Facebook, Gates Foundation Team Up to Create Apps For Future College Students

Written by Mashable
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Facebook hosted a hackathon in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Thursday, kicking off the foundation's College Knowledge Challenge — a $2.5 million investment fund to encourage developers to make apps that meliorate the college process.

Thursday's Hackathon, "HackEd," aimed to mesh the digital Facebook crowd with the Gates' altruistic mission in hopes of creating apps that are useful to students (and their parents) nearing college years. At the end of the hack, a panel of judges will announce winners and give out prizes.

Stacey Childress, deputy director for the foundation's College Ready Challenge, tells *Mashable* the app developers will focus on one or more of these problems facing future college students: the
application
process,
admissions
and
financial aid
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The reason the Foundation's partnership with Facebook is so important, she said, is because teens will best be reached through the use of the social networking site. Childress said today's teens rely on social networking to pick the college they'll attend.

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Adding other useful and easy-to-find apps on Facebook such as how to find financial aid, will be essential in encouraging young people to attend college. The apps will be platform agnostic, not tied to Facebook.

So how many apps does $2.5 million fund? Each finalist will get $50,000-$100,000 in funding to develop their app — so about 25-50.

Hackathons are a [common occurance](#) at Facebook. Usually fun and voluntary events for employees that occur after work, they allow tech-savvy minds at the company to develop projects of their own.

The goal: build something that either impacts the site (Timeline sprung from an idea at a Facebook Hackathon) or simply something interesting and useful.

Typically, hacks at Facebook begin after work hours and go until the early morning hours. This hack, though, is a day-long event starting at 9 a.m. and ending around 7 p.m. PT.

The Gates Foundation wants to encourage more developers, particularly women and minorities, to create these new tools. The request for proposals is open to anyone, and people who participated in the hack — whether they won or not — will be eligible to apply.

The contest goes through January, with the development challenge running through Nov. 16.