For this year’s Honors Showcase Project, our team designed and proposed a mobile app called “CatConnect”. CatConnect would allow University of Arizona students to connect with clubs, organizations, and sports by informing them and letting them plan their schedule around events taking place throughout UA’s campus.

In designing CatConnect, our team wanted the layout to be extremely simple for the average smartphone user to understand and be able to use. To do so, we looked at the layout of common apps such as Facebook and Twitter, apps that millions of people use daily. We spent a significant amount of time playing with ideas of how to make the app “social”. Originally, we designed the app to allow users to message others, “like” certain events, or even share or recommend events to friends who use the app. At some point, though, it struck us that an app used to post and plan events does not necessarily need to be part of social media. Actually, these features were only going to increase the app’s complexity for the average user, something we did not want to do originally. Therefore, in our final design we kept it as simple as possible. All of CatConnect’s features are separated across four sections or tabs: category, home, favorites, and calendar. In the end, this seemed to be what really set us apart from other social media
apps. With CatConnect, our team had designed an application to be purely useful and functional for the user, rather than provide entertainment or social interaction.

When a person first downloads the app and opens it for the first time, they are greeted by a login screen. Here, two separate login options are found, one for students and another for leaders. Students would complete a simple login process by entering their NetID and password that they use for all other online University of Arizona sponsored websites. Student users would only be able to view and RSVP to events through the app. Leaders, on the other hand, are able to actually create the events and, because of this, require a more detailed sign-up process in order to do so. Once they complete this process, however, they won’t have to do it again in the future. The next time users open the app they will automatically dive into the actual application rather than the login screen. In navigating through CatConnect, the most common starting point of the app for beginning users is the category section. In the “category” tab, students will have the ability to view various groups from the broad categories of clubs, organizations, and sports. They can also use the search bar located on the top of this page to search for a specific organization, club, or sport if they have one in mind. After locating a particular organization, club, or sport, the student is then able to subscribe to the group’s activity (i.e. any posted upcoming events). After subscribing to the group, that group will be listed in the “favorites” tab of the app. In this section, the student is not only able to view the organizations, clubs, and sports that they have subscribed too, but can unsubscribe to a favorite group as well. Any posted event from a “favorite” organization will then be displayed in a news feed located in the “home” tab of the app. Posted events will appear in a box format that includes the title, location, date
and time, and a short description of the event. On the bottom of each news feed item, there will be an option for the student to RSVP to the event, simply by checking a small box. This RSVP option will prove useful for both students and organizations who posted the event because the organization will then be able to have a rough estimate of how many people will be attending the event and plan it accordingly. By selecting the option to RSVP for an event, the event is automatically synced to an internal calendar on the app located in the “calendar” tab. In a basic calendar month layout (similar to any iPhone or Android calendar), users will be able to click on a date to see what events are scheduled for that day and at what times. Furthermore, one day prior to an event, the users will receive a notification, indicating the day of the event by partially shading the box red. The user is also able to view future months in order to view events planned for later in the year. By utilizing the features spread throughout four sections, CatConnect users will be able to subscribe to favorite organizations, clubs, and sports, RSVP to events, and plan out their schedule using a monthly calendar.

CatConnect is an app primarily developed to assist University of Arizona students in becoming involved members of the UA campus. By using the app, students will be able to learn of events occurring around campus sponsored by organizations, clubs, and sports that they might not have known about otherwise. Freshman, transfer students, and other newcomers to the University of Arizona, who may initially have difficulty adjusting to a new environment, will especially benefit from taking advantage of these presented involvement opportunities. Through organizations, clubs, or sports, CatConnect is able to connect students with events that enhance social interaction, physical fitness, learning experiences, professional development, or community service. Yet, what differentiates CatConnect from other resources or methods of
promoting campus events? Although there are resources such as the events section of the University of Arizona mobile app and physical flier boards located around campus, these resources offer either a random or endless range of events, without tailoring their events to the specific interests of a particular individual. In other words, these methods do not necessarily promote activities that are relevant or interesting to one individual. By using CatConnect, the student is able to limit what he or she sees to only content that has to do with organizations, clubs, or sports that he is affiliated with or interested in. Because CatConnect helps students become active and involved members of the University of Arizona, promotes activities that can benefit students’ well-being, and outperforms any similar resources being used right now on campus, the application merits being implemented in the near future by the University of Arizona.

The addition of CatConnect to the University of Arizona campus would not only prove to be beneficial for students, though. It is to the advantage of organizations, clubs, and sports to actively use the mobile application as well. Presenting its events through the app could lead to increased participation, membership, and greater financial revenues. Furthermore, an organization will be able to view the RSVP counter on the app to obtain an estimate of how many students have RSVP’d and are planning on attending the event. Doing so will allow the organization to adequately prepare for its guests by purchasing an ample amount of necessary supplies. Whether an organization is looking for increased participation, membership, revenue, or simply an accurate guest headcount, CatConnect should be utilized for better results when they have their events.
After CatConnect’s initial design phase, its successful application in the University of Arizona campus requires responsibility from multiple parties. The same process used to create the University of Arizona mobile app, around three years ago, should be used today to develop the CatConnect mobile application. In 2011, The University of Arizona department of Marketing for Student Affairs partnered with UITS (University Information Technology Services) and contracted Blackboard in order to develop the mobile application. The combination of Blackboard’s developmental technology and mobile app experience (the company specializes in creating mobile apps for universities around the country), with ideas and layout formulated by University of Arizona’s marketing department, eventually gave birth to an app that many University of Arizona students use routinely. If these mentioned parties combined again to undertake the CatConnect project, the application could make its way onto the University of Arizona campus in the near future. It is the responsibility of these combined groups to produce a well-functioning, accessible (through online app stores), and free service which is dedicated to providing the mobile application for University of Arizona students. Yet, even if CatConnect is successfully developed, it still requires its use by students and organization, colleges, and sports leaders to yield benefits. An organization member (preferably high-ranking) must log onto the CatConnect app by selecting the “leader” link and providing their credentials. It is the responsibility of organization members to post events on CatConnect, and their participation will provide a substantial return in value for their organization. Lastly, it is the responsibility of students to not only download the app that is easily available to them, but log into the app with their NetID and password to view the presented information. Only through
contributions from all these sources: UA departments, Blackboard, organization members, and students, can CatConnect truly function in the way it was designed to.

Our showcase project features a mobile app called CatConnect. CatConnect is an app that allows students to view and plan for upcoming events taking place around the University of Arizona campus, filtered by a student’s subscriptions. These events are posted on the app by members of organizations, clubs, and sports of the university. Although our vision for the design of the app has changed significantly throughout the course of the project, we believe that we have produced an understandable and user-friendly product design. The success of CatConnect requires the responsibility of multiple involved parties, but if executed properly should benefit both students and organizations. CatConnect will increase awareness of campus involvement opportunities for students that oftentimes promote valuable aspects such as social interaction, physical fitness, learning experiences, professional development, and community service. Organizations, clubs, and sports can expect to see increased student participation and membership, and potentially higher financial revenue, through the use of the app. Because CatConnect is superior to any resources or technology that we currently have access to at the University of Arizona, and the numerous benefits that it would bring to our campus, the mobile app deserves to be put into action at our school in the near future. Ultimately, let’s give CatConnect a chance, so that University of Arizona students don’t have to “wing it” anymore!
(The log in screen for CatConnect that allows the user to sign in as a student or a leader.)
CatConnect

Wyatt Anderson
Elizabeth Linn
Marshall Powell
Dylan Barr

Who we connect...
...University of Arizona students to organizations, colleges, and sports teams.

How we connect...
...by promoting involvement opportunities at the University of Arizona.

Why we connect...
...to give students the tools to be involved and active members of the University of Arizona community.

[CatConnect!]
So you don’t have to wing it.

(A picture of the overall posterboard)