Hacked!-v2—480 words

**Hacked!**

*Campus Hackathons Spur Innovation*

Montclair State has been hacked – but it’s all good. Campus hackathons have generated innovative solutions to everything from texting while driving to new ways to use public data.

In January 2013, the University hosted “Hack Jersey,” the state’s first journalist-tech hackathon, which was sponsored by the NJ News Commons at Montclair State in partnership with Knight-Mozilla Open News. During the 24-hour competition, approximately 80 journalists and software coders broke into teams to create groundbreaking news products and data visualization apps that could ultimately transform the way New Jersey residents use data and experience news.

Debbie Galant, director of the NJ News Commons co-created Hack Jersey with Digital First Media data editor Tom Meagher. “Hack Jersey was initially formed to create the hackathon,” she recalls. “It’s since become an organization that goes beyond hackathons. We’ve joined the civic hacking community and the data journalists in New Jersey together to foster storytelling through data, data transparency and building cool stuff.”

While winning projects at the inaugural hackathon ranged from an app that collects gun crime and homicide data by zip code to a site comparing the cost of radiology procedures in New Jersey, the event’s overall winner was CrashDataNJ, an app that sorts NJDOT data on accidents along the Garden State Parkway.

Since then, Hack Jersey has held other hack day events. In September 2013, reporters looking to master political data reporting attended the daylong “Law, Money and Politics” hackathon. Participants in the “Open Data NJ,” summit in May 2014 explored ways to mine publicly open data.

Joining young people on university campuses around the world, women students gathered in the ADP Center at University Hall during the weekend of April 25 to 27, 2014 for the International Women’s Hackathon sponsored by Microsoft Research.

Interdisciplinary teams worked together to solve problems -- like preventing texting while driving and encouraging STEM careers for girls --through technology. “Our teams created amazing solutions,” says University Director of Equity and Diversity Esmilda Abreu-Hornbostel. The No Texting team’s app, which they pitched live to the judges on the Hackathon’s last day, rewards people for not texting while driving with points for their favorite stores or causes. The STEM team devised a novel assessment tool that helps users determine which STEM field best suits their interests and personalities.

Solutions developed at the hack event reach far beyond the campus. “The tools these girls and women from across the globe built help NGOs make a worldwide impact for others and allowed them to see themselves as true agents of change,” notes Abreu-Hornbostel.

“I’m so proud of our teams and what they accomplished,” says Nicole Bryan, Director of CSR Initiatives at the School of Business. “The Hackathon brought alumni, business leaders, mentors and students together to leverage our strengths for the greater good. This is the beginning of a movement and we are looking forward to the next one!”

ALTERNATE SUBHEADS:

*Montclair State Hackathons Inspire Innovations/Innovative Thinking*

*Montclair State Hosts Hackathons to Spur Innovation*