Base Camp Coding Academy
Newsletter

Classroom Progress:

Students have officially completed the portion of the Base Camp curriculum focused on fundamentals of programming in the Python programming language. The students have each spent hundreds of hours developing their proficiency in Python, and their skills will continue to be reinforced through the rest of the program. This was a two and a half month endeavor, foundational to every software developer's body of knowledge, but to be frank not the easiest or most exciting content to master.

After a short period of reviewing and refreshing, the class dove into HTML, the first of several languages they will learn that wrap visual and interaction presentation layers on top of programs. Three days into this new content every student had created their own website, and were feeling a new sense of empowerment, accomplishment, and enthusiasm. For anyone who has not had personal experience with software development, for the students this was one of their bigger a-ha moments. (Think of practicing scuba diving safety and fundamentals in a swimming pool for months, and then being dropped into the ocean. Suddenly the world is limitless, full of color and texture, and those endless safety drills make a lot of sense.)

To date the inaugural Base Camp class is 4 weeks ahead of our most optimistic curriculum-pacing goals.

Classroom Visitors:

This past month we have hosted guests from the Computer Science department at Northwest Mississippi Community College, a group of board members from Innovate Mississippi, the executive director from 2nd Chance MS, a group of graduate students in partnership with the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement, and several regional educators. These visitors have shared their knowledge with us and our students, learned about Base Camp, and allowed our students to practice their coding skills in through presentation and teaching.

In some cases, our visitors have a vested interest in one or more of our students. Virge Cornelius is a math teacher in the Lafayette high school and one of the education professionals who nominated a student of hers to attend Base Camp. Her impressions and reflections on Base Camp are worth a read:
https://virgecornelius.com/2016/07/28/base-camp-coding-academy/

Field Trips:
The class took a celebratory trip to the bowling alley at the close of the Python portion of their studies. This week we visited the Renasant Technology Center building in Tupelo to experience first hand the levels of technology a modern bank requires to thrive in this digital age. We also visited the Mabus Agency, where creativity and technology merge to facilitate effective marketing and advertising. A huge thank-you to our hosts for their time and warm welcome.

Student Evaluations / Enablement:
This month Base Camp students experienced their first Enablement checkpoint. Throughout the year we check in with each student to evaluate their progress through the curriculum requirements, as well as their professionalism and contribution to the class culture and the support of their peers. This is an opportunity to provide positive feedback, identify additional steps the students and Base Camp can take to support individual and collective success, and listen to the student perspective as we continue to learn what challenges they face.

These evaluations brought to light an aspect of class culture that could quickly (d)evolve into a disparity of achievement down the road, with some students feeling self conscious about asking questions and others rocketing ahead of the already-fast-pace of the class.

In yet another demonstration of the caliber of these young adults: As we considered strategies to nip this issue in the bud, the class reshaped itself, and we found those who had been moving ahead of the class suddenly sitting next to their peers that would benefit most from a little extra assistance. We could not be more impressed by this level of self-correction and problem solving, and the positive impact on morale and achievement has been immediate.

Class of 2018!
Base Camp will begin accepting nominations for the class of 2018, (classes starting June 1, 2017,) in September. If you know of a high school senior with a strong work ethic, a problem-solving mind, and limited education opportunities following high school, please reach out to their teachers and recommend a nomination to Base Camp.

We will be back in the area schools starting this month to speak about Base Camp, and this year we will have current Base Camp students presenting at their alma maters.

Access:
If you would like to keep up with the goings-on in the Base Camp classroom in between these monthly newsletters, Sean does a great job posting updates to our social media sites:

https://www.facebook.com/basecampcodingacademy/
https://www.instagram.com/basecampcoding/

Fundraising Activities:
Kagan and Glen continue meeting with business and philanthropic leaders across Mississippi to ensure Base Camp has the resources to fully serve our students. Any warm introductions you can offer are greatly appreciated.

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