

Student's product helps bands make websites

December 7 2010, By Kathy Hovis



Sarah Sprague presents her work to other students in the Kessler Fellows program. Sprague's project, Instant Band Site, recently launched as a plug-in on wordpress.com. Credit: Jon Reis Photography

Sarah Sprague '11 isn't really a music fanatic, but thanks to her work this summer, many fledgling bands now have an easier way to promote their work.

Sprague, an information sciences systems and technology major, spent the summer at Nimbit, a company in Framingham, Mass., that serves up-and-coming musicians by providing [software](#) to help with [sales](#) and marketing. During the summer, she created an affiliate program for the company, researched the idea of adding fan funding capability to the company's products and investigated how the company might couple its core strengths with WordPress to automate the creation and maintenance of band websites.

This third project led to the launch this fall of Instant Band [Website](#), a WordPress "plugin" that allows bands without any Web experience to create high-quality websites to promote and sell their work.

"I worked on the project for about five weeks -- one week researching the project, one discovering how WordPress worked, because I hadn't used it before," Sprague said. "The next week, I developed the first version, then spent the last two weeks fixing bugs and adding features."

Then, Sprague took her product out to [market](#). "I also got the chance to work on my go-to-market strategy," she said. "Before this summer, I had no idea what a 'go-to-market' strategy even was."

So far, the plug-in has been downloaded more than 1,000 times, said Carl Jacobson, Nimbit's vice president of marketing. And news about Instant Band Site was picked up by Billboard, NPR, Digital Music News and Hypebot, among many other sites, Jacobson said.

"Considering the niche nature of this product, creating websites for bands, we're very happy with the results," he said.

Sprague is part of the College of Engineering's Kessler Fellows Program, which provides a course on entrepreneurship, a summer placement in a start-up or other entrepreneurial environment to immerse engineering students in the business side of innovation, and a symposium series where the fellows showcase their experiences.

The program was founded by Andrew Kessler '80, who wanted to give engineering students a better understanding of the business side of invention and innovation. Fellows receive mentoring from a senior officer in their host company and earn up to \$12,000 for their work. In addition to the salary, fellows receive a \$2,000 bonus for getting into the program, and financial aid recipients get reduced loans their senior year.

One key feature of the Kessler Fellows Program is the close mentoring relationship between the student and a company leader. In Sprague's case, these mentors included Jacobson, as well as Bob Cramer, the company CEO, and Phil Antoniadis, president.

"I worked right outside Bob Cramer's office, so I learned a lot just by watching what he did day to day," Sprague said. "But he also took me to lunch frequently, and we talked a lot. He answered any questions I might have.

"At Nimbit, almost everyone else was a musician," Sprague said. "It opened my eyes to see that when people are passionate about the product they are making, then they're never complaining about coming to work."

Provided by Cornell University

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