



« Education

NSCC has smart device app for you

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Need to check your grades? How about pay tuition? Northeast State Community College has an app for that.

The Blountville-based college has become the first community college in the Tennessee Board of Regents system to develop an application to make it's online services more easily accessible to students who prefer to use smartphones or tablets.

The free app is available for both Android and Apple devices and can be downloaded from the Android Marketplace or from the iTunes Store by searching for Northeast State, according to a school news release.

Fred Lewis, Vice President for Information Technology said a team of people from across the NSCC campus collaborated on how to best design the app.

"So we basically turned them loose to do that for Northeast State, and this app is what they came up with," Lewis said.

The app currently allows users to access a directory, maps, the library to look up books and the school's Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts.

NSCC cited a survey that indicated more than half of community college students own smartphones. More than 40 percent of those students use they devices to do homework.

"So they can get in there and check their grades and see what they owe," Lewis said.

Lewis said it used to be that colleges had computer labs, then utilized laptops for students, then developed wireless campuses. He said this app is an extension of that computer concept.

"And now we're seeing just this proliferation of smartphones and smart devices," Lewis said.

Lewis said NSCC's app will be tweaked as time goes by to add features students want. In fact, student input was what lead the team in designing this current iteration of the app.

The process of creating the app took a few months and cost practically nothing to develop.

"The biggest expense to us was just the time of this group to get together and do that," Lewis said.

Weather



Currently
Fog/Mist
49.0 F (9.4 C)



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Free software is available to create apps. The school chose what it thought were the best such tools for making its app.

Lewis said the school is tracking what devices are accessing the app, and is seeing a near daily increase in downloads of the application.

“So we’re seeing that more on a daily basis, the number of students with iPhones and iPads and Droids and everything else,” Lewis said.

A 10-person team designed and created the app under the direction of lead developers Chris Demas, a Northeast State librarian, and Russell Bowman, the College’s Web master. The College plans to share the source code with sister Tennessee Board of Regents’ institutions.

Users of the app should note that the Android version has a button for NORSTAR access and the Apple version will soon have that capability. For the Apple version, devices should have an iOS 5+ operating system.



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