HACKNYU, HACK THE WORLD

This year, students hacked in four tracks: education and student life, accessibility, sustainability, and dental care. Many projects took the form of apps, like ToothBit, which tells users when to brush their teeth based on what they've eaten, or ShareMeal, which allows students with extra meals on their plans to gift those meals to someone else. Some took the form of wearable technology, like Thinker, a helmet that reads brain waves. The wearer can play a simple computer game using only their thoughts, which has broader implications for people with limited mobility: Imagine being able to move a wheelchair just by thinking about where you want to go.

It's eight hours before the launch of HackNYU 2016, an intensive workshop aimed at developing technology that improves the lives of its users, and the Slack channels are buzzing. NYU students in New York City, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai are using the messaging app to connect across the world, learn about one another's projects, and get psyched for this annual 48-hour hackathon:

While winners are chosen in each track, the main objective of the hackathon is learning. For many students, the hackathon will be their first time competing, and some come in with only basic coding knowledge:

#HACKNYU2016

NEW MESSAGES

vdthatte
What is everybody working on?

ync228
Hey! We're Ripemrkt, working on an app to help prevent food waste.

vdthatte
@ync228 That's awesome!

bryceledner
Looking for a programmer. Anyone want to join my team?

saurabh.p
Any teams looking for a robotics/hardware guy?

jeen
@saurabh.p Team Local Influencers is looking for more people! We're making it easier for small business owners to find customers. I'll DM you.

#HACKNYU2016

NEW MESSAGES

Xtremenoob
Thanks for joining my project, KnewClasses! I'm trying to make it easier for NYU students to navigate the course selection process. I really expected to be working alone and not getting anything done because I'm such an @xtremenoob.

Hawa
Thanks for letting me join your team! I'm still learning too, but I can help with the basics.

Advanced hackers are also quick to offer help to other teams:
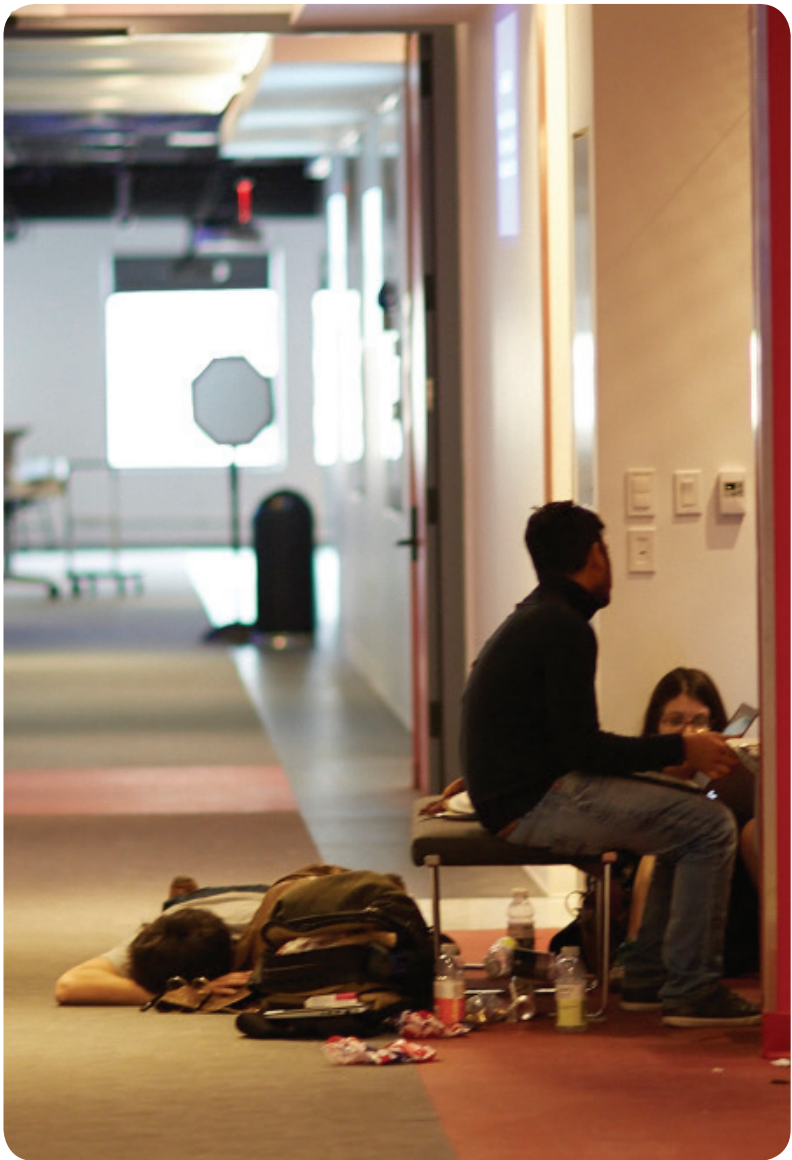
#HACKNYU2016

NEW MESSAGES

ryjare
I work with 3-D modeling software. Happy to help out if anyone needs advice!

idosalama
@everyone: while you are building, don't forget to pause and eliminate everything that is not core. #mentortip

Hackathon:
A gathering of the tech-minded for a period of intense collaboration. Everyone from programmers and hardware developers to graphic designers and project managers meet—often for just 24 hours, sometimes for as long as a week—to create innovative technological solutions to everyday problems.

Throughout the two days, students workshopped their projects with industry leaders like Baris Yuksel, a senior software engineer at Google, who hosted an introductory JavaScript class and then stayed for the rest of the weekend to mentor students. Joanne Zhou from WearHacks—a nonprofit that teaches hackers how to create and incorporate wearable hardware components, like Fitbit, into their projects—was on hand to advise and troubleshoot. There were also sessions on how to create a business plan and how to effectively pitch a project.

On the final afternoon, teams presented their ideas to one another and to the panel of judges in a science fair–style setup. Videoconferencing connected the fairs in Abu Dhabi, New York City, and Shanghai, so everyone could see the projects they'd been chatting about all weekend. The winning teams walked away with prizes like iPads and GoPro cameras, but just about everyone left feeling like they'd gained valuable skills:

#HACKNYU2016

NEW MESSAGES

peter
Didn't win, but huge shout-out to the organizers, volunteers, and fellow hackers for making my first hackathon an awesome learning experience. I can't wait to hack again.

Now What?

Great ideas are born at HackNYU, but after the 48 hours are up, there are plenty of resources for students who want to keep developing their ideas—or work on something completely different.

- At the Campus Coding Collaborative, student teams apply for funding and are mentored through a series of workshops as they take their ideas from the initial planning stages all the way to a launch strategy.

- Members of the student club Patent Pending spend their time working together with faculty advisors in the Prototyping Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering as they build circuits or learn to program the 3-D printer.

- At NYU Shanghai, LOOP is a club where students come to learn programming and robotics from each other. Experienced student coders teach their noncoding classmates how to bring their ideas to life.

- The Idea Lab at NYU Abu Dhabi is where students go to build prototypes, work with faculty and staff advisers, and attend talks with established entrepreneurs.

Hack Away!

Many hackathons take place at NYU throughout the year:

- The NYU Abu Dhabi Hackathon for Social Good in the Arab World brings together students from universities all over the globe.

- HackShanghai, created and run by NYU Shanghai students, is China's largest student hackathon.

- The impetus behind the Stupid Hackathon at Tisch School of the Arts is that many of history's biggest innovations were discovered by accident. The goal is to create freely and see where an idea might lead.

- HackNY, hosted at NYU, is a national hackathon for college students from across the United States.