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## UCF students create new app to enhance college experience

Keira Gilmore

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Student entrepreneurs Daniel Lyon (left) and Nicolas Zeballos (right) discuss further plans and design features on Wednesday. The pair said they hope to officially launch their app, ConnectMe, next month.

Keira Gilmore

Eight months ago, UCF College of Business students began brainstorming how they can help students make new friends, find out what's going on in the UCF community and save money along the way.

“What can we create that could engage and connect students,” said freshman business economics major Nicolas Zeballos.

Having this question in mind, a passion for helping others and a goal to bring people together, student entrepreneurs Zeballos and Daniel Lyon, sophomore finance major, started their plan to create a new social app exclusive to UCF.

With help and feedback from senior tech advisors from X and students in the UCF community, ConnectMe was born.

Lyon said developing an app for UCF came to mind because this generation uses social media daily and often only find out about events through social media or friends.

Zeballos said the app will work in a more intuitive way than other UCF apps and will allow students to filter their event searches and see other students who have RSVP'd to events, giving them the chance to meet new people with similar interests.

After surveying 50 UCF students, the majority said they found out about events through social media or friends instead of using UCF's platform, KnightConnect.

Lyon and Zeballos said they felt there was a lack of knowledge on campus about events going on. After talking with students, they came up with the concept for a social app that can help bring students together and promote businesses students frequent to save money and enjoy their college experience.

Lyon said that this was a project they wanted to take on as a way to further their careers and knowledge.

"There so much stuff you don't know how to do until you do it and have to learn along the way," Lyon said.

Zeballos said that taking on this challenge also allowed them as entrepreneurs to make new connections, gain advice and learn from other business owners' experiences.

Students will be able to create an account using their UCF email, sync their contacts and location, begin RSVPing to events with over 50 UCF organizations and access exclusive deals for over 16 businesses partnered with ConnectMe.

When Lyon and Zeballos first began developing their idea, they relied on each other's skill set

and knowledge, but when they began running out of funding, they needed extra help if they wanted to see the app develop further.

Lyon and Zeballos soon realized that it was going to take a team for the app to come to life. Soon after, they invited Rolando Paniagua, sophomore computer science major, to join their team. As an aspiring computer scientist, Paniagua was able to invest and provide the support that helped drive the team forward.

Lyon said that having a team like them helped transform the app and added a new level to their work.

“I was able to learn how to help manage a team with the same dream as me,” Zeballos said.

In the future, Lyon and Zeballos hope to extend this app to other universities if successful and continue their work in the industry, helping others create their own startups.

“It’s like seeing a baby we started grow up and reach the finish line,” Lyon said.

*The current version of this story correctly depicts the contents of Lyon's final quote and the spelling of Nicolas Zeballos.*