Six Cypress College Students, Instructor Bring MP3 Player to Market

▶ What started in a written class assignment, a daughter's broken phone and a desire for an A has turned into an international business.

In what may be the ultimate David vs. Goliath business battle, a group of Cypress College students and their Management and Marketing instructor enter the holiday retail season with the introduction of a brand new digital music player.

The six students and faculty member Susan Hunter teamed up to evolve the credit-card-sized device from a written class assignment to a product that went on sale roughly a month after the world’s largest company — Apple, Inc. — introduced its latest music-playing smartphone.

The Plugggg is at the opposite end of the spectrum, in terms of cost and slick features. At $29.95, the device holds about 2,000 songs, integrates with in-car navigation systems, and won’t shatter when dropped — a feature that prompted its creation.

All team members, including founder Todd Applebaum, derive a significant measure of pride in the fact that everyone involved is connected to Cypress College.

“We’re very proud of what it turned out to be,” said Applebaum. “I’m not going to be shy, when Susan came on board and started guiding us with it, I felt proud to be a part of Cypress College and this project. This is stuff that you hear from your MITs and your Harvards. Here we are a community college.”

About 18 months ago, Applebaum enrolled at Cypress College after the business he ran for 20 years collapsed under the weight of the stalling economy. Applebaum, who had lived near the college for about a dozen years, said he selected the campus because of its proximity to his home and an affinity developed while regularly walking the track or shopping at the swap meet.

While enrolled in a course with Hunter, Applebaum’s daughter dropped her new smart phone while using it to play music as she walked home from school. At roughly the same time, Hunter presented students with an assignment in which they conceptualized a new product or a significant evolution in an existing product category.

An indestructible, small, and cost-friendly music player seemed like a good way for Applebaum to earn himself an A, he noted while discussing the product this week.

Demand Still Soaring as Registration Begins

Students brought MyGateway to its knees, cracking the system with a flurry of activity that has seen 11,365 current students register in 82% of available seats (as of Thursday morning) in spring-semester courses during the first few days of priority registration. New and returning students have registration appointments set for next week. “This is beyond any enrollment ever done at the college in such a short time period of priority registration,” said David Wassenaar, Dean of Admissions and Records.

Happy Holidays and Healthy New Year

This is the final edition of @Cypress for 2011. Publication will resume in January.

The fall semester officially comes to an end on December 16, and the college’s winter recess runs December 23, 2011 through January 2, 2012. The campus is also closed on January 16 in observation of Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday.

Opening Day is on Friday, January 20, and the semester begins on Monday, January 23, 2012.
Comprehensive Master Plan, Program Discontinuance Near Approval

The District Comprehensive Master Plan has reached its final stage of development as the document will be considered for approval by Trustees of the North Orange County Community College District at their meeting on Tuesday, December 13.

“[Because] we stopped mid stream and re-focused on the educational component, more strongly connecting the facilities component, and providing additional review by faculty — we have a much stronger product,” said Bob Simpson, Cypress College’s Executive Vice President and a campus co-chair of the process to develop the CMP.

“This is a document that takes a broad, high-level, long-term view,” Simpson said. “It also positions us for capital projects, when the time comes.”

The master plan is one of “an incredible number of significant projects on our plates this semester,” Simpson noted.

The list also includes: finalization of the 16-week calendar, a formal accreditation response (which was worked on this semester and to be presented on Opening Day), development of a new campus Strategic Plan and related colloquium, and the Educational Program Discontinuance Policy.

Spurred by the recent accreditation cycle, the Educational Program Discontinuance Policy is also nearing completion.

Like the Comprehensive Master Plan, the policy is ready for consideration by NOCCCD Trustees.

The policy has been in the works for seven years, Simpson noted. He added that a formal procedure, which does not require Board approval, will be developed in the near future.

Kwanzaa Celebration Held in Theater Lobby on Wednesday Evening

Cypress College’s Diversity Committee sponsored the annual Kwanzaa celebration on campus on Wednesday, December 7, 2011 in the Theater Lobby.

Sixteen Cypress College Automotive Technology students were recipients of scholarships from the California New Car Dealers Association.

The students are: Tommy Bui, Justin Chanthavy, Alex Cruz, Anthony Cruz, Jason Durik, Brandon Hoggatt, Itani Ibrahim, Luis Loera, Erik Markus, Joe Mejia, Brandt Odil, Juan Olmos, Paul Park, Jonathan Reynoso, Junior Rodriguez, and Danny Payton.

Applications for these awards were submitted by the students in late spring. Faculty member Mike Klyde facilitated the student applications.

CONTINUED: Students Take MP3 Player From Assignment to Reality

That’s when concept met reality.

Classmate Allen Chen explained to him how emerging technology made the device possible. Further, Chen’s family in Taiwan (where he is now attending a university) was involved in the technology manufacturing business.

“A lot of good ideas never come to implementation,” Hunter said of the assignments she has given since she began as an adjunct faculty member at Cypress College in 1992. “But, Todd actually took the idea and ran with it.”

In addition to Hunter, Applebaum, and Chen, students Eric Pham, Derek Ameler, Anthony Gober, and Daniel Meza are involved in Plugggg with responsibilities ranging from advertising to photography to the website.

“We have white. We have black. We have Vietnamese. We have Chinese. Korean. We just have every mixture of people together on this project,” Applebaum said. “We’re like your Neapolitan ice cream.”

See Applebaum and Hunter describe the project.

The Cypress College mobile app is now available for the BlackBerry platform. The application has been available to Android and Apple iOS users since early in the semester. The app is available for BlackBerry OS 6.0 at http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/content/54446?lang=en. Links to all apps are available on the Cypress College home page.

For nearly a half-million students, Cypress College has been a springboard to their dreams. Cypress College: Motivating Minds.
Pull For Cypress Campaign

A record number of donors participated in the Foundation’s Pull for Cypress, which also raised more money than ever before. Here is a complete list of all 213 donors.

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This year’s results represent a 10% increase over last year, and all-time highs in both the number of participants and the amount of money raised. Revenue from Pull for Cypress supports the work of the Foundation — including book loans, emergency loans, scholarships and mini grants.
Cypress College Kwanzaa Celebration — 2011

“The Cypress College Diversity Committee sponsored the annual campus Kwanzaa celebration on Wednesday, December 7, 2011 in the Theater Lobby. Video by Derrick Coleman... Recorded on 12/7/11.”
“Cypress College’s Art Department hosted its annual Holiday Sale in the Art Gallery. Here is a look inside. Posted Nov. 30, 2011. Video by Derrick Coleman.”
Ed Giardina on NPR and the BBC

“Give the audience ownership of what they do—that makes the audience more engaged and want to work with you more.”

—Arts collective Finishing School
Cypress College Team Develops MP3 Player: Todd Applebaum

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