Advenus

Ana M. Coello-Amado

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ADVENUS

by

ANA COELLO

Under the direction of Jason Snape, MFA

ABSTRACT

Advenus is a graphic design project that explores the challenges and barriers that international students encounter in the United States while seeking employment. For many international students, the U.S. promises freedom, safety, and equality attained through hard work. Despite the value and knowledge that international students can offer to the U.S. economy, government policies regarding immigration make starting a new life here a challenge. For most individuals, it starts – or ends – with a lottery system. Advenus provides resources in digital and print formats, like a website and posters, to help international students navigate the immigration process, understand the different types of visas, answer specific questions, and prepare for job applications, with the goal of overcoming obstacles that come up during the process. Advenus (Latin for foreign) will also become a platform to share stories of those who have gone through the process - a vehicle for immigrant voices.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, International student, Graphic design, Web design, Editorial design, Typography, UX design.
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by

ANA COELLO

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Master of Fine Arts

in the College of the Arts

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2020
ADVENUS

by

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DEDICATION

Para mi familia.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... V

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................... VIII

1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 1

2 ADVENUS .................................................................................................................................. 8

3 U.S. IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ..................................................................................................... 9

  3.1 History .................................................................................................................................. 9
  3.2 Student Visa .......................................................................................................................... 10
  3.3 H-1B visa ............................................................................................................................... 12
  3.4 Other types of visas ............................................................................................................... 14

4 CASE STUDIES .......................................................................................................................... 16

  4.1 USCIS Website ....................................................................................................................... 16
  4.2 Rocket Mortgage .................................................................................................................... 18
  4.3 LegalZoom ............................................................................................................................. 20
  4.4 Current .................................................................................................................................. 21
  4.5 NANSEN Magazine ............................................................................................................... 23

5 DESIGN COMPONENTS ............................................................................................................. 25

  5.1 Typography ............................................................................................................................ 25
  5.2 Information Architecture (IA) ............................................................................................... 26
  5.3 User Experience (UX) ............................................................................................................ 27
  5.4 Web design ............................................................................................................................ 27
  5.5 Editorial design ....................................................................................................................... 28
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kleptocracy Exhibition. Ana Coello, 2017</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kleptocracy Exhibition. Ana Coello, 2017</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kleptocracy Exhibition. Ana Coello, 2017</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>WAAA campaign. Ana Coello and Constanza Loustalet, 2019</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>WAAA campaign. Ana Coello and Constanza Loustalet, 2019</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>USCIS homepage. USCIS website, <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>USCIS H-1B information. USCIS website, <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rocket Mortgage application. Rocket Mortgage, <a href="http://www.rocketmortage.com">www.rocketmortage.com</a></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Advenus logo. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Visby typeface. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fira Sans type family. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Advenus colors. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Advenus homepage. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Visas section. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Visas highlight. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student visa section. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>CPT page. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>OPT page. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 23. H-1B page. Ana Coello, 2020 .......................................................... 38
Figure 24. Employment-based immigration page. Ana Coello, 2020 .................. 39
Figure 25. EB-2 page. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................................ 40
Figure 26. EB-3 page. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................................ 41
Figure 27. Other types of visas page. Ana Coello, 2020 ........................................ 42
Figure 28. O1 page. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................................ 43
Figure 29. TN page. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................................ 44
Figure 30. Tips page. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................................ 45
Figure 31. Job interview tips page. Ana Coello, 2020 .......................................... 46
Figure 32. Stories page. Ana Coello, 2020 ........................................................... 47
Figure 33. Stories page quote. Ana Coello, 2020 .................................................. 48
Figure 34. Stories page video. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................................... 49
Figure 35. Resources page. Ana Coello, 2020 ...................................................... 50
Figure 36. Immigration forms page. Ana Coello, 2020 ........................................ 51
Figure 37. About page. Ana Coello, 2020 ............................................................ 52
Figure 38. Posters in human scale. Ana Coello, 2020 ......................................... 53
Figure 39. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 54
Figure 40. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 55
Figure 41. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 56
Figure 42. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 57
Figure 43. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 58
Figure 44. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ....................................................... 59
Figure 45. Mockup of Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020 ................................. 60
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Mockup of Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Flyer mockup. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Flyer front side. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Flyer back side. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Map wall mockup. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Website wall mockup. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Poster wall mockup. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53-60</td>
<td>Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020</td>
<td>73-80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

The United States has long been characterized by its history of accommodating a large number of immigrants. It is a culturally diverse country with many individuals wanting to study, work, and ultimately build a life in the U.S. According to the Pew Research Center, more than 40 million people currently living in the U.S. were born in another country.¹

For immigrants like myself, the U.S. promises the American dream. Writer and historian James Truslow Adams coined this term in his 1931 book *Epic of America*. For Adams, his dream is "of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement."² While the definition of the American dream has shifted throughout the years, for foreigners it still references a safe environment with opportunity and access to resources through hard work and perseverance, knowing that your efforts are valued and can yield results. America has always been a land of opportunities, the land of promise.³

Deciding to emigrate is not easy. Whatever the reason may be, you leave behind family, friends, and the safety of your home, your culture, and even your language. Many individuals decide to immigrate to the U.S. to pursue higher education. In my case, studying abroad allowed me to immerse myself in a different culture, practice my language skills, explore new mediums and ideas related to my field, and grow both personally and professionally.

While my original plans involved going back to Venezuela and applying the knowledge and skills gained from studying abroad, I felt limited in my eagerness to grow professionally because of the current political situation in Venezuela. This has guided my drive to find a way to

³ Ibid, 214.
stay in the U.S. and develop my professional career. A lot can change in three years, and while Venezuela will always be where I was born and raised, the U.S. has slowly become my home. It is the place where want to think about my future and where I want to create new memories and experiences. For me, the sense of being an immigrant has never left. It will most likely never fade away.

Since moving to the U.S., issues of social justice have been a crucial part of who I am and have slowly shaped the type of work I want to do. During Fall 2017, I was introduced to design thinking and the idea of developing an exhibition based on a social issue. Kleptocracy became the starting point of my interest in using graphic design to create an impact. I ultimately chose to work with illustrating the extent of corruption in Venezuela to others. This project allowed me to consider design on a bigger scale and how it can be translated into space.

Kleptocracy is the result of a research-based project about corruption in Venezuela. The exhibit focuses on the reality of Venezuela as a consequence of corruption and highlights economic, health and food crises by creating a past, present, and future overview.

Because the exhibition relies on dense and complicated information, the design elements presented are subtle to minimize distraction for viewers. The exhibition uses the three colors of the Venezuelan flag to divide the space, as well the Helvetica typeface to highlight specific information throughout the room. Most of the displays focus on graphic and photographic elements. The exhibit presents a graphic timeline with presidents in Venezuela’s history from 1813 to 1994 and photos from the ’20s, ’50s, ’60s, showing how Venezuela looked throughout the years. This section of the space is color-coded with red, for its association with power, war, and danger, as well as to create a visual contrast to the black and white photographs (Figure 1).
The middle walls of the exhibition focus on the current situation Venezuela is facing and those who are responsible for it. Using black and white images and highlighting elements in red, these walls have information on historical changes that both Chavez and Maduro made in Venezuela throughout their time (Figure 2).
The exhibition also has a graphic that compares the Venezuelan Bolivar to the U.S. dollar between years, creating a visual representation on how much the bolivar has lost its value. The last section of the exhibition focuses on the future. A wall reveals the word *esperanza* (hope in Spanish) and its different translations. By displaying photographs of the future of Venezuela and all it has to offer as a very diverse country, this exhibition shows that hope will prevail (Figure 3).

*Figure 2. Kleptocracy Exhibition. Ana Coello, 2017*
When I had the opportunity to design a campaign to persuade the beliefs of a targeted audience in Spring 2019, I was immediately interested in working with immigration. The result was a campaign about the misconception of Latino immigrants in the U.S. This project was a turning point in my work with immigration as a social issue, not only because I am an immigrant but also because it is relevant to the current global political climate.

The idea behind this campaign is to showcase similarities between people from different countries in America. Students are depicted in social media posts and posters to describe who they are by using self-identifiable descriptions of their interests and where they are from. Posts also highlight facts from different countries in America, hoping to let viewers know information on what makes these countries unique and how much they have to offer (Figure 4).
The posters show individuals in black and white photography, using one color (neon green) to highlight information. This color was chosen because it does not represent any specific country, allowing the design to be more neutral. A bold typeface (Avenir) emphasizes certain aspects of each individual, allowing the design to be read from a distance because of the size and placement of the information (Figure 5). *We are all Americans* also features videos interviewing U.S. citizens and Latinos, emphasizing their similarities. The objective of this campaign is to raise awareness and educate people about the similarities between individuals, promoting the idea that it does not matter where we come from, that *we are all Americans.*
It is because of my interest in immigration that Advenus tries to dismantle the convoluted process that international students face while seeking employment in the U.S. Despite the experience that immigration can offer, it makes starting a new life challenging. The purpose of this work is to help minimize mistakes made during the process by applying graphic design elements to organize and display complex data. As designers, we are taught to become problem-solvers by creating projects that consumers can relate to.

The target audience for this project are international students who are about to graduate from an American university and hope to find employment as a route to stay in the country. To tackle this issue, Advenus is a digital platform that assists international students in navigating the
immigration process, understanding the different types of visas, and preparing students for job applications. *Advenus* will also become a platform to share stories of those who have gone through the process. This will be achieved through posters and flyers marketing the website and guiding individuals to use this tool.

2 ADVENUS

*Advenus* is Latin for foreign, migrant, or alien. It is the title for this project because of its meaning, as international students are foreign individuals who study outside of their country. It is written in Latin for its power and authenticity, since it is considered the mother of all modern language. At least 60% of words in the English language are rooted in Latin. Advenus uses graphic design elements like typography, grids, hierarchy, and color to explain and organize complex information and make it easier for users to navigate through this data. The manner in which the information is currently presented does not invite students to read through it (even though they have to) and adds anxiety and confusion to an already complicated process. International students need to be aware very early on that there is a deadline to apply for an H-1B visa, that there are fees associated with each part of the process, and that most likely, an immigration attorney will be needed to help minimize any mistakes on application forms. This is the issue that *Advenus* aims to solve, by making sure that students have a reliable source of information, with direct links and clear and concise data of each step of the process. This is achieved by using design to decrease the risks and misunderstandings in the process of finding and applying for jobs.

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3 U.S. IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

To better understand how this project will tackle immigration and help international students, it is important to understand the immigration process and the difference between visas and how long this complicated process can be.

3.1 History

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines an international student as an individual who has crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and is now enrolled outside their country of origin. The United States is a product of multiple overlapping generations of immigrants. Simply put, life is better in some countries than in others, and this dynamic is what drives international migration.

The U.S. has a long and varied history of immigration laws. Immigration policies have been shaped not only by the perceived needs of the country, but by the needs and aspirations of the immigrants themselves. Economic, religious, political motives, freedom and opportunity were (and are) predominant factors driving international migration to the U.S.

The Immigration Act of 1907 proposed for the first time the existence of two types of admission for immigrants: one permanent, with people defined as immigrants, and another for people who were admitted for a temporary period of time, considered nonimmigrants.

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3.2 Student Visa

Student visas are, by design, temporary. The F-1 visa is meant to give students temporary permission to stay in the U.S. for the duration of their studies. Students must first apply and be accepted by an accredited institution that is approved by the Department of Justice, who then issues a certificate of eligibility (the I-20 form). The student then uses the school's letter of admission, the certificate of eligibility, evidence of financial support, and proof of proficiency in English when they interview at an American embassy for a visa.

The U.S. attracts a large number of foreigners to its workforce each year. However, international students’ do not automatically have the right to remain in the country for work purposes upon completion of their course. In fact, as part of the visa application process, some applicants must state that they are not planning to immigrate to the U.S. and have the intention of going back to their home country.

According to the March 2018 poll from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), there are more than 1.2 million (1,201,829) international students in the U.S.\(^8\) 85% of these students are enrolled in either an associate, bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral program, with China and India being the top countries to send individuals abroad.\(^9\) Around 2.14% of international students in the U.S. are currently enrolled in the education system in Georgia. In its 2018 report, Georgia State University mentions having 3,309 international students from more than 53,000 that are currently enrolled.\(^10\)


\(^{9}\) Ibid.

Concerning this topic, Ketevan Mamiseishvili, who is the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs and professor of higher education in the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas, mentions that it is commonly understood that international students are well prepared academically, have good financial support, and intend to stay in the country for only a short period of time. However, it does not matter how well-prepared international students are academically or how proficient they are in English they still face unique challenges to succeed in a foreign country away from family, friends, and familiar surroundings. Mamiseishvili also notes that the emphasis should be placed not only on the recruitment of international students but on their retention as well.\footnote{Mamiseishvili, Ketevan. “International Student Persistence in U.S. Postsecondary Institutions.” \textit{Higher Education} 64, no. 1 (2011): 1–17.}

According to the \textit{Open Doors} report issued by the Institute of International Education (IIE), the continued growth of international students coming to the U.S. for higher education has had a positive economic impact and contributed $45 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018.\footnote{“Economic Impact of International Students.” IIE. Accessed December 1, 2019. www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/Economic-Impact-of-International-Students}

International students are admitted with the understanding that they have no intention of abandoning their home country. Although their primary purpose is to study, international students are allowed to work only if it is related to their field of study. For a student to work, it is generally restricted to on-campus employment and a one-year off-campus work authorization after the completion of their studies.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) department gives an overview of the type of work that international students can participate in while on an F-1 visa. The Curricular Practical Training (CPT) takes place in the form of an internship prior to the student's program end date. The post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) takes place after a student's program
end date and allows students to work part-time or full-time for 12 months. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students with qualifying degrees have the opportunity to extend their OPT for an additional 24 months. To participate in OPT, students must receive employment authorization from the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Students can work for any employer, but the training must relate to the student's primary course of study.\textsuperscript{13} In the 2019 \textit{Open Doors} Report, there are currently 223,085 students in the OPT authorization period.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, OPT allows students to gain work experience in the U.S. and potentially enables them to transition from a student visa to a work visa after the completion of their studies. Despite having temporary visas, many international students end up applying for the H-1B visa program, in the hopes that they can change their status from temporary to permanent resident. As a result, some of these temporary migrants end up becoming highly skilled permanent immigrants.

\section*{3.3 H-1B visa}

The Immigration Act of 1990 proposed and implemented the creation of the H-1B lottery visa program for foreign professionals who seek temporary employment in the U.S.\textsuperscript{15} The H-1B visa is a program for individuals in specialty occupations, which the government defines as \textquotedblleft occupations that require theoretical and practical application of a body of specialized knowledge\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{16} along with at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Arts, engineering and medicine, amongst others, are specialty occupations. One of the key factors of this visa program

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is that it is temporary: it is granted for up to six years and renewable after the first three years. To participate in this program, companies need to apply for work permits in order to hire foreign professionals for jobs where there are no suitable U.S. candidates.

One thing to note about the H-1B visa program is that a maximum number of visas are granted each year – 65,000, to be exact. An extra 20,000 visas are allocated to individuals who have earned a U.S. master's degree or higher. Those who have a U.S. master's degree have two chances to be selected. First, a lottery is held to choose the 20,000 visas available to master's degree holders, and those that are not chosen are then entered in the regular lottery for the other 65,000 visas. Individuals who do not hold a U.S. master's degree are only entered in the second lottery.

In a press release posted on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website, the organization announced that it had completed the H-1B cap selection process for the 2020 Fiscal Year. The application period for this visa opens on April 1 each year. By April 5, 2019, USCIS reported enough applications to reach the mandated cap of 85,000, and a computer-generated visa lottery had selected enough petitions to meet the mandated regular cap, as well as the U.S. advanced degree cap.\textsuperscript{17} For the 2020 Fiscal Year, 201,011 individuals filed applications for the H-1B visa.\textsuperscript{18}

USCIS is the entity in charge of making the final decision on whether an individual qualifies for the H-1B visa. It is vital to note that this type of visa is employer-specific, meaning that an approved petition will allow the individual to work for the position and company specified in the petition. Even though the H-1B visa is a nonimmigrant visa, it is one of the few visa


categories that recognizes “dual intent”, meaning that an H-1B holder can intend to immigrate even though this type of visa is considered “nonimmigrant”. International students generally choose this visa as a potential route to stay in the U.S because they can apply for a permanent residence green card.

3.4 Other types of visas

While the H-1B visa is the most common route for international students, there are other visas that can help students transition to an employment visa and eventually to a permanent stay in the U.S.

The O-1 nonimmigrant visa is for individuals who possess extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, or who have demonstrated a record of exceptional achievement in the motion picture or television industry and have been nationally or internationally recognized.19

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) creates unique economic and trade relationships for the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The TN visa allows qualified Canadian and Mexican citizens to seek temporary entry into the United States to engage in business activities at a professional level. Among some of the professionals who are eligible to seek admission as TN nonimmigrants are accountants, engineers, lawyers, pharmacists, scientists, and teachers.20

Aside from these types of visas, there is also a permanent route that individuals can pursue: a green card. This employment-based immigration process is not a visa. Still, it is a direct route to permanent residence status in the U.S., and individuals who are approved receive an employment-
based green card. If you have the right combination of skills, education, and/or work experience, you can live permanently in the United States. For international students, the EB-2 category allows you to be eligible for an employment-based, second preference visa if you are a member of a profession holding an advanced degree or its equivalent, or an alien who has exceptional ability.

On the other hand, students are also eligible for the EB-3 category if they are a skilled individual, professional, or other worker. According to USCIS, skilled workers are persons whose job requires a minimum of 2 years training or work experience, is not of a temporary or seasonal nature. Professionals are individuals whose job requires at least a U.S. baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent. The other workers category is for individuals performing unskilled labor requiring less than 2 years training or experience, not of a temporary or seasonal nature.

In her journal *Beyond the Headlines: Changing Patterns in International Student Enrollment in the United States*, Heike Alberts, who is a Professor of Geography at the University of Wisconsin in Oshkosh, argues that former international students are a desirable group because they are both highly skilled and already adjusted to life in the U.S. Alberts also states that in order to fully tap the resource of international students who want to become permanent immigrants, the U.S. government should make an effort to simplify the immigration process. The idea that there is a company that wants to sponsor an international student and a dual desire between the employer and the employee to have that individual stay should result in a faster and more direct route to get students out of temporary visa status.

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22 Ibid.
4 CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are chosen for a variety of reasons. From official websites to services that make it easier for users to understand complex information, to editorial pieces that talk about immigrants, I look at how these examples use design with varying levels of success to help tackle its issues.

4.1 USCIS Website

According to their website, USCIS department “administers the nation’s lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.”24 Some of the services that USCIS offers include: citizenship, immigration of family members, working in the U.S., verifying an individual’s legal right to work in the U.S., humanitarian programs, adoptions, civic integration, and genealogy (Figure 6).

Figure 6. USCIS homepage. USCIS website, www.uscis.gov

Because USCIS handles a large number of services, the website feels congested and hard to process for an individual for whom English is a second language. There is little design applied to help ease the navigation. For an individual who wants to find information on H-1B visa application forms, there is no clear link or headline on the main page that would send the user to that specific information, and once you do get to the information you are looking for, it's a long text to read and to decipher (Figure 7). Therefore, the website ends up being a rabbit hole where people lose time trying to decipher the information that is provided.

**Figure 7. USCIS H-1B information. USCIS website, www.uscis.gov**
This is where User Experience (UX) comes into play. User experience is how a person feels when interfacing with a system. This system could be a website, a mobile application or computer software. UX is often related to layout, with this element ideally having clear instructions and labels. If a user understands the practicality of a website or application, they are more likely to continue using it. Users need to access USCIS’s website for various reasons, however, the design does not make it easier for individuals to navigate complex forms.

It is safe to say that most if not all government websites look alike, but it does not mean that the design should feel outdated or that the layout should consists of endless links to information. To its advantage, the website does use photographs and lists to make it easier for individuals to navigate through information. It also has an online virtual assistant to answer questions. If an international student wants to find information about the H-1B visa, they would have to click six to nine times on the website to find all of the information and requirements. According to the Nielsen Norman Group, research has shown that users often leave web pages in ten to twenty seconds, but pages with a clear value proposition can hold people's attention for much longer. The value proposition of a website or product should convince a potential customer why your service will be of more value to them than similar offerings. To gain several minutes of user attention, you must communicate your value proposition within ten seconds.

4.2 Rocket Mortgage

Rocket Mortgage is an online and mobile-friendly mortgage application system that takes the complicated process of applying for loans in an easy, ready-to-use form for the average user.

---

Owned by Quicken Loans, it was seen as the turning point for home financing. *Rocket Mortgage* is not just an online application system; it also verifies the information and can provide an approval in a hassle-free environment.

The process works by asking a question to its users: what are you trying to do? Purchase a new home? Lower your monthly payment? Once this question is answered, the application is tailored to the user's specific goal. The system breaks down fees, interest rates, and new mortgage payments. The website caters to self-service users who want to apply for a home loan without talking to a human and tells you the loan amount you will qualify for within minutes. Quicken Loans’ goal is to save time and take the mystery out of mortgages and provide a system where a mortgage application can be completed without the need to talk to anyone.27

*Rocket Mortgage* is used as an example for this project because it takes complicated information and transforms it into a straightforward system. It is designed so that people can answer simple questions without having to read complicated forms (Figure 7). It removes the need to talk or approach someone in order to apply for loans. Aesthetically, *Rocket Mortgage* uses a minimal design approach to guide users through the process, highlighting important information using a bold typeface and a progress bar to let users know where they are within the process, making it easy to navigate the website.

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4.3 LegalZoom

LegalZoom's goal is to provide clarity in contractual and legal processes by offering self-guided legal services and services from their independent attorneys. They simplify the process of navigating complicated legal information. LegalZoom minimizes the half-completed tasks that people never finish by providing a user-friendly website that organizes a large amount of information and makes it easier for users to read through essential data (Figure 8).

LegalZoom uses a simple interface to engage with its users. The information is organized clearly by creating hierarchy levels within the text using bold and regular typefaces. They also have a process bar at the top of the page, allowing the user to see what stage of the process they are in. The green and blue color scheme complement the white, minimalist background of the web page.
4.4 Current

Current is a mobile application focused on creating better financial outcomes for individuals. The app offers a debit card for both personal checking accounts and teen banking and is tailored for a modern life where members' money is connected to friends, family, and experiences.

In the mobile application and website, Current uses bold, contrasting colors to grab the viewers' attention. This aesthetic is enhanced with an easy-to-read sans serif typeface and a clean layout (Figure 9).

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The mundane tasks of mobile banking and financing are made interesting with Current's approach to the users' experience and interaction with the application (Figure 10). Current redefines the visual stereotype of online finance with its design. Due to the combination of a younger target demographic and a daunting subject like financing, the application boasts a simple, straightforward User Interface (UI) that clearly identifies tasks, potential actions, and budgets.²⁹

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*Figure 10. Current homepage. Current, www.current.com*
4.5 NANSEN Magazine

*NANSEN* is a magazine from Germany that talks about migrants of all kinds, highlighting one person in each issue. It promotes the concept that migrants are, and always have been, "explorers, entrepreneurs, visionaries, thrill-seekers, and dreamers. Whether we move by choice, chance, or force, we all have stories to tell."³⁰ The magazine is named after Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian explorer and humanitarian who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1922 for his work on behalf of refugees after WWI. He created what was known as the Nansen Passport, a document that allowed stateless refugees safe passage into other countries. The magazine as a whole, highlights the aspects of living away from home, something that all migrants can relate to. For *NANSEN*, the

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word “migrant” promotes a particular image. "We want to expand the way each of us sees migrants and the way we, as migrants, see ourselves."\textsuperscript{31}

\textit{NANSEN} employs a unique approach to its design by adopting a new voice and point of view in each issue, slightly adapting to better reflect the personality, energy, and experiences of the migrant it gives voice to. Each issue uses a new typeface from the cover logo to headlines, focusing on the individuality of its interviewee (Figure 11). According to Art Director Eva Gonçalves, "It is constant exercise in finding the fine balance between completely reinventing itself and staying faithful to its identity."\textsuperscript{32} \textit{NANSEN} has elements that tie each issue together, like the layout used for the cover. While it is true that the typeface changes each issue, the layout is consistent by having a photograph of the individual, slightly off-centered and rotated, with a grid layout that surrounds it. The placement of the photograph is compelling, and it alludes to the idea that immigrants do not fit into a mold or grid, and that each individual offers unique abilities to the country they are immigrating to. The magazine also mixes the use of photographs and illustrations, depending on the content that is being referred to on each page. However, the overall aesthetic of the magazine is built around a clean layout that highlights interesting information about one distinctive individual.

This project inspires my idea of designing a booklet that will incorporate stories from other international students who have gone through the process and transition from student to employee. My goal with this booklet is that these stories will resonate and help other students by finding similarities between each other.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
www.evagoncalves.com/nansen-magazine-02
5 DESIGN COMPONENTS

As mentioned before, Advenus will incorporate different design elements to create the overall look and feel of the website, posters, and flyer. It is essential to understand these elements, their definition, and their connection to the project.

5.1 Typography

Typography is the art and technique of arranging letters using language as a means of communicating a message. Whether it is on our phones, books, or websites, we are continuously
processing written words. Typography is more than just choosing a font: it is a vital component of design. Good typography establishes balance, the overall tone of the design, and a strong visual hierarchy. It should guide viewers and optimize readability and accessibility.

Moreover, a typeface is a collection of letters. While each letter is unique, a typeface can represent shared patterns across a group of letters. Each letter is a shape that can serve as an illustration, an icon, or a graphic focal point. When used in large sizes, letterforms can have an extraordinary impact. Therefore, the use of typography is the most straightforward way of connecting with the audience, and it is the primary design element used for Advenus.

5.2 Information Architecture (IA)

Information Architecture, also known as IA, is the structural organization of content on websites, mobile applications, and software. IA organizes data clearly and logically. The purpose of using IA is to help users navigate complex information in a more accessible way.

To this point, there are some principles to consider in Information Architecture, like keeping the number of choices to a minimum and showing a preview of information that will help users understand what kind of data will be displayed if they continue reading/scrolling. The structure of content, though, differs from the type of products and services that companies offer. Still, user satisfaction is always a priority, which is why Information Architecture goes hand in hand with User Experience.

5.3 User Experience (UX)

User Experience, or UX, refers to an individual’s emotions and attitudes when using a particular product, system, or service. Don Norman, who is the co-founder of the Nielsen Norman Group Design Consultancy is credited with coining the term “user experience” and he describes it as “User experience encompasses all aspects of the end-user’s interaction with the company, its services, and its products.”35

We all encounter designed UX everywhere. On the surface, from the way you interact with a software product to the location of an on-off switch, it is an example of UX. The sum of your interactions with a product becomes the experience that you have when you use that product.

5.4 Web design

We have to take several things into account when designing for the web, from its visual appearance (how the website looks) to its functionality (how the website works). In web design, usability determines the success and failure of a website,36 although design can undoubtedly help with navigation. Since the visitor is an individual who decides everything, web design is user-centric, because if a user cannot use a feature, it has no place on the overall design.

Thus, users appreciate quality and credibility when opening new websites. If the site provides high-quality content, users are more likely to scan through the information to see if they can find what they are looking for. Another point that is often talked about when designing for the web is to minimize the use of extended sections by avoiding long blocks of text. If the website

aims to provide details of products or services, using a step-by-step approach is better, because users will be able to digest this information more easily.

A web designer works on the appearance and layout of a website. Appearance relates to the colors, fonts, and images used on the site, and layout refers to how the information is structured and organized. Another important aspect of web design is that the website needs to be responsive so that the content moves dynamically depending on the screen size, adapting to bigger screens like desktops and smaller screens like tablets and phones.

5.5 Editorial design

Editorial design is a subset of graphic design. It traditionally refers to newspaper, magazine and book design, but it can also refer to online publications or print materials. Editorial design has a significant impact on how information is read and understood. It needs to be cohesive, clear, and draw the attention of its readers.\textsuperscript{37} The correct selection of typography, graphics, colors, and layout will result in a piece that relates to its audience and incites them to take action.

6 THESIS WORK

My thesis project \textit{Advenus} combines the design elements mentioned above to offer a new tool for international students. It includes a prototype of a website, with posters and a flyer as promotional pieces, and a map showing data on the cultural origins of GSU’s student body. The objective of this work is to create an additional tool for students to generate the best possible results in the immigration process, hoping to reduce anxiety and stress by creating a website that will have clear and concise information. For schools, it could become a new tool to share with their students.

Advenus, in all of its presentations, applies typography as the main design element, organizing information in clear, cohesive layouts to minimize confusion within this intricate process. For the design pieces, bold typefaces and colors will guide users through the website and editorial pieces to highlight essential facts. For the Advenus logo/name (Figure 12), I used Visby Sans CF (Figure 13) for its bold and sans serif type, using this to create contrast with the rest of the information.

![Advenus logo](image1)

Figure 13. Advenus logo. Ana Coello, 2020

VISBY SANS CF HEAVY

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ABCDEFGHJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789
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![Visby typeface](image2)

Figure 14. Visby typeface. Ana Coello, 2020

For the rest of the information on the website, posters, and flyer, I used Fira Sans (Figure 14) for the variety of typefaces offered since I wanted to contrast light and bold type within the same block of text.
When a section has a significant amount of information to display, I selected a sans serif typeface due to its legibility and maximum clarity, which is essential for user experience. Color also plays a vital role in how users interact with design.

Having a color scheme is an essential aspect of design since it’s a pivotal component to branding a product or service, and it helps communicate a message to the users. Thus, complementary colors are colors located on the opposite of each other on the color wheel.38

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Blue and orange, to that extent, are complementary colors and were carefully selected as the primary colors of *Advenus* along with a dark grey and a light grey gradient (Figure 15). Blue signifies stability, expertise, and trust, and is used as a standard color in web design. Orange, on the other hand, is often seen as a cheerful color and is a color that can stimulate mental activity. Finally, grey provides a feeling of security and reliability, and it also creates a good contrast with the darker shades of orange and blue.\(^{39}\)

![Color Swatches](image)

*Figure 15. Advenus colors. Ana Coello, 2020*

### 6.1 Advenus website prototype

*Advenus* is a prototype of a website (Figure 16) designed for international students who are concerned about the process of applying for jobs in the U.S. It provides information tailored for them, like the different types of visas they can apply for and offering tips and other resources to help students prepare for applications to reduce obstacles that come up during the immigration process. International students need to know the steps, forms, and fees involved when applying and changing visa status so that they are well equipped when the time comes. This prototype can be seen here: invis.io/KCWPPPTW2HG

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The *Advenus* homepage uses blue as its background color to create contrast with the information highlighted on this page. The logo is always placed on the top left corner and is used with an orange background. The menu is in white, and the orange highlights the page you are currently in. The tagline ‘helping international students navigate the immigration process’ serves as an intro text into what this project aims to do, as well as letting users know that this website uses information from USCIS’s official website. There are also photographs of individuals who are highlighted throughout the site, to humanize the entire *Advenus* project and make it feel more personal and relatable to international students.

![Advenus homepage](image)

*Figure 17. Advenus homepage. Ana Coello, 2020*

The website is divided into different sections: home, visas, tips, stories, resources and about, providing information from how to build a *resumé*, as well as emphasizing vital data like visa deadlines and fees so that students are aware of these facts from the beginning.
The visas section (Figure 17) is divided into four categories: student visa, H-1B visa, employment-based immigration, and other types of visas. This page is structured this way to let users navigate the type of visa they are most interested in. For most of the pages in Advenus, the background color is a grey gradient, in order to use the blue and orange as accent colors. Throughout the site, there is an orange bar at the bottom of the pages that act as a footer.

![Visas section](image)

*Figure 18. Visas section. Ana Coello, 2020*

To emphasize where the user is on the page, whenever they move their mouse, the text gets highlighted in orange, and the rest of the categories change to a light grey color (Figure 18).
When users click on each of the categories, they will be prompted to the visa information for each. Student visa, employment-based immigration, and other types of visas take you to the main page for each that lets you choose between two options. H-1B takes you directly to the information for this type of visa since there is only one option. Once users are on each visas section, the background color for these pages’ changes to blue, and the text is shown in white with orange accents.

The student visa section lets you choose from two options: CPT (Curricular Practical Training) and OPT (Optional Practical Training). This page (Figure 19) shows a quote from one of our featured international students and how to select from the two options offered. Once one of the options is selected (between CPT and OPT), the page will have a video at the top with an international student talking about his or her process for that specific visa.
As the focal piece for this project, the visa information is divided into steps, helping users understand this information more easily. By creating steps, the information, which was once condensed, is now clear and easy to read and minimizes how daunting the process can feel. Each visa process is divided between four and six steps, and each has information on what to do and in what order it needs to be done (Figure 20-28).

Figure 20. Student visa section. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 21. CPT page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 22. OPT page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 23. H-1B page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 24. Employment-based immigration page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 26. EB-3 page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 27. Other types of visas page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 28. O1 page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 29. TN page. Ana Coello, 2020
The next section for this website is the tips pages. This page offers resources for international students, like resume tips, job interview tips, and a job search engine (Figure 29). When clicking on job interview tips, as an example, the website offers links to curated articles and videos that aim to help students during this process (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Tips page. Ana Coello, 2020
The stories section was designed with the idea of showing international students from around the world (Figure 31). The idea is that each photograph, when clicked, will prompt either a video or a quote from this student (Figure 32,33). These students talk about their process and how their overall experience as an international student in the U.S. has been. This section is to show international students that they are not alone in this process and that others have gone through it as well, and that we all rely on each other to get through stressful times.
Figure 32. Stories page. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 33. Stories page quote. Ana Coello, 2020
The resources section is divided into six categories: USCIS website, immigration forms, immigration articles, immigration lawyers, college search, and relaxing games (Figure 34). This page offers external links to provide international students with other tools to help them. The immigration forms, for example, give a direct link so that students can download the forms that
are required for the visa they want to apply for, minimizing the amount of time they might spend looking for this form on the official website (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Resources page. Ana Coello, 2020
Lastly, the about page (called Advenus) offers insight into why this project was created by explaining the goals that this website is aiming for (Figure 36), while also briefly mentioning the definition of the word Advenus.
The main concern with this website prototype is making sure that individuals are aware that this is an additional tool provided to help them navigate the process, but that it is up to each individual to assess the information and complete the visa process. Advenus cannot guarantee that the outcome of an application will be successful, but it will try to minimize hurdles. This platform uses a clean, minimal interface design accompanied by contrasting bold type and colors to grab the user’s attention to motivate them to continue using this tool.

6.2 Posters

To promote the website and engage with its users, I designed posters to encourage and invite students to utilize this platform. The posters highlight essential steps of the visa application process, as well as promote Advenus through bold typography (Figure 37).
The typography and colors on the poster match the ones selected for the website. The information on these posters is divided into three categories: The orange posters talk about international students and their life in the U.S (Figure 38). The blue posters show data on how many international students there are in the U.S. as an example (Figure 39). Lastly, the white posters show the definition of the different visas that students can apply to (Figure 40).
International students are admitted with the understanding that they have no intention of abandoning their home country.

Figure 39. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
There are more than 1.2 million international students currently enrolled in the United States.

Figure 40. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
The Curricular Practical Training (CPT) takes place in the form of an internship prior to the student’s program end date.

There are also other promotional posters with the use of the tagline (helping international students navigate the immigration process), the definition of Advenus, and the fact that student visas are only temporary. These posters have a QR code that links to the prototype of the website (Figure 41-43).
Figure 42. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 43. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
Another set of posters that were designed specifically for the exhibition were mockups showing these posters in places around campus and MARTA stations since the highest demographics of students are concentrated in these areas (Figure 44,45).

Figure 44. Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 45. Mockup of Advenus poster. Ana Coello, 2020
6.3 Flyers

The structural design is a printed, folded flyer designed to be given to students as a promotional piece, in the hopes that they visit the website for more information (Figure 46). This flyer would ideally be found in the international offices of universities. Particularly for Georgia State University students, this flyer would be placed in the International Student and Scholar
Services office, as well as the student center. Around campus, this piece would be found in selected locations like MARTA train stations, and stores that are visited by students daily, like coffee shops.

The flyer folds four times so that its final size is small enough for students to carry in their wallets or pockets. The final size once opened is 8 ½ x 11 inches. When opening the flyer, each fold prompts a question or information related to this project (Figure 47). On the other side of the flyer, students will find information about the different types of visas (Figure 48).
Figure 48. Flyer front side. Ana Coello, 2020
The thesis exhibition that was going to be shown at the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design Galleries on April 6-10, 2020, consisted of three sections.

The first section shows an introductory text explaining how this project came about and what is being shown in the gallery space. It also includes a map showing data on the cultural origins of GSU’s student body by surveying 35 students to start. This map is meant to be interactive, where
individuals are encouraged to place their stickers on the wall. The orange label indicates where the student was born; blue indicates where the student’s parents were born, and green indicates where the student’s grandparents were born. This map is created to show how immigration touches those around us and how the U.S., as mentioned previously, is a product of multiple overlapping generations of immigrants. This map is also accompanied by quotes from international students on the advice they would give others who are about to go through this process, hoping to help and inspire others who may be struggling. (Figure 48).

The second section is the Advenus website. This prototype shows how this new platform aims to help international students navigate complex information in a more accessible way by offering resources related to the immigration process (Figure 49).
Lastly, the third section of this exhibition is a showcase of the informational posters and flyers that will promote the website and provide more information on the immigration process (Figure 50).
Although the exhibition ended up as a virtual space, when testing the prototype of the *Advenus* website, I received great feedback on how this can be a useful tool for international students and how the step by step process for the visa makes the information less daunting. At the same time, some of the comments received on how to make the website better would be to let users know in the visa section that they will find the step by step process if they continue clicking or scrolling. Another comment was to add the name of the visa for which each form is needed in the immigration forms resources, as most of us are not familiar with the naming of each.

*Figure 52. Poster wall mockup. Ana Coello, 2020*
8 CONCLUSIONS

This project becomes more relevant as time goes by because immigration is one of the most discussed topics around the world. The design of a website is not a new concept. There are other websites out there aimed for international students. However, one that offers information on the immigration process in a way that feels easier to read is a new tool that should be used to the advantage of its audience. Advenus aims to use graphic design to help display complex information in a more accessible way, guiding users through a step by step process of each different visa that is mentioned. Advenus also offers other resources to help students, like giving them tools and tips on how to build their resumes, college and job search, and even relaxing games aimed at helping students to de-stress.

The goal of my thesis project is to become a one-stop place to help international students prepare for job applications and hopefully help them in their process of wanting to stay in the U.S. and get out of a student visa status. For students, it becomes an additional tool to help them through the process. For universities, it becomes a complementary tool to offer to their students. I believe that this project, if developed further, can have an incredible impact on the lives of international students, and ultimately show that graphic design can help in our understanding of how we process information.
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Figure 53. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 54. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020
Although their primary purpose is to study, international students are allowed to work if it is related to their studies.

International students are admitted with the understanding that they have no intention of abandoning their home country.

Despite the experience that immigration can offer to students, it makes starting a new life challenging.

International students’ do not automatically have the right to remain in the country for work purposes upon completion of their studies.

Figure 55. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 56. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020

- Immigration policies have been shaped not only by the perceived needs of the country, but by the needs and aspirations of immigrants.
- If you have the right combination of skills, education, and/or work experience, you can live permanently in the United States.
- There are more than 1.2 million international students currently enrolled in the United States.
- The continued growth of international students contributed $45 billion to the United States economy in 2018.
85% of international students are enrolled in either an associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral program.

Around 2.14% of international students in the U.S. are currently enrolled in the education system in Georgia.

International students make up 5.5% of the United States higher education population.

There are currently 223,085 students in the Optional Practical Training (OPT) authorization period.

Figure 57. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020
Figure 58. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020

65,000 visas are granted each year through the H1-B program. An extra 20,000 are for individuals who have a U.S. master’s degree.

For the 2020 Fiscal Year, 201,011 individuals filed applications for the H1-B visa.

The F-1 visa gives students temporary permission to stay in the United States.

The Curricular Practical Training (CPT) takes place in the form of an internship prior to the student’s program end date.
The Optional Practical Training (OPT) takes place after a student’s program end date and allows students to work for 12 months.

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students can extend their OPT for an additional 24 months.

The Optional Practical Training (OPT) period allows students to gain work experience in the United States.

The H1-B is a lottery-based visa program for individuals in specialty occupations, like arts, engineering, and science.

Figure 59. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020
Students may be eligible for an employment based, second preference greencard if they hold an advanced degree.

The O-1 visa is for individuals who possess extraordinary abilities in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics.

The TN visa allows qualified Canadian and Mexican citizens to seek temporary entry into the U.S. to engage in activities at a professional level.

Figure 60. Advenus Posters. Ana Coello, 2020