MCG Mobile: The Ultimate Custom Mobile Campus

The Medical College of Georgia (MCG) has always placed a high priority on providing students with the very best technology to enhance the learning experience. Recognizing the increase in smartphone usage among students, MCG established the goal of using mobile devices to advance teaching and learning beyond the classroom. Driven by the vision of their Instruction and Enrollment Office, MCG became one of the first medical schools in the world to take campus learning and life mobile.

MCG chose to partner with the Blackboard Mobile™ team to develop MCG Mobile: a Medical College of Georgia-branded mobile application combining the out-of-the-box Blackboard Mobile™ Central features with medical-specific modules built by MCG using the Blackboard Mobile Software Development Kit (SDK).

Buy or Build? MCG Chose Both.

In 2009, MCG began developing individual medical-specific iPhone® apps, with plans to sell them through the iPhone App Store℠. However, they soon saw the unique value of a single mobile platform that could house multiple modules in an MCG-branded app that was free to all. They wanted to utilize the best of what they had created, and also integrate additional functionality to complete the campus experience. In other words, they wanted it all.

It was at this point that the administration learned about iStanford. The very first campus mobile app developed for a higher education institution, iStanford was created by a team of Stanford students in partnership with the school’s administration. Those same students later became a part of Blackboard Mobile.

MCG quickly determined that Blackboard Mobile was uniquely equipped to help them realize their vision. Using the SDK, they could combine Blackboard Mobile’s robust set of out-of-the-box campus life modules with their own custom-built apps, resulting in an optimized, tailored solution.

Medical College of Georgia

Founded in 1828, the Medical College of Georgia is one of the oldest continuously operating medical schools in the United States. MCG boasts more than 2,500 students in five schools: Medicine, Allied Health Sciences, Dentistry, Graduate Studies and Nursing.
Introducing MCG Mobile

In order to launch MCG Mobile as quickly and effectively as possible, the Blackboard and MCG teams took a phased approach. The initial focus was on implementing the applications that Blackboard Mobile had ready out-of-the-box. Just a few months after the project began, the first version of MCG Mobile was launched with the Directory, Maps, iScope (Videos), Events, and News modules.

As word began to spread about MCG's new free mobile app, work began on incorporating MCG's custom medical modules into MCG Mobile. Blackboard Mobile's Software Development Kit was employed to quickly and easily integrate MCG-created modules, including Mnemonics, ATP3 Lipids, OB Wheel, and MediMath. MCG released v.1.5 of MCG Mobile in June 2010.

MCG Mobile now contains more modules than any other Blackboard Mobile Central app—modules created specifically to meet the unique needs of MCG students. By building off of the Blackboard Mobile Central platform, MCG created a combined community-engagement and student-learning app. And they now offer it all free to their students.

Success from the Start

MCG Mobile has been a success from its launch. According to VP for Instruction and Enrollment Management, Roman Cibirka, “The best thing has been watching the enthusiasm about it – watching the students becoming engaged, seeing them realize that MCG is trying to do the best they can to address their educational needs.”

And, MCG Mobile promises to be a powerful draw for future students, too. As Connie Drisko, Dean, MCG School of Dentistry explains, “As we complete our transformation of the curriculum to MCG Mobile, it’s going to be a huge recruiting tool for us. It’s going to make a difference in how our students learn, because they’re going to be able to integrate the information better.”

What do the students themselves have to say? Colin Booth, a third-year medical student studying orthopedic surgery sums it up this way: “MCG Mobile makes my life much easier. It’s actually a joy to learn, because you don’t have to spend time finding things. It’s there, in your hands, ready for you to find it.”

The Next Chapter

Since the launch of MCG Mobile, students and faculty have been actively sharing ideas for future developments. As with the current offerings of MCG Mobile, additions will fall into two main categories: convenience, student life and community modules; and cutting-edge instructional modules. MCG is working to enhance the integration of MCG Mobile into the curriculum, and to deliver media-rich instructional materials and references to their students on the go.