

Term Paper – School View

The project I have been working on for this semester in Mobile App Programming I is something I call “School View.” School View is a school rating app that is based on student or visitor reviews. To start off, what problem exactly is this app trying to solve? The problem is that there is no simple way for students to view how well a university is doing based on important factors, being academics, athletics, housing, dining, social life, faculty, and many more. There is also no quick way for rising college undergrads to view which school they want to enroll in based on these categories. An app that can fix both of these problems is where School View comes in. It is not an app to help high school students find a right pick, like Unigo, Capex, College Insight, or any of the apps that match GPA or interests with high school students picking colleges. School View is more focused on showing off specific aspects of a school, or trying to improve them without making any recommendations, and without any matching algorithms based on GPA or test scores. The app is completely influenced by the students. School View is an app unlike any other, with features that could be revolutionary in how schools interact with their students and future undergrads.

The app functions by the following: The user logs into the app with an account, or through google or Facebook. The user is able to set the school they are currently going to or set multiple schools, being a category mostly used by high school students. There are no barriers in the application, a user that is already in a university can set a review for another university they have visited. Of course, there can be some problems with that but will need to be addressed

later on. Once in the app, the user can search for a school in the search bar at the top of the screen, similar to a search engine. Once entered, the user will see the rating of the school followed by a star rating out of five underneath it. The user will also see categories that can be clicked on and reviewed, being academics, athletics, housing, dining, social life, faculty, and an “other” category. Once the user clicks on one of these categories, they will see written reviews and star ratings given by other users. All the star ratings in a category are taken together into an average rating, which is set as the rating for the category. The star ratings for the categories are taken by average and that is the star rating for the school. The “other” category is a place for students to share other types of feedback for the school, however, I have decided to not have a rating feature for it due to it not being an organized category.

All these features are going to fill a vision of a world that schools will work their hardest to satisfy their students. If this is an app that is popular for college and high school students, I see the great benefit that it can bring to society. There is competition between schools like there is competition between businesses. However, there is sometimes no real incentive for schools into improve on specific parts of itself. Instead of a university relying on how good just the education is, School View will make an incentive for the university to improve on other factors due to the voices of their students. For example, the dining at the University of Massachusetts Lowell is certainly not the worst but is outclassed by many other schools nearby. If enough students share the same opinion that I just mentioned and put up reviews on School View that involve dining, perhaps the university will look into improving that category. This will result in the school getting higher ratings, which will attract more new students.

Now looking at it from a high schooler's perspective, it is a little similar. When applying for a university, almost all students do not focus on just academics. They want to see what different fields the school is great at. For example, when I was looking for a university that fits me, I wanted a school to have Coop opportunities. I went with the University of Massachusetts Lowell because they had one of the best-rated coop programs in New England. Every student has their own expectations which just minimum GPA or SAT scores cannot satisfy. As mentioned earlier, the app will not make any recommendations nor matches. The user has full control over what they want to do and can make up their own mind based on reviews they see.

The process of creating this application has been on the more difficult side logistically. It is not yet finished, however, and it seems like it is a project that will need to be continued into Mobile App Programming II. I started this project by using Android Studio. I learned how to use XML and Kotlin as the languages for building the app. Before doing any real progress on School View, I have watched many videos on how to properly use Android studio. One of them was a very helpful one by an account called Treehouse, which goes over the basic features and shows how to create a very basic app. I have made some mediocre progress for School View using Android Studio. I created a login screen, A home screen with a search bar, and the screen where users can leave ratings. I have implemented buttons for each rating category and working rating stars. I personally thought it was coming together great. Unfortunately, however, I had many problems when using Android Studio. The program was very slow on my MacBook Pro, which hindered the speed of my progress drastically. There were freezes and even one crash where I had to restart the program. Since I do not have an android device, I had to use an emulator, which took ages to load and caused my laptop to freeze. I eventually said enough is enough and

switched to a different program even though I already had good progress with Android Studio. Since I have a MacBook, I switched over to using XCode, which was a night and day difference when compared to Android Studio. The program is very responsive and optimized. I was able to recreate what I had in android studio in just a couple of days. It did take a day or two to learn how to use XCode properly. It has similar features to the previous program like drag and drop, but it uses swift instead of Kotlin or Java. In XCode, I was able to customize the appearance of my buttons and the overall look of the app much better. The cherry on top is that since I have an iPhone, I can run the app through my phone instead of using an emulator.

School View is an app that is far from being finished, there will be a lot of progress made between now and the end of the semester, however many key features still need to be implemented, like an average rating calculator, a search bar that can actually search, and there are many buttons that do not have any function yet. When this app will be complete however, hopefully being by the end of next semester, School View will be an app that will benefit college students, high school students, and the schools themselves all alike.