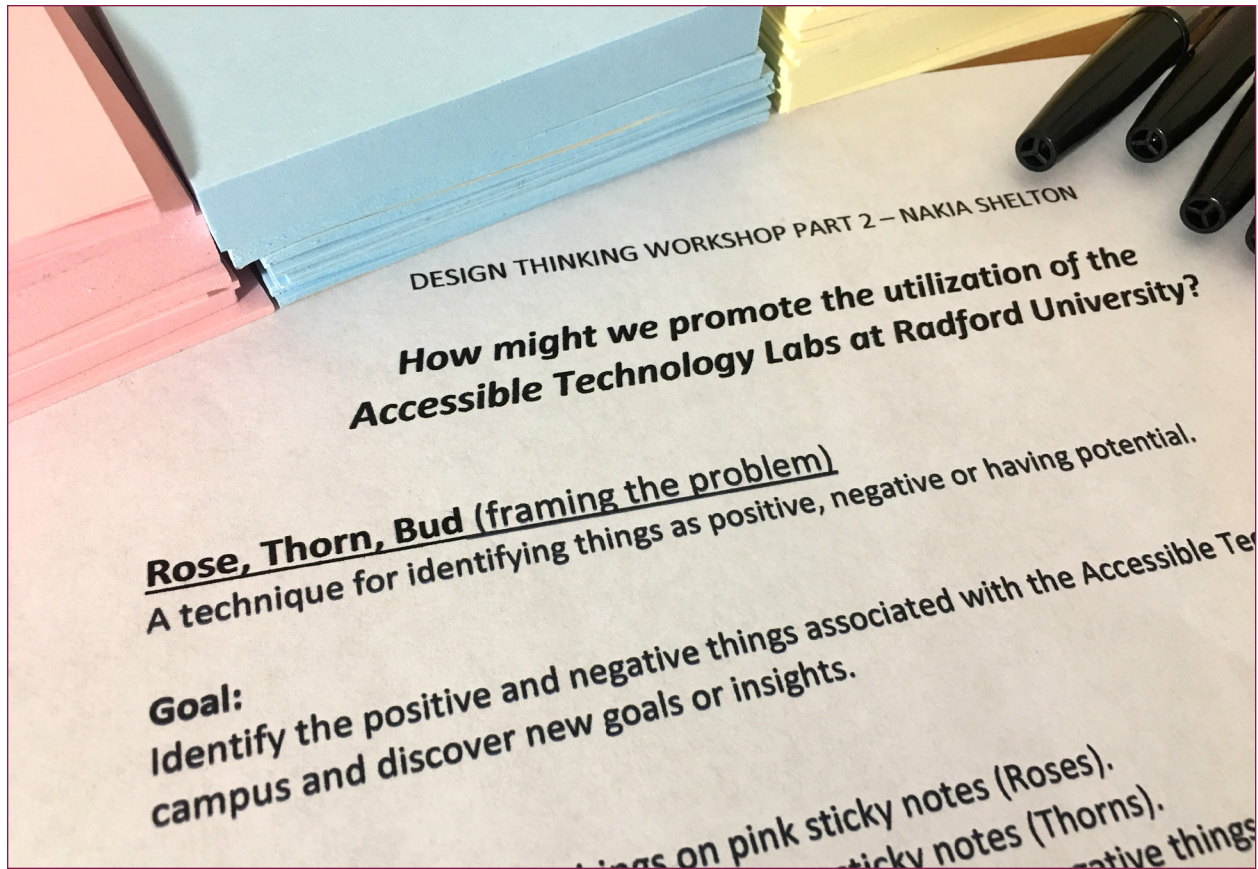
Before implementing the methods focused on in the workshop, I shared with participants the information gathered from my meeting with CAS and the research conducted leading to the workshop. I first shared the Experience Diagram of my Walk-a-Mile-Immersion conducted in Project 1, which was difficult to do because the discoveries were unfavorable. Participants were very concerned and shocked by the findings, however, a greater awareness was established and steps are being taken to resolve the issues experienced. The Experience Diagram can be seen at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v0hoZRaup4OQOJI6sWyEnWmFhegHY3mn/view?usp=sharing>.

Next, I shared a Concept Map of key findings from the survey, which can be viewed at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aKRA61IRXyB2bra2yq-m7Q0TZEY6UeTK/view?usp=sharing>. The survey confirmed much of what was assumed. Among survey respondents, the Russell Hall location was the most well-known lab, primarily because of the CAS office. None of the respondents have been to the McConnell Library location and could not provide feedback; only one person was presumed to have visited the Russell Hall location, based on the responses. The survey indicated awareness of the Accessible Technology Labs was about average. Proficiency of technology offered in the labs was shown to be below average. Most were made aware of the resources through either the CAS office, Quest, Quest Guide or through their parents and teachers. Respondents also provided suggestions for additional assistive technology and services for the labs as well as ways to better understand and utilize the resources offered.

I incorporated survey responses into the Rose, Thorn, Bud method to represent the student voice. Everyone participated in implementing the Rose, Thorn, Bud with Affinity Clustering method and the Importance/Difficulty Matrix. I created instructional handouts to aid in facilitating the workshop and executing the strategies.



Sharing the Experience Diagram, Concept Map, and discussing research findings.



Rose, Thorn, Bud

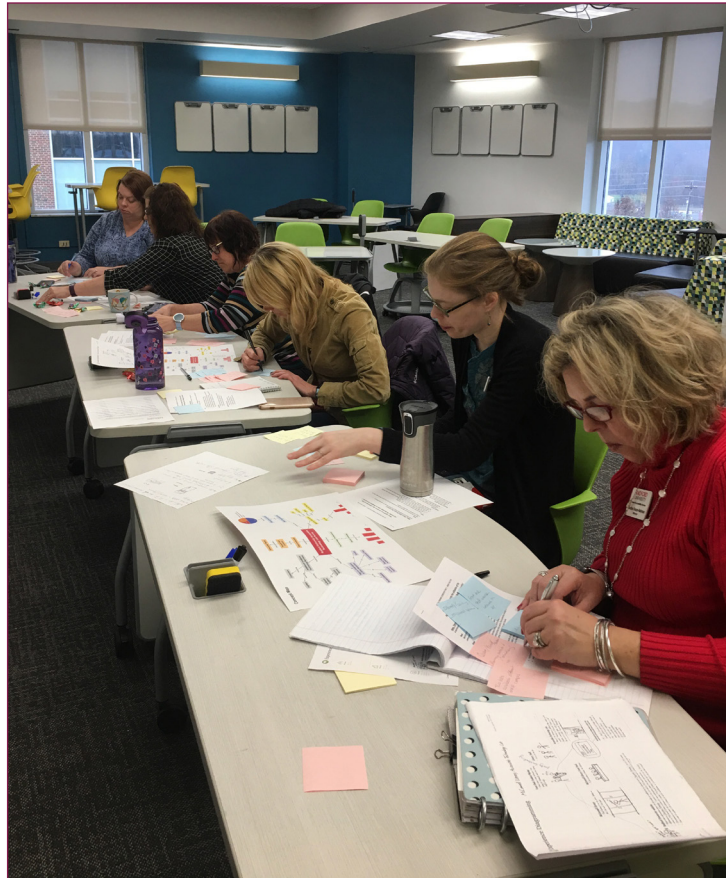
The goal of the method was to identify the positive and negative things associated with the Accessible Technology Labs on campus and discover new goals or insights. Materials provided for participants, to conduct the method, were the Rose, Thorn, Bud instructional handout, sticky notes, pens, dry erase markers, and a dry erase board. The instructional handout predominately served as my guide to effectively explain and facilitate implementation of the method to participants.

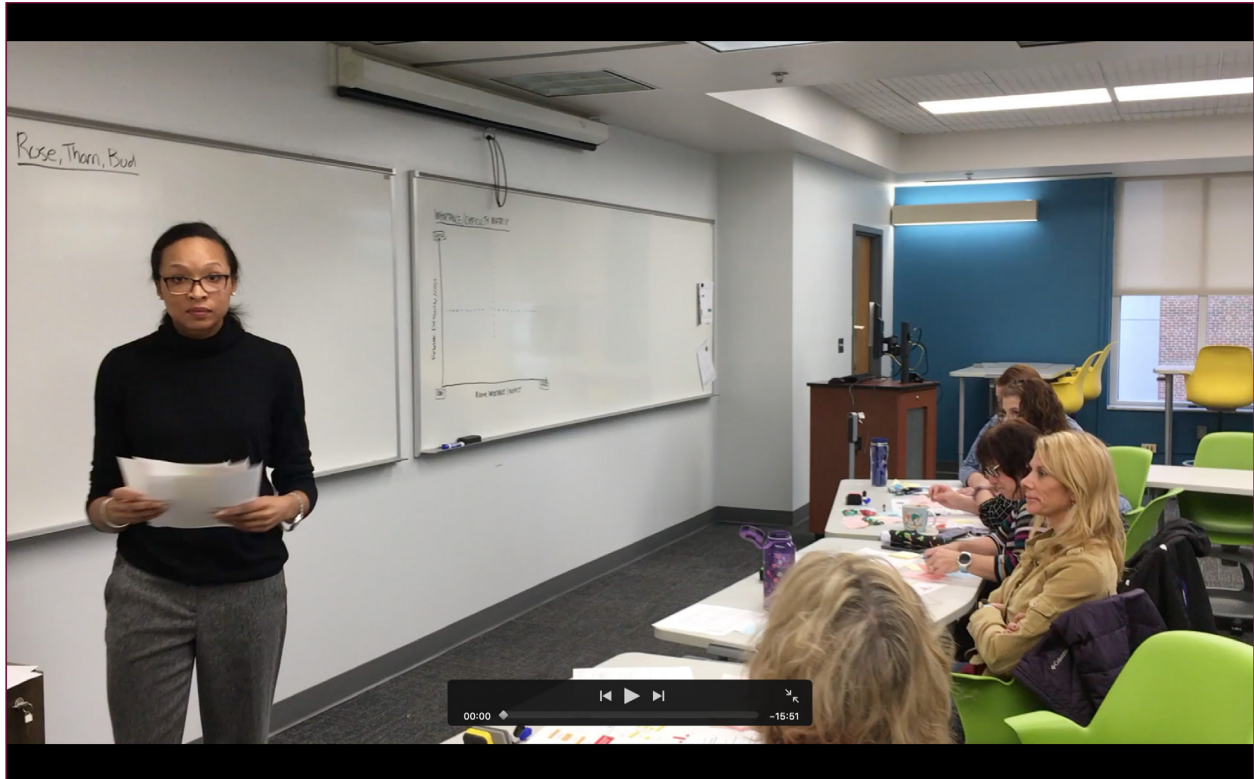
The instructional handout stated the following:

1. Write positive things on pink sticky notes (Roses).
2. Write negative things on blue sticky notes (Thorns).
3. Write the opportunities to overcome the negative things on yellow sticky notes (Buds).
4. Plot data points on white board and group by category.
5. Capture ideas by clustering similar data points. Find similarities among the data points by grouping them together. Circle and label each cluster.

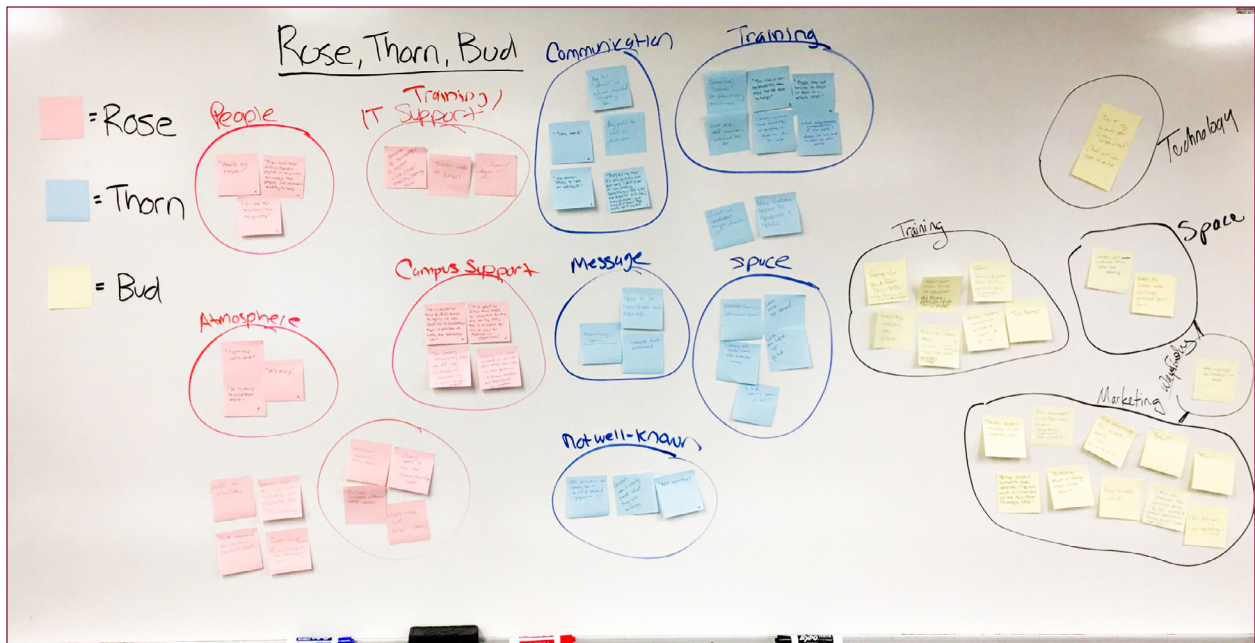
Below are photos of participants implementing the Rose, Thorn, Bud method:

Participants, individually, writing out issues, insights and ideas on sticky notes.

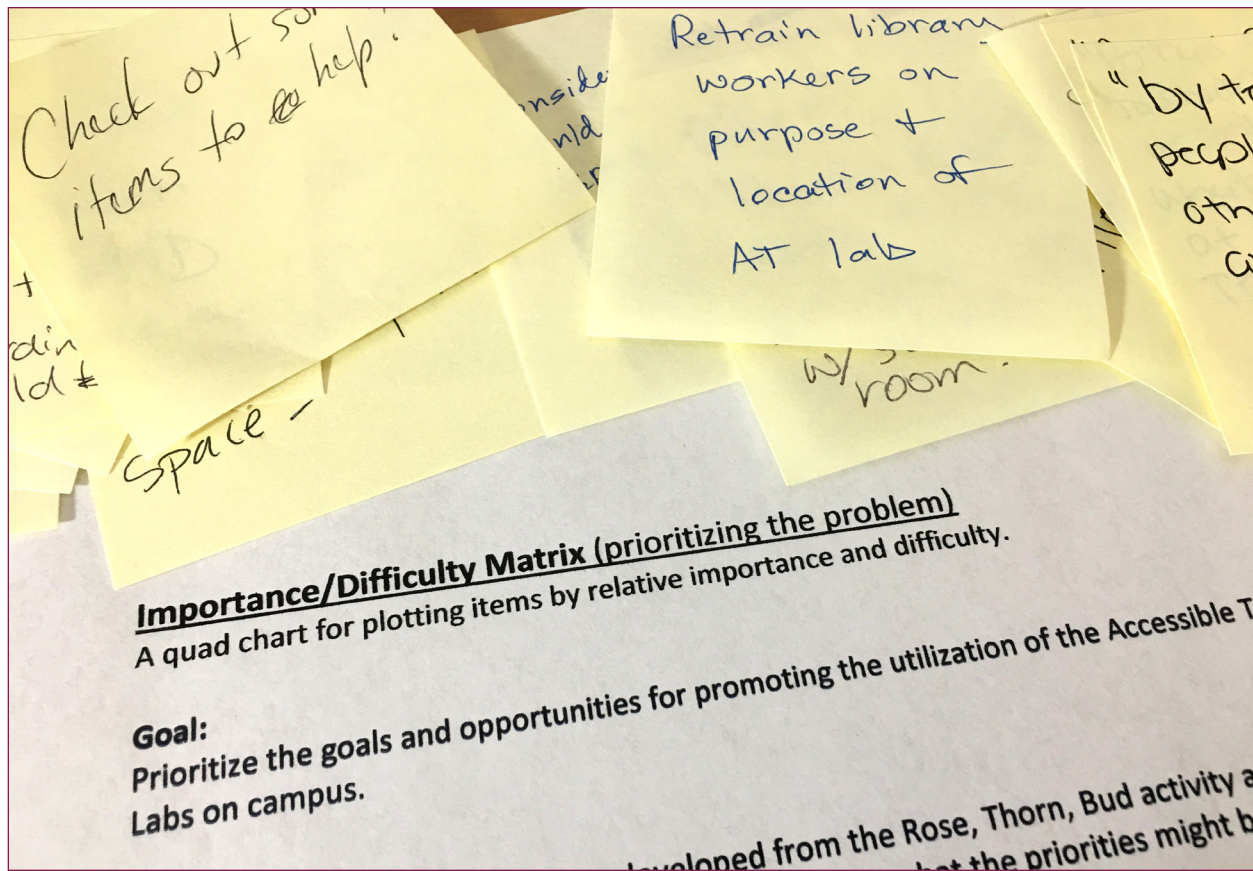




A video of the Rose, Thorn, Bud discussion and implementation can be seen at the following link:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1osFfdNRe3AeTYPewq3FO2DJitFLIrEwa/view?usp=sharing>.



Final Rose, Thorn, Bud with Affinity Clustering implementation.



Importance/Difficulty Matrix

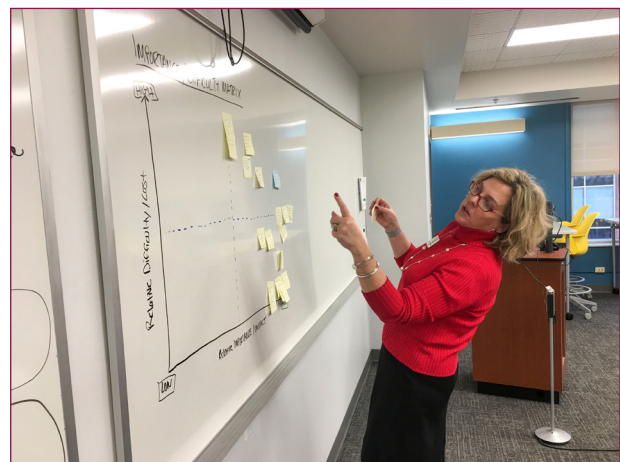
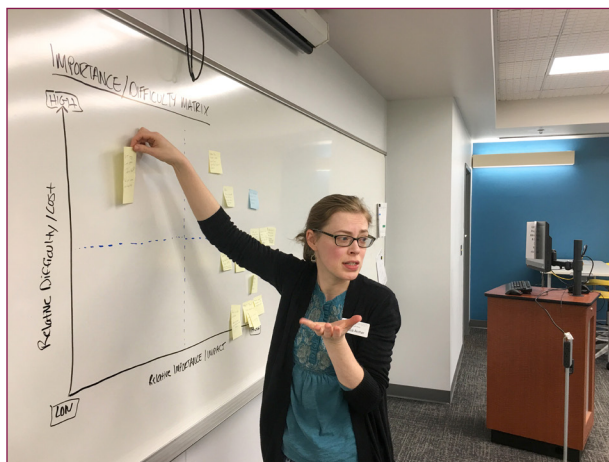
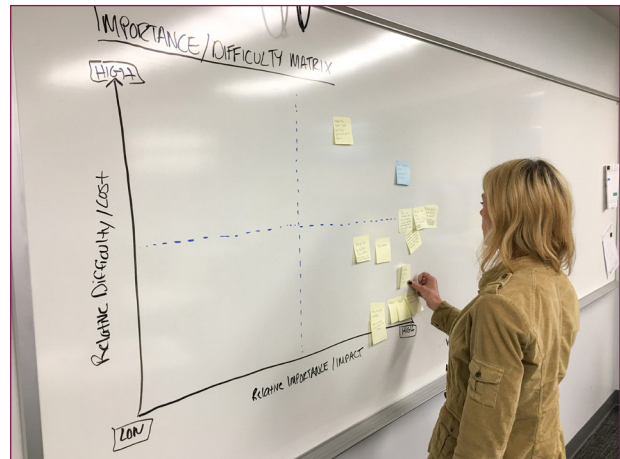
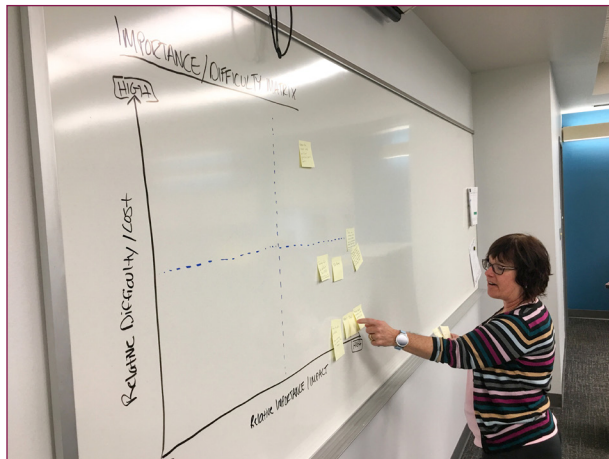
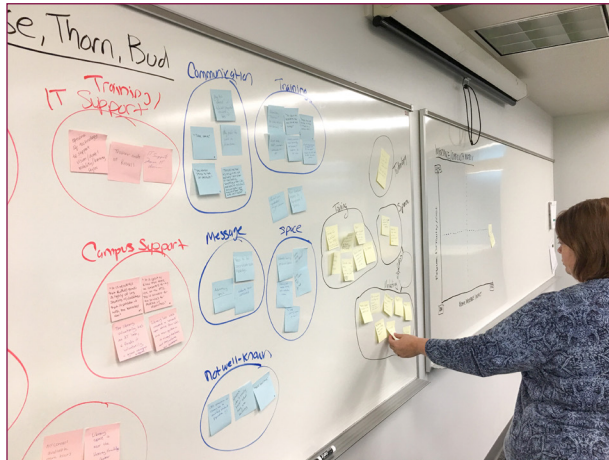
The goal of the method was to prioritize the goals and opportunities for promoting the utilization of the Accessible Technology Labs on campus. Materials provided for participants, to conduct the method, were the Importance/Difficulty Matrix instructional handout and a diagram of the quad chart drawn on a dry erase board. The instructional handout predominately served as my guide to effectively explain and facilitate implementation of the method to participants. Participants were instructed to take the “Buds” or opportunities developed from the Rose, Thorn, Bud activity and plot them into an Importance/Difficulty Matrix in order to think about what the priorities might be moving forward.

The instructional handout stated the following:

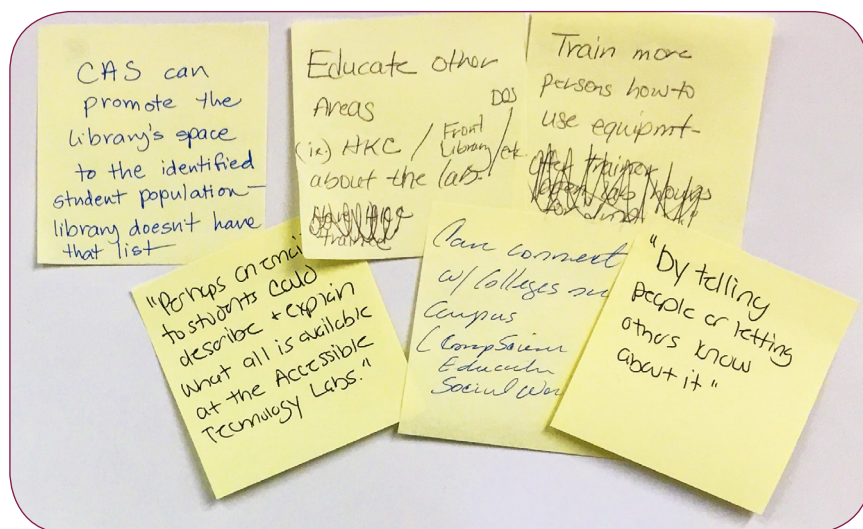
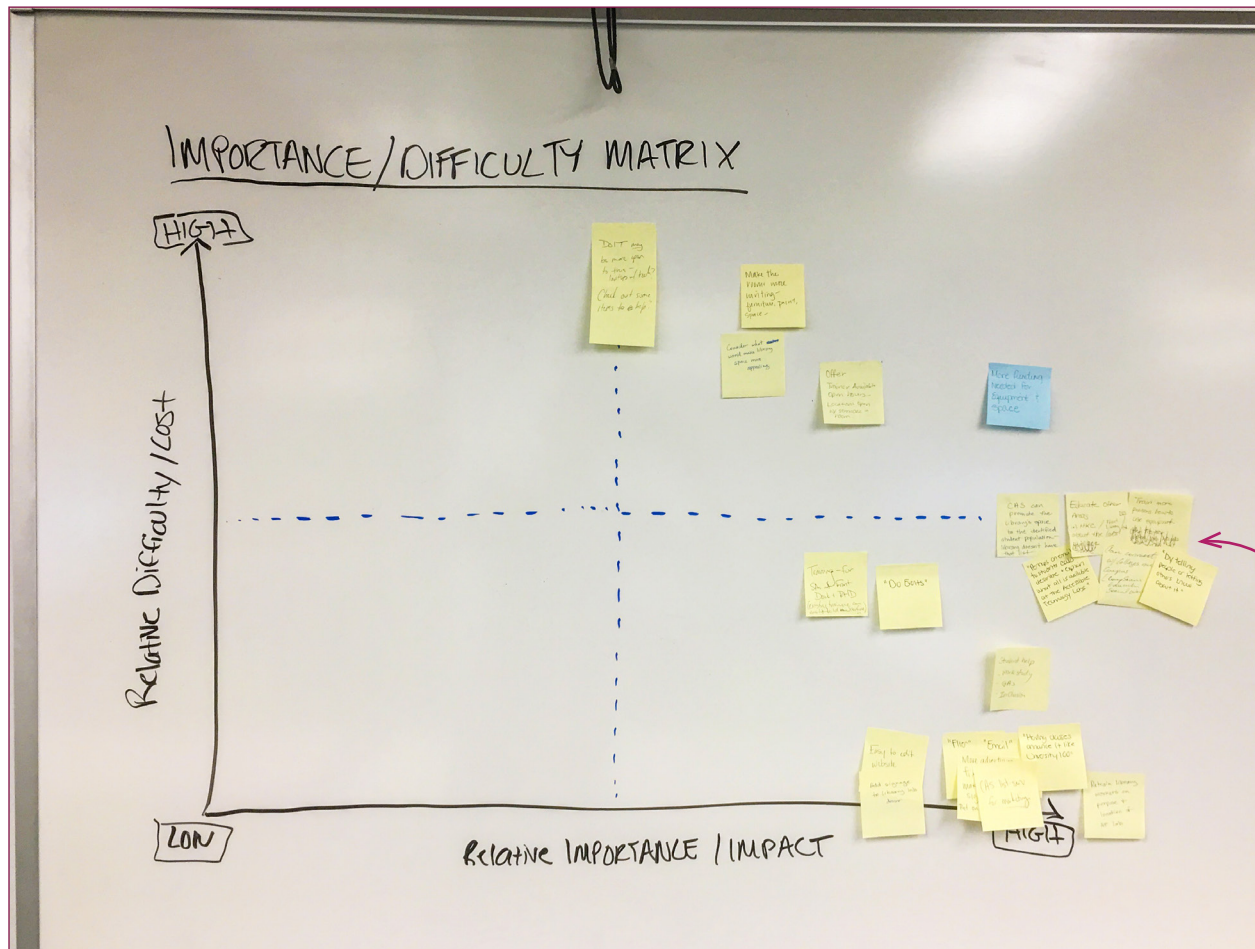
- Plot items horizontally by relative importance.
- Plot items vertically by relative difficulty.
- Consider the quadrants where items get placed.
- Look for related groupings and set priorities.

Below are photos of participants implementing the Importance/Difficulty Matrix method:

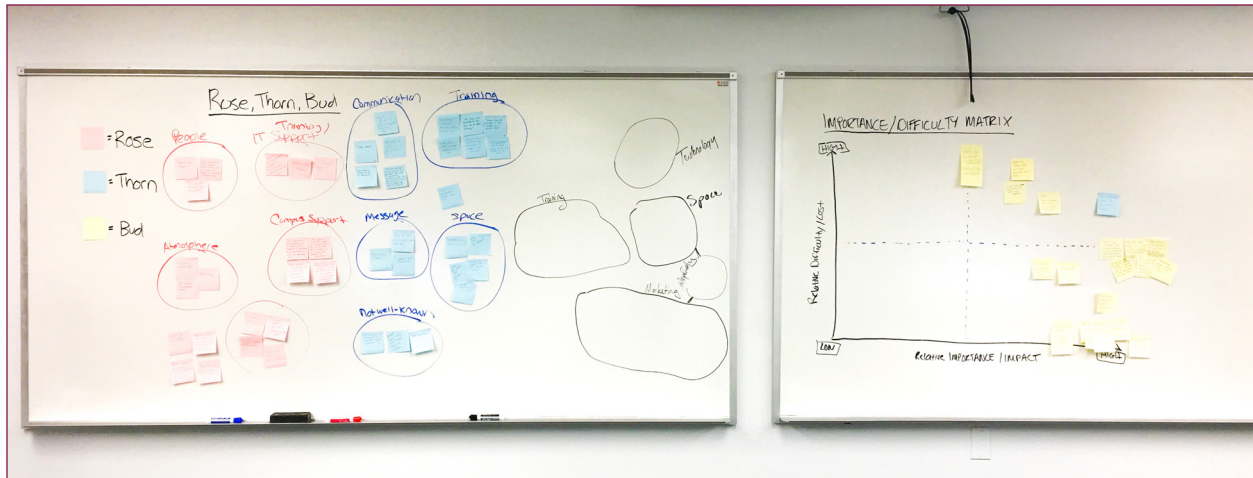
Participants deliberating and plotting insights from the Rose, Thorn, Bud method on the quad chart.



Final Importance/Difficulty Matrix implementation.



Close-up of the top priorities identified.



Closing Thoughts

Restructuring the problem statement from Project 1 to focus on promoting the utilization of both the Russell Hall and the McConnell Library Accessible Technology Lab locations provided greater clarity and direction for problem solving. Although it was not truly representative of all users of the Accessible Technology Labs, obtaining feedback from students through the survey provided insight into the problem and suggestions for improving and promoting the spaces. Incorporating student perspectives into the implementation of methods confirmed assumptions and informed ideas on ways to move forward. Plotting the insights from the Rose, Thorn, Bud method into the Importance/Difficulty Matrix helped participants prioritize the opportunities for change, which can be developed into an action plan moving forward. Overall, I believe a better understanding about the problem was attained from the research conducted and methods implemented.