

Navigation Consolidation Plan

Deliverable: Sub-navigation audit & consolidation recommendation · **Prepared by:** Ellis Agency · **Date:** July 2026

Adopted — this structure is now built into the Concept G and Concept H comps for review.

1. Executive summary

Guilford's primary navigation drop-downs are **long, flat, and alphabetical** — 13 to 16 links each under Academics, Admission & Aid, Life at Guilford, and Who We Are. Two problems compound:

1. **Redundancy with the hub pages.** A large share of items in each drop-down are *also* surfaced as cards/links on that section's landing ("hub") page. The drop-down is doing the hub page's job — twice.
2. **Mixed content in one flat list.** Each menu blends primary tasks, niche interior pages, audience paths (High School / Transfer / Veteran...), transactional tools (Registrar, Student Accounts), and links to **external, non-Drupal systems** (catalog, athletics, bookstore, a Google Site) — with no grouping.

Recommendation: Treat each drop-down as a **curated shortlist (6-8 links), not a sitemap**. Move hub-redundant, niche, transactional, and external-system links out of the menu and let the **hub page be the complete index**. Group what remains, and route audience paths through the homepage "For You" bar rather than repeating them in every menu.

57 → 26

drop-down links across the 4 menus

≈ 55%

fewer top-nav links

0

pages removed — all stay one click away

2. How we audited this

We pulled the **live guilford.edu** mega-menu for each section and compared it, link by link, against the links that already appear in the **body of that section's hub landing page**. Any drop-down item already promoted on the hub is a **redundancy candidate** — it can leave the top nav without becoming harder to find. We then classified every remaining item by type (primary task, audience path, interior/niche page, transactional tool, external system) to surface the second tier of opportunities.

This is a public-site audit. Final counts should be validated against Drupal's real menu config + Google Analytics (which items actually get clicked) once admin/GA access lands — see §9.

3. Consolidation levers (the options)

A • De-duplicate against the hub. Remove drop-down items already featured on the hub page. The hub becomes the full index; the menu becomes a shortcut. (*The specific ask.*)

B • Group, don't just list. Replace the flat alphabetical list with 2–3 labeled clusters (e.g., *Study · Experience · Resources*). Same links, far lower cognitive load.

C • Demote external / non-Drupal systems. Catalog, athletics, bookstore, calendar, library, Google-Sites pages belong in a hub "Quick links" strip or the footer — not the primary menu.

D • Route audiences, don't list them. High School / Transfer / International / Veteran / Graduate / Adult are *audiences*, not nav items — send them through the homepage "For You" bar + one block on the Admission hub.

E • Cap the menu at 6–8 links. Long menus aren't scanned. Curate to the highest-traffic, highest-intent links; everything else lives on the hub.

F • Merge near-duplicates. Three financial-aid links → one "Financial Aid" group; two "High School" entries → one; two "Student Life" entries → one.

4. Section-by-section audit & recommendation

Action key: **KEEP** stays in the slimmed menu · **HUB** remove; already on the hub page · **QUICK-LINKS / FOOTER** external or transactional → demote · **MERGE** fold into a group · **AUDIENCE** route via the "For You" bar.

4.1 Academics — 16 links → 6

DROP-DOWN ITEM	ON HUB?	ACTION	WHY
Majors and Minors (/program-finder)	✓	KEEP	The #1 academics task.
Departments and Centers		KEEP	Primary browse path.
Hands-On Learning	✓	KEEP	Signature brand story.
Guilford College Rise (/RISE)	✓	KEEP	Flagship program — relabelled High School Programs in the menu, which is what prospective families are actually looking for.
Ethical Leadership		KEEP	Differentiator (Principled Problem Solving).
College Catalog (external)		KEEP ↗	High-intent; flag as external.
Your First Year Experience	✓	HUB	Already featured on the hub.
General Education		HUB	Curricular detail → interior page.
Honors Program	✓	HUB	Niche; on the hub.
Global at Guilford (external)		QUICK-LINKS	Lives in the catalog system.
Summer School		HUB	Seasonal / niche.
Academic Resources	✓	HUB	Student-facing; on the hub.
Accessibility Resource Center	✓	HUB	Support service; hub + footer.
Hege Academic Commons / Library		QUICK-LINKS	Destination site → quick-links/footer.
Registrar		FOOTER	Transactional; current-student.
Student Accounts		FOOTER	Transactional; current-student.

PROPOSED ACADEMICS MENU

Study — Majors & Minors · Departments & Centers · College Catalog ↗

Experience — Hands-On Learning · High School Programs · Ethical Leadership

+ "See all academics →" linking the hub.

4.2 Admission & Aid — 13 links → 7

DROP-DOWN ITEM	ON HUB?	ACTION	WHY
Apply to Guilford	✓	KEEP	Primary conversion.
Request Information		KEEP	Primary conversion.
Financial Aid and Costs	✓	KEEP	Group head for the aid trio.
Tuition and Fees		MERGE	Sub-page of Financial Aid.
How to Apply for Aid	✓	MERGE	Sub-page of Financial Aid.
The Guilford Commitment	✓	KEEP	Signature affordability promise.
Admission Team	✓	KEEP	Counselor connection = enrollment.
High School Students	✓	AUDIENCE	Route the six student types through one "Which student are you?" row + the homepage "For You" bar — not six separate menu lines.
Transfer Students	✓	AUDIENCE	
International Students	✓	AUDIENCE	
Veterans	✓	AUDIENCE	
Graduate School	✓	AUDIENCE	
Continuing Education (Adult)	✓	AUDIENCE	
High School & Independent Counselors		MERGE	Near-duplicate of Admission Team path.

PROPOSED ADMISSION MENU

Apply • **Request Info** • **Visit** | Financial Aid (Costs • Tuition • How to Apply) • **The Guilford Commitment** • **Admission Team**

+ a single "Which student are you?" row: HS • Transfer • International • Veteran • Graduate • Adult.

4.3 Life at Guilford — 15 links → 6

DROP-DOWN ITEM	ON HUB?	ACTION	WHY
Living and Eating (Housing + Dining)	✓	KEEP	Core residential-life task.
Health and Safety		KEEP	High-need.
The Arts		KEEP	Signature experience.
Sports / Athletics (external)		KEEP ↗	High interest; external site.
Student Media	✓	KEEP	Distinctive.
Calendar of Events	✓	QUICK-LINKS	Utility; already global + on hub.
Student Life (Google Site)	✓	HUB	Clubs/orgs live off-Drupal; feature on hub.
First-Gen at Guilford		HUB	Audience/support → hub.
Guilford Stories and Videos		HUB	Content collection → hub.
International Student Services		HUB	Support; also under Admission.
Commencement		FOOTER	Seasonal event.
Bookstore (external)		FOOTER	Retail system.
Faculty and Staff News		FOOTER	Wrong audience for this menu.
Title IX and Equal Opportunity		FOOTER	Compliance → global footer.
Student Life (duplicate entry)	✓	MERGE	Duplicate — one home per link.

4.4 Who We Are — 13 links → 7

DROP-DOWN ITEM	ON HUB?	ACTION	WHY
History and Quaker Roots	✓	KEEP	Core identity.
Core Values	✓	KEEP	Core identity.
College Leadership		KEEP	Expected "about" item.
Facts and Figures		KEEP	High-intent for prospects / press.
Faculty & Staff Directory		KEEP ↗	High-traffic utility.
Social Responsibility	✓	KEEP	Signature commitment.
Guilford College Magazine		KEEP	Alumni / engagement.
Friends Center	✓	HUB	Sub-topic of Quaker identity.
Office of Transformation & Inclusion		HUB	Department → hub / directory.
Office of the Provost		FOOTER	Internal office.
Office of Communications & Marketing		FOOTER	Internal office.
Greater Greensboro Consortium		FOOTER	Niche partner.
Greensboro		MERGE	Fold into Facts / "the place".

5. Before / after at a glance

SECTION	LIVE DROP-DOWN	PROPOSED	CHANGE
Academics	16	6	−10
Admission & Aid	13	7	−6
Life at Guilford	15	6	−9
Who We Are	13	7	−6
Total	57	≈ 26	≈ −55%

No content is removed from the site — demoted links remain on the hub page, in a hub "Quick links" strip, in the footer, or (for audiences) in the "For You" bar.

6. Proposed final top navigation

Here is the structure the four menus would house after the plan above — grouped, ~6–8 links each, audience paths routed through a single row, and systems / transactional pages moved to the footer or hub quick-links.

Academics 6 LINKS STUDY Majors & Minors Departments & Centers College Catalog ↗ catalog.guilford.edu EXPERIENCE Hands-On Learning High School Programs Ethical Leadership See all academics →	Admission & Aid 7 LINKS APPLY Apply Now Request Information Schedule a Visit COST & AID Financial Aid (Costs · Tuition · How to Apply) The Guilford Commitment Admission Team Which student are you? High School · Transfer · International · Veteran · Graduate · Adult See all admission & aid →
Life at Guilford 6 LINKS LIVE & BELONG Living & Eating Health & Safety Clubs & Organizations EXPERIENCE The Arts Student Media Athletics ↗ guilfordquakers.com See all of student life →	Who We Are 7 LINKS IDENTITY History & Quaker Roots Core Values Social Responsibility THE COLLEGE College Leadership Facts & Figures Guilford College Magazine Faculty & Staff Directory ↗ See all →

Moved out of the drop-downs — still one click away:

Footer / quick-links — Registrar · Student Accounts · Library (Hege) · Calendar · Bookstore · Title IX · Office of the Provost · Communications & Marketing · Greater Greensboro Consortium · Commencement.

On the hub pages — First-Year Experience · General Education · Honors Program · Summer School · Academic Resources · Accessibility Resource Center · Friends Center · Transformation & Inclusion · First-Gen · Stories & Videos.

"For You" bar — the six Admission audiences (High School, Transfer, International, Veteran, Graduate, Adult).

The utility strip is unchanged (Current Students · Faculty & Staff · Alumni · Parents · Directory · Calendar · Give a Gift), and the global header actions — **Apply** · **Give** · **Search** — stay put.

7. Design principles to lock in

- **The menu is a shortcut; the hub is the index.** If a link is prominently on the hub, it doesn't also need to be in the drop-down.
- **6-8 links per menu, grouped** into 2-3 labeled clusters.
- **Owned pages in the nav; systems in quick-links/footer** (catalog, athletics, bookstore, calendar, library).
- **Audiences are routed, not listed** — one "For You" bar + one hub block, not six menu lines each.
- **One home per link.** Kill duplicates & near-duplicates (two "Student Life", three financial-aid, two "High School").
- **Consistency across all four menus** — same grouping pattern, same "See all →" hub link, same treatment for external ↗ links.

8. SEO — protecting rankings through the nav change

Consolidating the menus changes the site's internal-link graph, so the SEO work below runs **in parallel with the build and ships before/with launch** — not after. A nav change made without it risks orphaned pages and lost rankings on deep, high-value pages.

1 · Redirects (301s)

Removing a link from a menu needs *no* redirect — the page still lives at its URL. Redirects apply only where consolidation **changes or merges a URL**. Build a 301 map for: the merged financial-aid pages (Costs / Tuition / How-to-Apply → one Financial Aid parent, if URLs change); the duplicate "High School" and "Student Life" entries collapsing to one canonical URL; and the "Majors & Minors" → `/program-finder` canonicalization. Also fix the known `/news` canonical-index path flagged in the page-type inventory. External links (catalog, athletics, bookstore) get no redirect — they're not ours.

2 · Internal linking & orphan prevention

Fewer nav links means fewer sitewide internal links to demoted pages, which lowers their crawl priority and link equity. Mitigate: every demoted page keeps **at least one internal link** — from its hub page (contextual), the footer/quick-links, or a "See all →" index. Run an orphan audit after launch: zero demoted pages with no internal link. Never strip

internal links from a top-traffic / top-ranking page (financial aid, majors, apply) without a compensating contextual link.

3 • XML sitemap & Search Console

Regenerate and resubmit the XML sitemap — demoted pages stay in it (they're not deleted). Submit any changed URLs, then monitor Coverage, Crawl Stats, and Performance for the demoted/deep pages for 4–6 weeks. A brief impressions dip on deep pages is normal; confirm they hold rankings via hub linking.

4 • Structured data & crawlable markup

Update `SiteNavigationElement` and `BreadcrumbList` structured data to the new structure, and confirm breadcrumbs still resolve for demoted pages. Keep every nav link a real, crawlable `<a href>` in the HTML (not JS-only) — the mega-menu and the "See all" hub links must expose the full crawl path in source.

5 • Measurement

Add event tracking to the new nav so click data validates the consolidation, and annotate the launch date in GA4. Compare pre/post organic traffic and rankings on the affected page set, and keep a rollback note for any page that loses position.

Sequencing: the SEO specialist finalizes the redirect map + internal-linking audit **before** the nav goes live, and the redirects ship with launch.

9. Decisions & dependencies for the client

1. **Confirm the "keep" list per menu.** The keeps above are our recommendation; the client owns final calls on ownership-sensitive items (e.g., which offices appear).
2. **Validate against analytics.** Pull GA on the current mega-menu links — low-click items are the easiest cuts; high-click items stay regardless of hub redundancy. *(Depends on GA access.)*
3. **Confirm the Drupal menu model.** Whether these are one menu or several, and whether "audience routing" is feasible in the current menu system.
4. **Redirect plan.** Any URL changes from consolidation go through the SEO specialist **before** launch (redirects + sitemap).
5. **External-system inventory.** Finalize which links are non-Drupal (→ Quick-links/footer + the T6 brand frame): catalog, athletics, bookstore, the Google-Sites student-life page.

Next step: on client sign-off of the "keep" lists, we mock the six-link grouped drop-downs into the redesign comps (Concept G / H) and hand the redirect map to SEO.

Ellis Agency — Guilford College Website & UX Refresh. Public-site audit; figures to be validated against Drupal menu config + GA. Not an affiliated Guilford College page.