Bloomsburg University Hackathon Proposal

Dr. Bashar W. Hanna   April 10, 2018
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
Carver Hall
400 East Second Street
Bloomsburg, Pa 17815

Dear Dr. Hanna,

Drawing inspiration from Bloomsburg's Mission to "provide resources to maximize opportunities for success", the purpose of this letter is to propose a 48-hour hackathon to be held on campus in the fall of 2018. This event would provide College of Science and Technology students the opportunity to gain valuable experience that is highly sought after by technology companies all over the world. Our plan is to have the event open to college students currently enrolled in any educational institution in the United States, with first preference given to Bloomsburg University students. Additionally, companies from the technology sector would be invited to both recruit participants as well as partner with Bloomsburg in sponsoring the event. This would allow us to join an expansive list of educational institutions hosting hackathons around the country. In fact, all of the top 40 ranked universities for computer science by US News have hosted hackathons over the previous years. In the following paragraphs, we will go more in depth on the details for this proposal and the benefits Bloomsburg would obtain by hosting a hackathon.

The Current Situation

Bloomsburg University hosts two events featuring the College of Science and Technology each year. The first is called BloomCon, which is a conference focused around the cyber security industry. BloomCon has been a resounding success since its inception in February 2016. This conference has placed a well-deserved spotlight on both our Forensics department and its students and draws an audience from multiple states in the northeastern United States.

Besides BloomCon, our university also hosts an annual high school programming contest for multiple schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. This gives teens the opportunity to experience our university and have fun competing against their peers. The event recently held on April 10th, 2018 marks the 23rd time Bloomsburg has welcomed these potential new Huskies onto our campus.

These two events both highlight the College of Science and Technology at Bloomsburg. However, we feel there is still a void that a hackathon could fill. BloomCon is an asset mainly geared towards students majoring in Digital Forensics and the annual high school programming contest focuses on the pre-college aged student. In comparison, Bloomsburg currently does not have a similar event which is directed towards undergraduate computer science students. This is the void a hackathon would fill. It would not only illuminate our computer science department, but also would provide current and future computer science students a value experience desired by most employers.
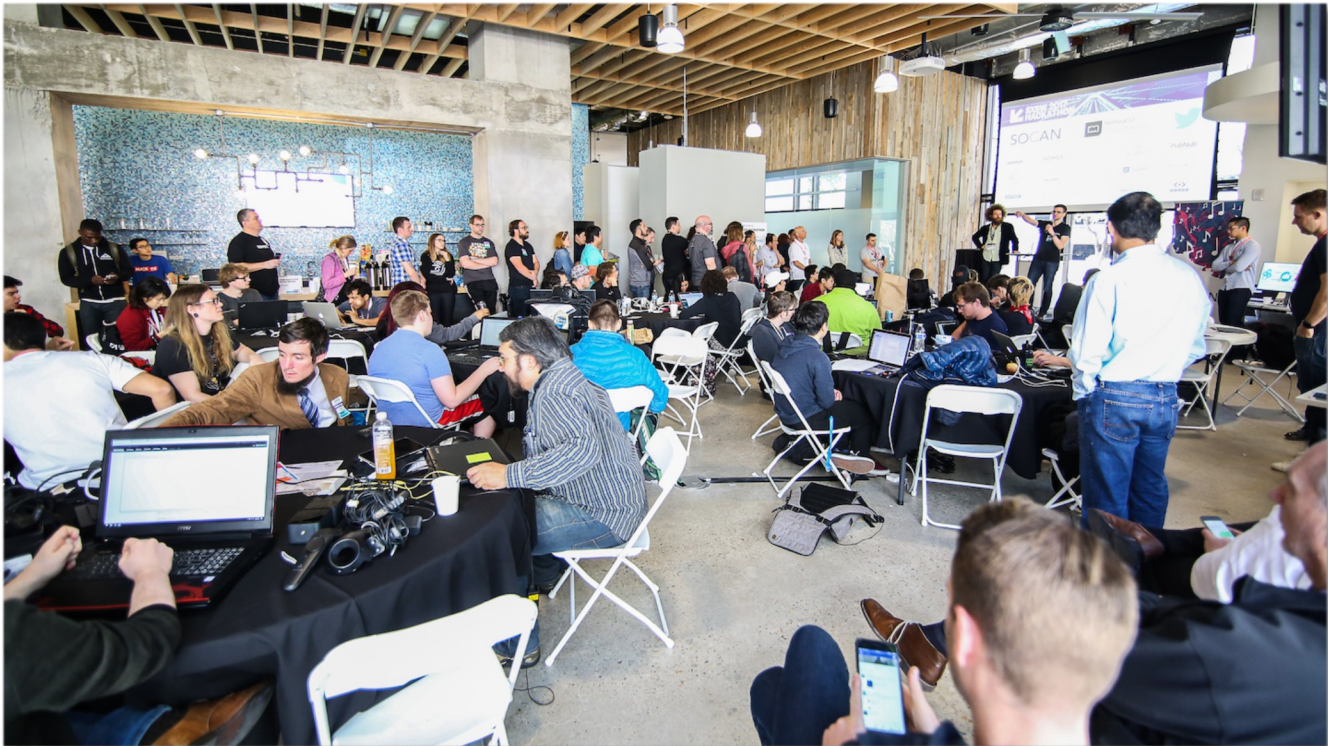

Proposed Project Plan

We are proposing that Bloomsburg University hosts a Hackathon for Computer Science and other related majors. The event will be held in Kehr Union's Ballrooms. The main language we will implement is Java because that is the language focused on by Bloomsburg University. Structurally, there will be novice and expert sections. Novices will work on logic based problems, such as calculating the nth digit of the Fibonacci sequence, and experts will develop a piece of software according to the theme.

The first day we will have the main guest speaker begin the event by saying a few words of inspiration and announcing the theme of the hackathon. Once the theme is announced, the 24 hours allowed to participants to create their entry will begin. Throughout this first day, we will have lectures planned featuring faculty and other guest speakers. This is often done at other hackathons and allows participants the opportunity to take a break and learn something new. Also, this will allow students who are not participating and guests a benefit as well.

We will have a small scale job fair on the second day for participants and attendees, where sponsors will be able to recruit participants for full-time positions or internships. Also, you will have a dramatic countdown to the end of the 24 hours allotted participants to program their entry. After the participants cease working and turn in their entry, there will be a lecture given by the main guest speaker while the judges closely examine each entry. Finally, the results will be revealed and the event will come to a close.

Qualifications

We are a group of Bloomsburg University students interested in taking what we have learned, and competing against other students of similar skill levels. Our school takes pride in our Computer Science department, and this event would give those students a platform to showcase their knowledge and ingenuity. We are simply doing our best to further enrich our college experience and we believe that a hackathon would be a helpful opportunity.

Cost and Benefits

The cost of hosting a Hackathon pales in comparison to its benefits. Events like this are the perfect way to put the spotlight on the College of Science and Technology. This would give the Computer Science department a chance to grow and possibly recruit a few students along the way. Hosting this event would also help our current Computer Science majors learn from each other and see problems from different angles. We could even get some diversity in majors among the groups, such as a group with a Computer Science student, an Electronics Engineering Technology student, and a Digital Forensics student.
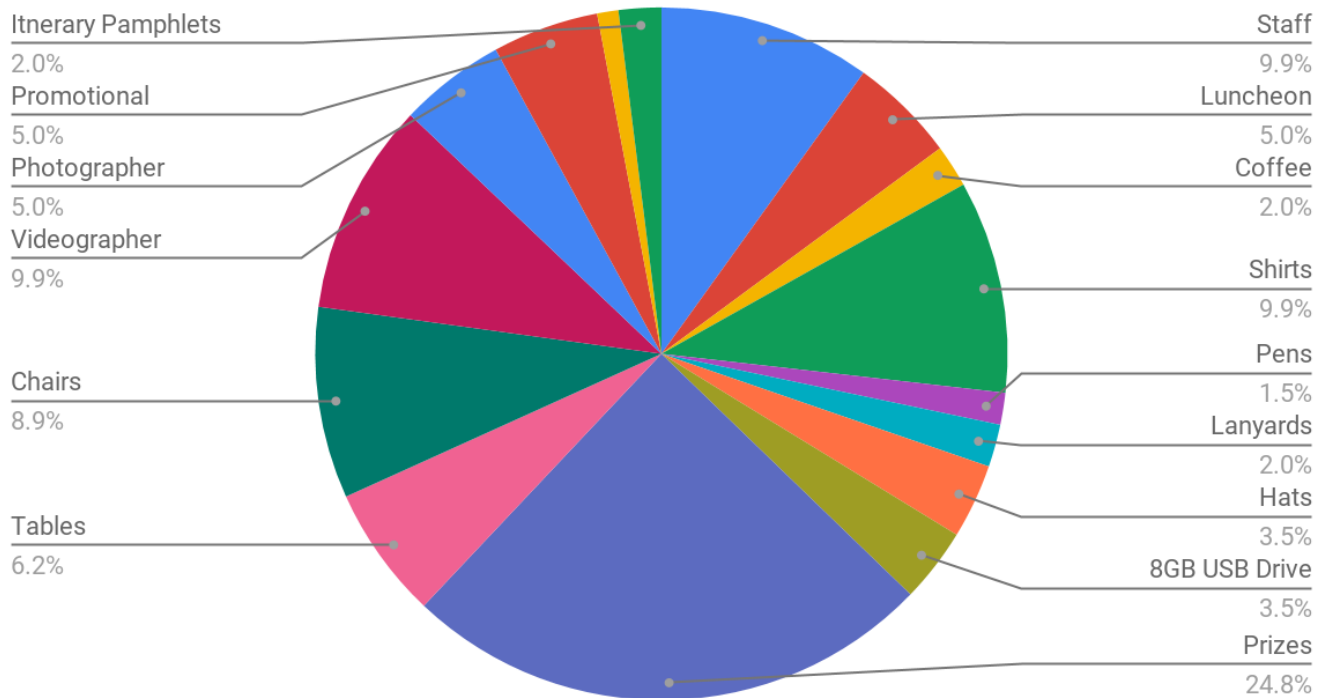
Getting the students used to working with people of different skill sets will make their transition into the workforce that much easier. Additionally, employers highly value prospective candidates with hackathons on their resume. Due to the time constraint imposed on teams to complete the project they devise, students learn valuable lessons on how to work together on a team at a frenetic pace. This simulates the last minute push often seen in software and game development extremely well.

Total Budget

Item	Quantity	Total Cost
Staff	20	$2000
Luncheon (Subway)	60ft Subs	$1000
Coffee	N/A	$400
Shirts	150	$2000
Pens	300	$300
Lanyards	150	$400
Hats	100	$700
8GB USB Drive	100	$700
Prizes	6	$5000
Tables	30	$1400
Chairs	100	$1800
Videographer	N/A	$2000
Photographer	N/A	$1000
Promotional Advertisements	3	$1000
Website	1	$200
Itinerary Pamphlets*	200	$400
Total Cost		$19,650

*There will be pages in the pamphlets to thank sponsors for their contributions, similar to an ad spot.

Budget Distribution

Itnerary Pamphlets 2.0%
Promotional 5.0%
Photographer 5.0%
Videographer 9.9%
Chairs 8.9%
Tables 6.2%

Staff 9.9%
Luncheon 5.0%
Coffee 2.0%
Shirts 9.9%
Pens 1.5%
Lanyards 2.0%
Hats 3.5%
8GB USB Drive 3.5%
Prizes 24.8%

We will also ask local businesses if they would like to participate in the hackathon as sponsors. This will give them the opportunity to meet students in person and recruit them for varying positions and internships. Their donations will go a long way in helping the budget and any money raised from sponsors will be subtracted from the costs and given back to the University. We did not include donations in our cost estimation because there is no feasible way to gauge an amount at this time. Additionally, we would also look into the option of charging for admission for future years in order to offset the costs involved. To maximize attendance and initial interest, this would not be done during the first year.

FAQ

What is a Hackathon?

A programming event where computer programmers design usable software based on a theme. They often have a specific focus like what programming languages can be used.

Would there be a deadline to get a ticket?

One week before the event

Who can participate

Teams will be comprised of currently enrolled computer science students from universities in the United States.

Would the university need to supply computers for the attendees to use while programming their project?

No, Attendees would be required to bring their laptop to use during the competition.

Would housing be provided to students visiting for the event?

Most hackathons require attendees to secure their own lodging. Participants generally stay up the entire evening of the event or take brief naps where they can.

What are the prizes for Novices?

- 1st Place: 200$ Best Buy gift card

- 2nd Place: 100$ Best Buy gift card

- 3rd Place: 50$ Best Buy gift card

What are the prizes for Experts?

- 1st Place Team: Each team member is awarded an HP Spectre laptop.

- 2nd Place Team: 300$ Gift cards for each member to Best Buy

- 3rd Place Team: Each member awarded 200$ gift cards to Best Buy

Conclusion

It is our belief that a Bloomsburg University Hackathon would greatly benefit the computer science students. Our proposed hackathon will give students a chance to experience what programming as a team would be like and would simulate the pressure of trying to complete a software project on a deadline.

Sincerely,

James Garringer   Mike Lasko   John Viola