

ECU students create app for scheduling

BY JANE DAIL
The Daily Reflector

A chance meeting between two East Carolina University students blossomed into a friendship and a new business venture that started with a need to help students keep track of school assignments.

Cameron Jennings and Mikal Chavez both are from the Raleigh area but did not meet until they were students at ECU.

Chavez, a senior in computer science, said he met Jennings, a sophomore studying urban planning and political science, for the first time in March through their girlfriends, who were friends. Chavez said the first day they met, they began brainstorming.

"We hit it off, like we've known each other for years," Chavez said. "We were just talking about school. The next thing you know we started talking about ideas."

In that casual meeting, they also discussed a way to make it easier to input a class syllabus into a smartphone's calendar.

The two began researching smartphone applications with a similar function but were surprised when there was no competition.

"It's just something that was brand new," Chavez said. "It was new territory. That's how it's been ever since the beginning."

From there, they decided to pursue creating their app, SyllabEye.

With the application — which launched in the

SYLLABEYE

■ To learn more about the SyllabEye smart phone application, visit syllabeye.com or search for it in the Google Play Store or the iTunes store.

■ The app is free to download for the first class. After that, it is 99 cents for the year for early downloaders. After, it will be 99 cents per semester.



Google Play Store for Android devices in December and in Apple's iTunes Store on Jan. 6 — users can take photos of a printed class syllabus or a syllabus online with their phone. The app will then plug the information into the phone's calendar and allow users to customize reminders for assignments. It is free for the first class and then 99 cents per semester.

"Before, if I were to get all this information in, I'd have to sit there and write it all down and then I'd have to set an alarm and type it into my calendar," Jennings said.

Chavez said creating the app also has worked to their benefit in the classroom.

"This was something that we needed at the time, as well, because we were dealing with a whole lot of class work," he said.

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"Things can get overwhelming at times, but SyllabEye we felt like could be that revelation that could help us and that we could spread to other people."

The two created Chavez & Jennings Visions LLC, which now includes five other members, with Jennings taking care of most of the business side while Chavez handles the more technical aspects.

Jennings said the two worked with a company to create the app starting in April, which kept the idea and technology a secret during the development phase. During that time, the two raised funds to offset costs of developing the app.

Jennings said SyllabEye has a pilot program at the ECU College of Business and they are trying to start them at other universities in the state, including at N.C. State University and the University of North Caro-

lina at Chapel Hill.

So far about 250 people have downloaded the app, primarily in the Greenville area and Wake Forest area, which is where Jennings is from. The app has also garnered interest in California and New York.

"They feel the value of it, because never before have they been so sure of knowing about all assignments that's coming up," Jennings said. "... You just take a couple of pictures and hit the button a couple of times."

The creators are planning bigger events to let people know about the app. Jennings said he would like to do a publicity tour during freshmen orientations at universities.

Jennings and Chavez are also planning to have an internship program later in the semester where fellow students learn about the process, including creating a business plan and finding capital to fund it.

"You run into so many road blocks that will make you think that this is some-

thing that you can't do because you're a student," Jennings said. "You have horrible credit, you don't have rich friends who can pull this off (by investing in it), all those road blocks don't mean anything. There's always a way around it, and we want to show a whole lot of students that."

Jennings said those interested in creating an app can expect to spend \$5,000-\$10,000 with already existing technology. The two had to create new technology for SyllabEye, which took more effort and time.

"As long as you're not creating new technology, it's relatively cheap nowadays," he said. "But if you're creating new technology and there's complex questions and algorithms that have to be created, then you're looking at a long, drawn-out process and an expensive price."

Jennings said the company has more ideas for applications, and he would like to create an app with the similar idea of SyllabEye

but for work schedules.

"A whole lot of people take pictures of their schedules at work and they just refer to it every day," he said. "But ... you could take a picture and it goes right to your calendar."

He said he also wants to pursue other business ventures pertaining to his major, though he would like to continue working with Chavez. He said he wants to open a Raleigh office for the company and move the operations there when he graduates.

Chavez said the two work well with each other and feed off each other's energy. After graduation, he would ideally be able to work with the company full-time.

"However it goes, we started something here that I think is going to go for a while," he said. "The longevity I see in it is great. I'm hoping to get out and work for the company."

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