

## **Stony Brook University Hosts its First Hackathon**

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A hackathon is a weekend-long competition where attendees, usually students, create a project solely in the duration of the event. Although every hackathon is different in purpose, many hackathons are designated for college students. Beyond the classroom, these hackathons lead students to work with important tools that are otherwise not taught in depth. Hackers can also network with representatives for companies that sponsor the event.

As collegiate hackathons rose in popularity, Mike Swift with Jon Gottfried, a Stony Brook alum, founded Major League Hacking (abbreviated MLH) in 2013. A student hackathon league, MLH hosts a leaderboard ranking universities, by attendance of students, to the hackathons that it sanctions. University faculties also began to witness the importance of hackathons.

Once low in the rankings, Stony Brook University won ninth place during the 2017 fall and spring season. As the student body began to discover these hackathons, the university rose in the leaderboard. Although smaller-scaled hackathons not affiliated with the university, such as Hack@CEWIT, referring to the Center of Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology, took place on campus, the university had never held its own official hackathon.

On Friday, September 14, 2018, Stony Brook University's first annual SBUHacks was held at the Central Reading Room in the Frank Melville Memorial Library. About half of around two-hundred attendees were students attending other universities.

At this twenty-four hour event, attendees interacted with and received project help from employees representing companies such as Scholastic, Softheon, and Applied Visions. Employees at these companies held instructional seminars, or 'tech talks,' and provided help to participants on various projects. As a result of the partnership with MLH, a diverse range of borrowable hardware, such as Arduino hardware kits and Oculus Rift virtual reality headsets, were provided.

Away from the corporate presence of the hackathon, the volunteers held fun activities, such as a campus-wide scavenger hunt and a real-life version of *Hungry Hungry Hippos*. Hackers were fed well; ample food from Buffalo Wild Wings and a local pizza branch from the nearby Ronkonkoma were catered and served even at late hours.

On Saturday morning, Samuel L. Stanley Jr., the president of Stony Brook University, paid a visit to the hackathon. "The drive of students to go far beyond the classroom is nothing short of

inspiring,” the former biomedical researcher stated. “Even though I am the president of this university, I have surely seen nothing like this on campus before.”

Once the event had concluded, students from Stony Brook were energized to attend hackathons at other schools, many of which provide travel reimbursement and accommodations. Students from other universities found the opportunity at SBUHacks to learn about the culture of Stony Brook University and the atmosphere of its campus.

## Why do people go to hackathons?



## MLH 2017 Season Top Ten

Ranking	University Name	Hackathon Name
1	Georgia Tech	HackGT
2	Rutgers University	HackRU
3	University of Waterloo	Hack the North
4	University of Florida	SwampHacks
5	University of Toronto	UofTHacks
6	University of Maryland, College Park	Bitcamp
7	New York University	HackNYU
8	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	HackIllinois
9	Florida International University	MangoHacks
10	 Stony Brook University	None

Despite Stony Brook University's successful placement on the top ten universities for hackathon attendance during the 2017 hackathon season, the school was once **the only school** on the list not to have a school-directed hackathon on its campus.