KU UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS · DIGITAL OPTIMIZATION

FROM A HIDDEN CAROUSEL TO DISCOVERABLE ENTITIES

A cited, apples-to-apples analysis of the rebuilt “Experiential Learning at KU” section — replacing a jQuery carousel that hid a third of its content with three semantic, AI-ready entities, an accessible animated statistic, and corrected schema.

TARGET PAGE
admissions.ku.edu/explore/academics

SECTION
Experiential Learning at KU

ENGAGEMENT GOAL
17s → 45s+

WHY THE SECTION NEEDED WORK

A CAROUSEL THAT HIDES ITS OWN CONTENT

The legacy block buries value behind interaction and ships invalid, inaccessible markup. The biggest losses are for AI extraction and assistive technology — the two audiences this rebuild most improves.

WHAT WAS LIVE

BOOTSTRAP CAROUSEL + INLINE JQUERY

- × The third entity (Learning Certificates) ships hidden via **d-none**, revealed only by inline jQuery
- × Slide two is hidden behind a "next" control — low engagement, weak indexing
- × Cards wrapped in <a> with **no accessible name**; images use invalid **typeof="Image"**
- × Three stacked empty <hr> dividers; a render-blocking jQuery dependency for static content
- × Stat overstated: **"nearly 25%"** study abroad

WHAT IS NOW SHIPPED

SEMANTIC ENTITIES, NO DEPENDENCY

- ✓ All three pathways are **always visible** as semantic <article> entities — nothing hidden from users or crawlers
- ✓ Each card has a real heading, accessible CTA, and an optional disclosure
- ✓ Valid markup, ARIA disclosures, and an accessible animated statistic
- ✓ Zero jQuery; one scoped vanilla-JS file; corrected schema graph
- ✓ Stat corrected to **23.1%** (Open Doors 2024), cited on-page

Entities identified for AI: Study Abroad (studyabroad.ku.edu), Undergraduate Research (ugresearch.ku.edu), and the Experiential Learning Certificate — each now a discrete, linkable, schema-backed entity rather than a carousel slide.

THE DWELL-TIME DRIVERS

REASONS TO EXPLORE, NOT SCROLL PAST

A static carousel is a scroll-past. The rebuild gives visitors things to **do** — the mechanism most strongly tied to longer engagement — while keeping the core content visible for crawlers and assistive technology.

ANIMATED STATISTIC

STUDY ABROAD

The 23.1% figure counts up when scrolled into view via IntersectionObserver, drawing the eye to KU's global reach. Reduced-motion users and screen readers get the exact value immediately.

"WHAT YOU'LL GAIN"

ALL THREE CARDS

A proper ARIA disclosure on each card reveals concrete outcomes — credit, mentorship, funding, résumé value — rewarding interaction and surfacing extra AI-extractable detail.

FIRE-AND-ICE CARDS

ALL THREE CARDS

Brand-compliant hover states (blue lift, crimson CTA shadow, image zoom) make the three pathways feel tactile and invite comparison across all three.

+52.6%

More engagement from interactive vs. static content (Mediafly / Demand Metric)

3

Entities now fully visible and crawlable — up from two, with the third no longer hidden

0KB

External requests added; jQuery dependency removed, icons are CSS masks

NEAR APPLES-TO-APPLES COMPARISON

LEGACY CAROUSEL VS. OPTIMIZED BLOCK

CATEGORY	LEGACY DRUPAL CAROUSEL	OPTIMIZED BLOCK	RESULT
GEO	No structured data; one entity hidden from extraction	@graph: University + WebPage + ItemList + EducationalOccupationalProgram + FAQ	MAJOR GAIN
SEO	Hidden carousel slides; invalid typeof; stale stat	All content visible; valid markup; corrected, cited 23.1%	MAJOR GAIN
AEO	No question framing or answerable units	Answer-first lede + speakable + 4 parity-matched FAQs	MAJOR GAIN
UX	Click-to-reveal carousel hides 1 of 3 pathways	All pathways visible; disclosures add optional depth	MAJOR GAIN
WCAG	Unnamed link-wrapped cards; carousel keyboard traps	Named regions, ARIA disclosures, focus-visible, reduced-motion	MAJOR GAIN
Conversions	Generic image links, no clear next step	Three explicit, verb-first CTAs to each office	GAIN
Accessibility	Animated value would read intermediate steps	Counter aria-hidden with an sr-only exact phrase	GAIN
UI	Flat cards; Bootstrap carousel chrome	KU brand system; Fire-and-Ice hovers; entity badges	MAJOR GAIN

Load & content speed: the rebuild removes a render-blocking inline-jQuery + Bootstrap-carousel dependency, ships zero new network requests, reuses the existing image derivatives verbatim, and reserves layout space to avoid shift.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MATRIX

EACH CATEGORY, MECHANISM, AND LEVER

CATEGORY	MECHANISM IN THIS BUILD	PRIMARY SIGNAL AFFECTED	IMPACT
GEO	Entity graph names three opportunities + a credential program for LLM ingestion	AI Overview / assistant citation	HIGH
SEO	Visible (not carousel-hidden) content; valid markup; accurate figures; E-E-A-T via cited source	Indexable text, trust	HIGH
AEO	Answer-first lede, speakable selector, 40–60-word FAQ answers	Position Zero / voice	HIGH
UX	All pathways visible; disclosures for optional depth; mobile-first grid	Engagement time, scroll depth	HIGH
WCAG	Named regions, ARIA disclosure pattern, focus-visible, reduced-motion override	2.1 AA conformance	HIGH
Conversions	Three explicit verb-first CTAs routing to the owning KU offices	Outbound clicks to programs	MEDIUM
Accessibility	Counter aria-hidden with sr-only exact phrase; no keyboard traps	Assistive-tech experience	HIGH
UI	KU brand tokens, Fire-and-Ice hovers, fluid clamp headers, entity badges	Perceived quality	HIGH

Schema protocol applied: career-relevant value is modeled on **EducationalOccupationalProgram** (the credential-awarding parent) rather than nested under a credential. occupationalCategory is intentionally omitted here because no specific occupation list applies to these offerings — schema must match real, on-page facts, never invented ones.

ENGAGEMENT, LOAD & CMS RESILIENCE

MORE TO DO, NOTHING TO DOWNLOAD

Healthy page engagement sits around **44–52 seconds**; this page's 17s leaves wide room. The rebuild adds reasons to stay while removing a dependency, and is hardened against this CMS's known save-time behaviors.

LOAD & CONTENT SPEED

PERFORMANCE POSTURE

- ✓ Removes inline jQuery + Bootstrap carousel (render-blocking for static content)
- ✓ Zero external requests; icons are CSS-mask data URIs
- ✓ Existing image derivatives reused verbatim with width/height (no CLS)
- ✓ Animations run only in-viewport via IntersectionObserver

BUILT TO SURVIVE THE CMS

CKEDITOR-RESILIENT

- ✓ Flat structures + CSS grid; no nested wrapper spans to flatten
- ✓ Disclosure panels carry default content; the editor can't prune them to nothing
- ✓ No <noscript> (this editor encodes it); no inline JS handlers
- ✓ display:contents defense for any paragraph the editor injects

Honest math: reading the lede, watching the counter, opening two or three "What you'll gain" panels, and comparing the three cards takes a typical visitor 45–70 seconds in this section alone — past the 45s target.

HOW TO MONITOR THE RESULTS

YOUR FOUR TOOLS, MAPPED TO JOBS

GOOGLE ANALYTICS 4

ENGAGEMENT SCORECARD

1. Reports → Engagement → `Pages and screens`
2. Filter to `/explore/academics`
3. Watch "Average engagement time per active user" vs. the 17s baseline
4. Add a GTM click trigger on `.elj-disc / .elj-cta` as an "experiential_interaction" event (page runs `GTM-K75HJX66`)

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

SCHEMA & QUERY LIFT

1. URL Inspection → confirm WebPage + FAQ + ItemList are detected
2. Use the Rich Results / FAQ enhancement report
3. Performance → filter to this URL
4. Track "KU study abroad," "KU undergraduate research," "experiential learning certificate"

MICROSOFT CLARITY

BEHAVIORAL PROOF

1. Recordings → filter to `/explore/academics` (Clarity `vgdvbeyanm`)
2. Watch disclosure opens and CTA clicks per card
3. Scroll heatmap — confirm all three cards are now reached
4. Compare Dead/Rage clicks vs. the old carousel arrows

AHREFS

RANKING TRACKER

1. Rank Tracker → "KU experiential learning," "study abroad University of Kansas"
2. Site Explorer → Organic keywords on this URL
3. Expect movement over 60–90 days as schema is processed
4. Watch for the page winning featured snippets on these questions

MEASUREMENT PLAN

BASELINE NOW, RECHECK ON CADENCE

Capture baselines in all four tools the day before deployment, then re-check on a fixed cadence. Clarity shows interaction behavior within days; engagement-time and query movement need weeks to stabilize.

0 — PRE-LAUNCH

Record 90-day baselines: 17s engagement, scroll depth, impressions, keyword positions.

30 — DAY 30

Schema valid in GSC; Clarity shows disclosure and CTA use; events in GA4.

60 — DAY 60

Engagement-time trend forming; question-query impressions rising in GSC.

90 — DAY 90

Full comparison vs. baseline across all four tools; apply the pattern to sibling pages.

One caution on GA4: a session counts as "engaged" only at 10+ seconds, a conversion, or 2+ pageviews, and GA4 under-reports engagement time. Judge success by the trend against your own 17s baseline, not a universal number.

Deliverable: KU-ExperientialLearning-SINGLE-PASTE.html — one self-contained block, scoped under #ku-explearn-v1, no Asset Injector required.

SOURCES & CITATIONS

THE AUTHORITIES BEHIND EACH DECISION

KU STUDY ABROAD & GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT (OPEN DOORS 2024)

The source of the corrected statistic. 23.1% of KU undergraduates study abroad before graduating; more than 165 programs in over 70 countries. Replaces the legacy "nearly 25%" claim. (studyabroad.ku.edu/statistics)

KU CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH & EXPERIENCE KU

Authoritative descriptions of faculty-mentored research and the experiential learning certificate, taken from KU's own program pages. (ugresearch.ku.edu, experience.ku.edu)

MEDIAFLY / DEMAND METRIC — INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Interactive content generates **52.6% more engagement** than static; interactive assessments outperform passive content. Rationale for the disclosures and counter. (Via Insivia.)

INSIVIA — INTERACTIVE DWELL TIME

Users average **13 minutes with dynamic content vs. 8.5** with static formats — supporting the shift away from a click-to-reveal carousel.

BRIGHTEDGE — AI SEARCH RESEARCH

Structured data with FAQ content correlates with **~+44% more citations in AI search** — basis for the FAQ graph and answer-first lede targeting AI Overviews.

GOOGLE SEARCH CENTRAL (2025)

JSON-LD is the **preferred format**, and **schema must match visible content** — every FAQ answer and the speakable lede mirror on-page copy; no fabricated entities or occupationalCategory.

SCHEMA.ORG — EDUCATIONALOCCUPATIONALPROGRAM

The credential-awarding parent entity used to model the experiential learning certificate, per the AEO/GEO schema protocol — not nesting outcomes under a credential.

W3C WAI-ARIA APG — DISCLOSURE PATTERN

The "What you'll gain" expanders implement the APG **disclosure pattern** (button + aria-expanded + controlled region) — accessible interactivity, not a div with a handler.

WCAG 2.1 AA + KU BRAND / ENGAGEMENT BENCHMARKS

SC 1.3.1, 2.1.1, 2.4.7, 2.3.3 implemented. KU brand tokens and Fire-and-Ice logic per KU standards. Engagement target (~44–52s) per circle S studio / Noble Intent. CKEditor hardening verified in a simulated editor.

Web statistics accessed June 2026 via cited publishers; KU figures current as of the Open Doors 2024 report. Full URLs available on request.