When Omid Sadeghpour, MBA ’13, came to MIT Sloan last year, he immediately planned to connect with classmates who had either biotech or software development backgrounds. However, there was no mechanism in place to easily find people, so he invented one.

The result is Tree.st, <http://tree.st/MITSloan>, a free MIT Sloan community search engine where members can search for one another by specifying any number of qualities or attributes of the people they wish to discover.

The information is all voluntary, and about 500 MIT Sloan students are already using the system for networking. Members must have an mit.edu address to join. “This search engine really gathers the micro-level details [about its users],” Sadeghpour said. “LinkedIn for example, only asks about your career. What we tried to do was ask everybody any question that anyone wants to come up with.”

Sadeghpour, who has a background in software and bioengineering, started work on Tree.st last winter after the Core ended. He collaborated with a few of his classmates in the New Enterprises class (15.390), including Shireen Taleghani, MBA ’13, and other collaborators such as: Shailesh Mittal (MBA ’14), Alexander Romanov (LGO ’13) and Adam Borelli (MBA ’13). He has been in discussions with the MIT Venture Mentoring Service (http://web.mit.edu/vms/) and the Martin (1958) Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship (<http://entrepreneurship.mit.edu/>) and said the advice they have provided has helped propel the project forward.

“The concept of Tree, or what we were trying to build, is so you can connect with people who matter to you. That was the number one priority,” he said. “The idea is that we are all leaves of a tree. All the knowledge that we have can be branched into larger branches. The idea is to allow anybody to connect with anybody,” he added.

One of the most important parts of Tree.st is the “anti-spam” mechanism. There is a point system in place that prevents users from instantly having access to everyone in the system. In order to connect with other Tree.st members, users have to spend points. “It’s almost like a marketplace. The more information that you give the system, the more points you get. And, this will allow you to connect with about 300 or 400 people,” Sadeghpour said.

Romanov, one of Sadeghpour’s team collaborators, agreed that privacy is absolutely paramount to Tree.st’s success. “Any Internet startup has to consider this,” he said. “You have to guarantee that the data will be used for the purposes you are specifying. The only purpose we see to Tree.st is to help others connect. We don’t intend to make this an advertisement-based startup.”

Many of the MBA ’14s are already using Tree.st, Sadeghpour said.

R. Blaize Wallace, MBA ’14, said he signed up for the service as part of the early beta testing trials. “It seemed like a great way to make connections in large communities, which could be very useful to those of us in school,” he said. Wallace recently logged on in search of classmates with work experience in Brazilian startups, for a G-Lab project he’s currently working on. “I foresee using it frequently in the future to find students who have experiences and interests in unconventional areas,” he said.

“We’ve seen a remarkable rate of participation in this, with very little marketing,” Romanov said.

The next step is potentially rolling out Tree.st to all of MIT. Sadeghpour has already met with about 20 different organizations across the Institute to promote the service.

He is also seeking more members to join the team, as he, Mittal, and Romanov are planning on pursuing the project as a possible viable business opportunity. To contact Sadeghpour, email him at [omid.sadeghpour@sloan.mit.edu](mailto:omid.sadeghpour@sloan.mit.edu)