

STUDENT SUCCESS STORY**Senior Uses Tech Savvy to Help Students**

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Joel Croft, BSBA '10, has been putting his passion for technology to work for his fellow students since he arrived at AU. He saw an opportunity in the class registration process during his freshman year and decided to help his fellow students by creating a program called Class Alert.

"I was really frustrated because I never got my choice of classes, so I thought it would be cool if I could get a text if someone dropped a class I wanted," Croft explained. "I developed a script that would check the registrar's Web site and send me a text when a class had an open space."

Croft ran the program from his personal Web site; after more tweaking to the system, he soon opened it up to the entire student body. The Eagle picked up on the story, the program's popularity spiked and professors and advisors began using Class Alert as well.

"I got a lot of emails from students thanking me, some of them saying that they almost weren't able to graduate until they got the class that they needed with Class Alert," Croft said. "Later the registrar contacted me and I met with her to discuss the problems I was having and the concept of a waitlist, which began the next semester."

Originally from Houston, TX, Croft began programming at an early age when he worked on his first consulting project in the 7th grade. He designed a custom online auction program which non-profits can use as fundraisers. He has done 15 auctions so far, soliciting to mainly local organizations in Houston, including his former high school. He also started his own Web site development business, Everyone's Hosting, during high school.

"I'm really good at knowing how computers work and I have a passion for programming and helping other people," Croft said.

During his junior year, Croft spent a semester abroad in London and used his computer talents to develop a Web site, called Abroad Circle, where he tried to "bridge the gap between abroad students. I wanted to know where other students were studying abroad, so I created Abroad Circle as a community for other AU abroad students who could exchange travel advice," Croft said. About 40% of the students abroad at the time signed up for the exclusively AU students Web site.

Croft wanted to share his love for computers, so he helped found the Business, Technology, and Consulting club in Kogod. One of his professors and mentors, Alberto Espinosa, is the group's academic advisor and encouraged Croft to start the club.

"It is clear to me that he not only wanted to create a club to run interesting activities, but he was totally committed to create a student community around technology," Espinosa said.

Professor Espinosa taught Croft in his ITEC 334, Programming in the Web Era, class, but saw that he was much more advanced than his peers. He suggested that Croft - who is completing two specializations in Information Systems and Technology and Management - should drop the class and instead enroll in an independent study with him to receive more challenging assignments.

"Joel is a model student. Technically, he is one of the most advanced students I've had, but I love having him in my classes because students gravitate to him and he will not hesitate to step in and guide them when they need help," Espinosa said. "What makes Joel stand out is his focused approach to his education. He has spent a lot of time with me brainstorming about career paths and professional career planning."

Croft is also currently serving as the Director of the Student Advocacy Center, where students advise other students on their rights in regards to the Student Conduct Code and the Academic Integrity Code. He helps students understand AU policies and ease the anxiety they might experience when they run into trouble by being their peer advocate.

When he graduates in May, Croft hopes to go into IT consulting and stay in DC. "I really want to apply my understanding of technology to my love for business and take my skills to a business setting to make them more efficient," Croft explained.