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Coursicle

s2016

COMPANY   **Company name:**

Coursicle

Company url, if any:

http://www.coursicle.com

If you have a demo, what's the url? For non-software, demo can be a video.

(Please don't password protect it; just use an obscure url.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGvT41KRZVo

Describe your company in 50 characters or less.

Easy course registration for college students

What is your company going to make?

We have developed a course search engine which allows students to very easily browse through their university's classes. While browsing, they can save a class to a mock schedule and view that schedule on a calendar, allowing them to visually filter down which classes they want to take by time-conflicts. We present the classes in a "tile" format (see here for example: http://unc.coursicle.com/#title=phy), with hand-picked images for each subject, rather than a conventional table format. Students can also see what classes their Facebook friends are considering in real-time. This product is necessary because the Enterprise Software provided by nearly every university is notoriously horrible.

We also run a sister service which notifies students when a class they want to get into has an available seat. Across many universities, getting into the classes one wants to take is a major challenge. Students register for courses in stages, and those in the later stages often aren't able to register for courses that they need to graduate. Their only recourse is manually refreshing a webpage over the course of months, waiting to see if someone has dropped that class. We automate that process for them.

Which category best applies to your company?

Education

Is this application in response to a YC RFS?

Yes

If yes, which one?

Education

Where do you live now, and where would the company be based after YC?

(List as City A, Country A / City B, Country B.)

Chapel Hill, USA / Chicago, USA

CONTACT **Email address of the founder who is filling out this application:**

joe@pooch.us

Phone number(s):

(919) 259-2136, (919) 623-7419

FOUNDERS **Please enter the url of a 1 minute unlisted (not private) YouTube video introducing the founders. (Follow the Video Guidelines.)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qETzxhnZM9o

Please tell us about an interesting project, preferably outside of class or work, that two or more of you created together. Include urls if possible.

We wrote some code to generate a knowledge dependency tree for a given subject. For instance, if a user entered "partial differential equations", a tree would be returned with "differential equations" and "multivariable functions" as subtrees, each with their own subtrees (about three levels deep). It relies on recursively analyzing the links on the inputted topic's Wikipedia page to discover relations. The idea arose when reading/studying math and being introduced to a new term; such a tool would be helpful for identifying what background was needed in

order to understand this new term. Unfortunately it's missing a front-end, so we don't have a link to send over.

How long have the founders known one another and how did you meet? Have any of the founders not met in person?

We've known each other since summer 2010. We met at a physics and math summer camp in North Carolina when we were sophomores in high school. We have met in person.

PROGRESS

How far along are you?

So far, we've had good user adoption at our first 5 schools (16900 users, 8600 monthly active), as well as good engagement (28 min. average session duration). In order to maximize our growth rate, we expanded from 5 to over 100 schools in February.

How long have each of you been working on this? Have you been part-time or full-time? Please explain.

We've worked on both products as hobbies since 2013 for UNC students. In August 2015, we decided to expand to schools other than UNC. We've written about 4.5K lines of code on the client (Javascript with heavy jQuery use), and 3.5K lines of code on the server (Python, PHP, and shell scripts).

Which of the following best describes your progress?

Launched

When will you have a prototype or beta?

How many active users or customers do you have? If you have some particularly valuable customers, who are they?

16900

Do you have revenue?

No

What was your revenue in the last full calendar month?

(Please use USD. If none, enter '0')

Your revenue 2 months ago?

Your revenue 3 months ago?

Your revenue 4 months ago?

Your revenue 5 months ago?

Your revenue 6 months ago?

Anything else you would like us to know regarding your revenue or growth rate?

Currently, our user count is growing by 10% every month on average. Our growth varies greatly by time of year due to the seasonality of our products.

How much money do you spend per month?

How much money does your company have in the bank now?

How long is your runway?

(e.g. 5 months)

If you've applied previously with the same idea, how much progress have you made since the last time you applied? Anything change?

This is our first time applying.

If you have already participated or committed to participate in an incubator, "accelerator" or "pre-accelerator" program, please tell us about it.

No commitments.

IDEA　**Why did you pick this idea to work on? Do you have domain expertise in this area? How do you know people need what you're making?**

The problems we're addressing affected us personally as well as most of our friends. In freshman year, because planning for registration and getting into classes took so much time and was often during exams, Joe was often

overwhelmed by the stress. As students, we know the workflows that make the most sense when planning, as well as the data that students want on each course. As for the demand, student-made sites similar to ours have been popping up at universities all across the country for years, getting strong adoption at the developers' school, and then dying some years later after the developers graduate (one exception being CourseRank, which started at Stanford, expanded to 30 other schools, and was bought by Chegg after about a year). Most universities use one of two or three enterprise software providers (e.g. Ellucian, PeopleSoft), and so identifying the need at one Ellucian school highly suggests another Ellucian school would feel a similar need.

We've also conducted surveys at 20+ universities to confirm the need is universal across schools of various type (public, private, large/small enrollment). Our user count and average session duration are also an indication of the need.

What's new about what you're making? What substitutes do people resort to because it doesn't exist yet (or they don't know about it)?

A modern design, ease of use, and more data on courses for our schedule planner product, and the mere existence of a multi-school notification product. Right now, people use pencil/paper or Excel to visually plan their schedule, and they manually refresh a webpage over many months to see if the class they want has an available seat.

Who are your competitors, and who might become competitors? Who do you fear most?

Our primary competitors are myEdu (at 1000+ colleges), courseoff (indie developer, 30 colleges, 8 of which are functional), Koofers (class data 2 years stale), and a handful of student made products specific to a single college (RegisterBYU, Schedule Sniper, PennCourseNotify, etc). It's possible that the Enterprise Software companies (Ellucian, Oracle, etc.) could make significant improvements to the user-facing side of their software and become our competition, but Enterprise companies care about the wants of the purchaser, not the end user. Even if they did do a significant update, universities would have to pay millions in upgrade costs for it, and the rollout wouldn't be complete for years.

We fear myEdu the most due to their scale and current position as the leader of this space, but their UX isn't great, and they haven't advanced their scheduling product in >3 years. They've also pivoted their focus to being a LinkedIn for college students to assist with job finding, and they were just purchased by Enterprise Software giant Blackboard, whose capacity to deliver high quality software is subpar, to put it nicely.

What do you understand about your business that other companies in it just don't get?

Nearly all of our competitors assume that students know exactly what classes they want to take and that the only issue is considering all possible combinations of times that those classes are held. We've found that this is an invalid assumption; for instance, at least 50% of incoming students are undecided on their major, let alone know what elective classes they'll want to take. Alternatively, when building Coursicle, we first focused on improving the experience of browsing courses, resulting in us rejecting the traditional table format for presenting course data. Validating this insight, we've found even more students use our search engine than our scheduling feature.

How do or will you make money? How much could you make?

(We realize you can't know precisely, but give your best estimate.)

We haven't chosen yet, but we've been looking into our options. The ones we feel most comfortable pursuing are: targeted advertising, textbook price comparisons, and freemium/pay for use.

Targeted advertising: LSAT/MCAT/GRE prep books, jobs/internships based on the classes you're taking, apps that are targeting college students, etc. We also already send 128,000 texts/month/school on average to students, which we think could be a new way of reaching them with ads. We're currently unsure about how to give a good estimate for this monetization method, but we're meeting with the founder of Adzerk (ad delivery for Reddit, Stackoverflow, etc) in two weeks to talk about this.

Textbook price comparisons: get paid affiliate fees (e.g. 6-8% from Amazon). Students on average spend $1200 on textbooks per year. Say they save 50% online, so $600/year * .06 = $36/year/student. Of our existing 100 supported schools (total population 1.2 million), say we get 5% of their students to buy textbooks through us. That's 1.2 million * .05 * $36/year = $2M per year (at our 100 schools). $36M per year (at all U.S. schools).

Pay for use: One time $10 for all four years, freemium model (pay for premium features such as student reviews, grade data, ad removal), rollout model (completely free for first year to gain traction, then paywall or freemium). Of our existing 100 schools (total population 1.2 million), say we get 10% of their students to pay one time $10 fee for all four years. That's 1.2 million * .10 * $2.50/year = $300k per year (at our 100 schools). $5.05M per year (at all U.S. schools).

How will you get users? If your idea is the type that faces a chicken-and-egg problem in the sense that it won't be attractive to users till it has a lot of users (e.g. a marketplace, a dating

site, an ad network), how will you overcome
that?

We've been scraping the student email directory for each
college and sending students emails prior to registration.
We don't have to spend a dollar, and sending the emails as
plain-text gets us a unique CTR consistently between 15-
25% depending on the school. We've tried some other free
methods (campus reps, Facebook posts), but their
effort/payoff ratio was a lot worse. We may move into
AdWords or Facebook advertising in the future.

EQUITY   **Have you incorporated, or formed any legal
entity (like an LLC) yet?**

Yes

**What kind of entity and in what state or country
was the entity formed?**

(e.g. Delaware C Corp)

North Carolina LLC

**Please describe the breakdown of the equity
ownership in percentages among the founders,
employees and any other stockholders.**

Right now, we're Tara - 50%, Joe - 50%. But to avoid
stagnation in case we run into an important decision that
we can't agree on, we may decide to change this
breakdown to 49/51.

**List any investments your company has received.
Include the name of the investor, the amount
invested, the premoney valuation / valuation
cap, and the type of security sold (convertible
notes, safes or stock).**

No outside investors.

**If you have not formed the company yet,
describe the planned equity ownership
breakdown among the founders, employees and
any other proposed stockholders.**

(This question is as much for you as us.)

**Please provide any other relevant information
about the structure or formation of the**

company.

Nothing of note.

LEGAL   **Are any of the founders covered by noncompetes or intellectual property agreements that overlap with your project? If so, please explain.**

Nope.

Who writes code, or does other technical work on your product? Was any of it done by a non-founder? Please explain.

No.

Is there anything else we should know about your company?

(Pending lawsuits, cofounders who have left, etc.)

Here are some anonymized testimonials from our users:

"As I am sure many students have told you, this website rocks. It is an invaluable resource in helping plan out courses."

"This is one of the most user-friendly and intuitive websites I've used."

"[Coursicle]: the only weapon bestowed upon us."

"Whoever you are, wherever you are, thank you for bringing a long-cherished dream to life for all of us."

"I love the design. This is easily the most beautiful course schedule I've encountered."

OTHERS   **If you had any other ideas you considered applying with, please list them. One may be something we've been waiting for. Often when we fund people it's to do something they list here and not in the main application.**

- Site that connects two users randomly based on a music genre they specify, then they get launched into private chatroom where they essentially DJ for each other (music played through YouTube). Companion personal version, where users can listen to what songs their friends or celebrities are listening to in real-time.
- Phone app that OCR's a user's picture of a restaurant menu and provides a tinder-like interface with images of

each of the items listed on the menu and their ingredients (as well as a non-fancy-word translation of the item name).

Please tell us something surprising or amusing that one of you has discovered.

(The answer need not be related to your project.)

We send a lot of texts, (e.g. 260k at UNC last January). Recently we discovered a lot of cute tweets from students like:

"Better than a good morning text is Coursicle's text letting you know the class you need has changed from 'closed' to 'open'"

"Nothing like a text from bae (aka Coursicle) to get into a needed class at 1:02am and getting the last seat in the lecture"

CURIOUS ### What convinced you to apply to Y Combinator?

The combination of network, mentors, and capital offered by YC is unmatched. We're also interested in the imagineK12 program, which requires applying to YC. The advice Kevin Hale provided during Office Hours was astute given his 10 minute briefing of our company.

How did you hear about Y Combinator?

First time was probably when Joe was interning at a startup in NC 3 years ago.

Y

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