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Mobile App Programming I

November 29, 2021

The Development of Tutorable

Abstract

The Android development process has introduced me to several new challenges and a unique creative workflow that I have had the chance to familiarize myself with this semester. In this relatively short time, I was able to apply my learning by working hands-on alongside my partner Wilbert De la Rosa to create an app we call Tutorable. The vision for Tutorable was to create an app that facilitates the tutoring process for college students by allowing them to easily schedule in-person meetings with verified tutors, based on the school they attend. Tutorable provides a solution for students that need tutoring but might not be comfortable with getting the help they need. Our app aims to solve this by giving college students a more personalized tutoring experience, which should further encourage students to get help from tutors.

Over the past three short months, I have been given the exciting opportunity to study the mobile app development process for Android. I started this course with no prior knowledge of mobile app development outside of a general understanding of

Java programming. The integrated development environment Android Studio was brand new to me and required a lot of toying around to fully grasp. Although before any of the actual development began, I had to identify what my focus was going to be for the semester. After much discussion over several different ideas, my project partner, Wilbert De la Rosa, and I were able to narrow down a problem that needed solving. The magnum opus of my time spent working on Android app development is a matchmaking-style tutoring app that we call Tutorable.

The idea to build this kind of tutoring app was inspired by the success of other popular matchmaking-style apps and the desire to make the tutoring process easier for both college students and tutors. In order to start the entire creative process of building an app, my partner Wilbert and I began by conducting our own surveys and involving ourselves in group discussion with other students. The survey asked individuals about a problem that they would like an app to solve, and if an app offering to solve that problem already existed, it asked what they liked and disliked about that particular app. After gathering enough data and pitching our ideas to one another, Wilbert and I decided we wanted to make a tutoring app that would benefit college students more than existing tutoring apps. While most other tutoring apps promote 24/7 online support,

which can sometimes be completely anonymous and leave students feeling disconnected from their tutor, our app Tutorable would provide a more personalized experience that focused on the individual school level.

Once our idea was solidified, we began to draft the functionalities and user-interfaces for our app. We decided that Tutorable would operate on three main screens across two different user modes which depends on whether the user registers as a student or a tutor. The main difference between the two modes being that tutors have some additional options. The three main screens would include: a home screen with all the most important information displayed to the user front-and-center, an appointments screen that provided both students and tutors the ability to find a session with a tutor, while also giving tutors the ability to set availabilities, and lastly a settings screen to allow users to update their information. Upon opening the app for the first time, the user will be met with a registration screen that asks for some basic information and confirms whether the user is signing up as a student or a tutor. In total we had drafted eight different screens for the foundation of our app's layout. After drawing a mock-up of each screen, we were ready to begin development on Android Studio.

Learning Android Studio was, and still is, a significant part of the development process for Tutorable. Early in the semester I put together a couple of different versions of a very basic app that contained relatively simple XML layouts and Java code by following simple online tutorials. After this I found myself scouring the Android developer website to try to understand as much as I could about the development process and the various APIs for Android apps. I am currently still trying to learn as much as I can about the many Java classes and libraries that we have implemented in our code. Fortunately, my experience with Java programming has made it much easier to read and write code for the app. In terms of collaboration, my partner Wilbert and I decided we would use GitHub for version control in order to better manage and stay on top of our work. We also have a project board where we assign ourselves tasks and keep track of our progress.

The main concept for Tutorable was to create an app that could make one-on-one tutoring as familiar and personalized as the student needs, without requiring the student to pay fees. Upon signing up, the app asks the user to input the school they attend, and then the subject or course they need help in, which will display a list of available tutoring sessions. Students will be able to request the tutor that works best for them, and

tutors will be able to register themselves on the app for certain courses and subjects in which they offer tutoring. For security, we will require verification from registering tutors by resume and/or by an official transcript along with a method of ID. Registered tutors can set up meetings by appointment, which they may either confirm or deny, or offer drop-in hours or virtual meetings. To help the user keep track of their schedule, all scheduled appointments will be displayed on the home screen for quick and easy access.

We hope that the invention of our app will provide students with a more flexible and secure way to get help from tutors. As it stands, some students that may need tutoring may not be comfortable with getting the help they need. This app will give college students a more personalized tutoring experience, which should further encourage getting help from tutors, by allowing them to select the tutor that is right for them.