

Driving Home Design Research

Columbus, Ohio USA

A collaborative design case study for developing positive parking experiences on a university campus

This collaboration is a unique case study in student-led design research. It highlights what happens when the process supports an open-ended solution that's responsive to the research. The results inspired the collaborating institution to not only extend the project duration, but expand the research scope.

CampusParc, a university campus parking provider, engaged students and faculty in The Ohio State University's Department of Design to determine how its brand and service can contribute to a more positive parking experience in the 36,000+ spaces in garages and surface lots—particularly for visitors to the main campus.

This year-long collaboration involved multiple design-definition sessions between design faculty and a CampusParc design strategy team, an 8-week graduate/undergraduate design-led Discovery Workshop, and a full-semester Advanced Visual Communication Design Studio course. The outcomes included discovery themes, journey maps, observation findings, problem statements, design opportunity proposals, and concept prototypes.

Throughout this process, the students worked with, presented to, and received feedback from design faculty and the CampusParc team. Additionally, students engaged stakeholders, university staff, and parking visitors. By immersing students into a complex practice-based project, the students applied their design research and visual communication coursework in environmental graphics and branding.

CampusParc is realizing new design opportunities, embracing proposed design themes and concepts, and shifting their role from a 'utility' to a 'service' provider. This new mindset is motivating CampusParc to focus on relationship building and crafting a friendly and approachable brand language that interjects a sense of delight while supporting confidence and loyalty.

Ohio State faculty and students:

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CampusParc Representatives:

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David Hoover, Corporate Communications Director
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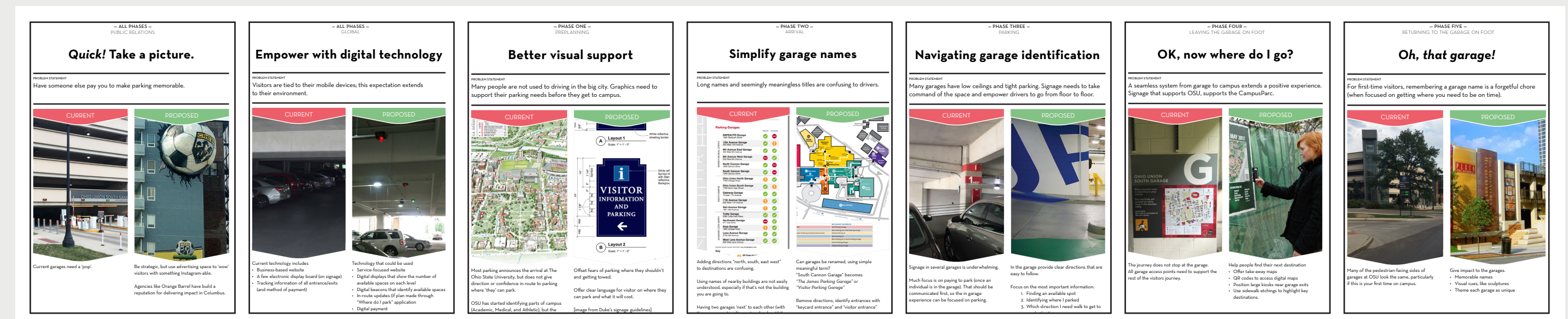
Discovery Workshop (May–June 2016)

The Discovery Workshop focused on the parking experience of prospective students and their families. This workshop followed a set timeline: Week 1) introduce project and define scope; Week 2) conduct research; Weeks 3 & 4) identify stakeholders; Weeks 5 & 6) map user-journeys; Week 7) frame situations; Week 8) share insights.

The plan was set around two key activities: Stakeholder and User-Journey Mapping. These activities were supplemented throughout the project with web-based research, observations, on-site user interviews, and meetings with representatives of the university directly involved with correspondences related to orientation activities.

The students discovered 23 opportunities. They were presented as both an informal exhibit and a final presentation to CampusParc. Each exhibit poster framed a specific opportunity: problem statements, current conditions, proposed conditions, included images, and a short discussion on recommendations. The presentation documented both the 8-week process and the findings from the workshop.

The Discovery Workshop served to understand many of the conditions surrounding the university's parking experience. The posters and presentation would be carried forward to inform future project phases.



Partial set of exhibit posters from the final exhibit during week 8 of the Discover Workshop.

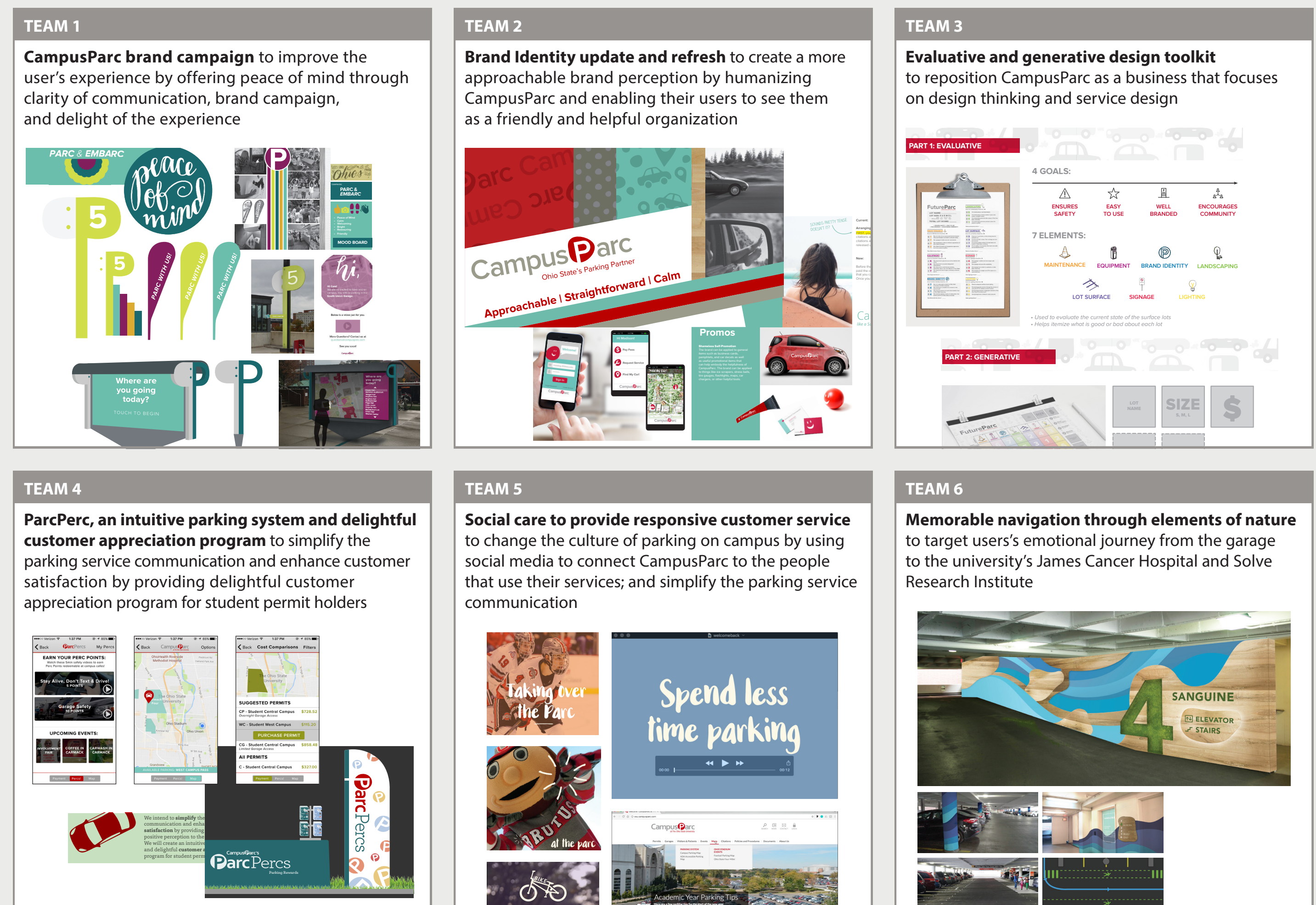
Design Concepts (August–December 2016)

The next phase of the project built upon the workshop's research within a senior-level visual communication course. It was divided into a timeline with four phases: 1) Discover, 3 weeks; 2) Define, 2 weeks; 3) Explore, 4 weeks; and 4) Frame solutions, 7 weeks. These phases emphasized the processes of a user-centered and iterative design approach. At the end of each phase each team would present their current work, and each individual would share their reflections.

After their initial research and a presentation from the Discovery Workshop team, the six student teams selected their specific research scope. Each team was responsible for the application of planning, analyzing, and designing in two/three-dimensional visual communications and information design systems; with an emphasis on application of design research, analysis techniques, design strategic thinking, concept development, implementation, and design evaluation.

The design faculty used studio time to meet with individual teams, providing specific direction and instruction. Since project topics were divergent, students worked within their team both in- and outside of class, only to re-group during end-of-phase presentations. This provided each team control in their project needs. Additionally, this autonomy fostered meaningful discussion during projects presentations, with unique perspectives, supporting primary research, and learning.

Teams presented their resolved design concepts to CampusParc representatives. Their final presentations included a 3 to 5-minute video that used a narrative to realized the impact of their proposed solution. The projects each provided CampusParc with unexpected and unique insights from 'blue sky' opportunities to step-by-step pathways toward pragmatic partnerships.



Images from final concept presentations during week 15 of the Design Concepts

Outcomes and Future work

The two sponsored design research projects in this year-long collaboration provided new and exciting opportunities. CampusParc and the department faculty met throughout the Spring and Summer of 2017 to prioritize and map the next year's steps.

At the start of Autumn 2017 the team decided to advance "The future new garage" inspired by Team 6's project and formed a design/technology partnership to explore virtual reality

prototyping. A 9-month collaboration is now underway for "Human-centered and desirable parking experience." This collaboration currently has over 25 team members from parking system management, patient experience experts, OSU faculty and students, design practitioners, and technology application developers identifying core design values to create a holistic user journey by exploring physical and emotional experiences related to the future parking experience at The Ohio State University.



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Organization

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