

Tyler Trocinski summer report- building sp0t

With the help of the Chi Psi Alpha Sigma Foundation Summer Enrichment Scholarship, me, along with my cofounder and fellow brother Kenny Barone, were given the opportunity to pursue building a startup full time upon graduating this past May.

Leading up to the summer

We started working on a mobile app a year and a half ago while we were juniors living in the Lodge. The idea came from a hiking trip at Jordan Lake, where we stumbled upon a clearing with tree trunks to sit on and take in the sunset. As we explored the area more, we found a notebook inside a hollowed out tree nearby filled with letters, doodles, and poems. We felt connected to the people filling up these pages, that had sat where we sat and experienced this same special place.

On the way home we thought about the thousands of other similar spots out there we may never experience because we didn't know how to find them. Stumbling upon that beach and that notebook was one in a million- but it didn't have to be, so we set out building an app to connect people to these meaningful, off-the-grid destinations, called sp0t.

We worked on sp0t on the side of classes and internships over the next summer and our senior year, but finding the time was difficult and progress was slow. Still, we carved out as much time as we could and continued working on the app, entering pitch competitions and applying for grants.

The big turning point for us was getting accepted into Launch Chapel Hill's at the start of this year. Launch is an accelerator and workspace for early-stage startups that provides mentorship, programming, and getting into their spring cohort was a huge step forward for us. We learned so much about how to build a company with Launch that spring, and it gave us the confidence in our idea we needed to forgo job opportunities, and instead pursue sp0t full time after we graduated.

This summer

This summer we started working on sp0t full time. Kenny spent the days teaching himself how to code to develop the app, while I did the design work, market research, and created our launch rollout plan. Additionally we participated in the Launch's summer cohort for UNC students specifically, where we got to learn from other students pursuing entrepreneurship, give weekly pitches to local business owners, professors, and angel investors, and receive more mentorship and networking opportunities.

Overall, the summer was an invaluable period of personal and professional growth for me. Through internet research and talking to other entrepreneurs, I taught myself how to design an app, motion design, how to develop a marketing rollout plan, how to conduct user research, and

how to write a business plan. I got to work on so many different aspects of starting a business because it was just the two of us, and although that was stressful at times, I came out of it a far more well-rounded designer and professional. I've improved my organizational, long and short-term goal setting, public speaking, time management, and communication skills. I've become more confident, self-motivated, self-disciplined, and open to criticism. Most of all I've gained perseverance. Working on my own project without any structure, formal schedule, or boss or teacher to report to was a strange experience that often left me feeling anxious about how things would turn out or how much progress I was making, how fast. But I stuck with it, and I'm extremely proud to say that Kenny and I came out of the summer with a finished product.

What's next?

Currently, we're beta testing with a small group of target users in Chapel Hill. Through September we're focusing on testing and validating our idea, and then iterating on what we find while expanding our beta test to a larger group of people. Following, we'll be launching sp0t publicly!

What I'll bring back to the Lodge

Entrepreneurship is a great tradition of the Lodge, one that Kenny and I are proud to be a part of. Over the past year, we looked to our alumni for advice on their various entrepreneurial pursuits, and the mentorship that Kenny and I have received thus far has been absolutely crucial to our progress. Conversations with Thomas Layton, Walt Boyle Jr., Chris Mumford, Bert Johnson, and other Lodgers have been really impactful. The energy that they put into us has definitely inspired the kind of alumni brother I want to be in the future.

Regardless of whether things work out with our company, we plan using what we've learned this summer to be a resource to future Lodgers. Deciding to pursue a startup post-grad wasn't an easy decision, and we didn't see many others before us take that path. We're excited to talk to Lodgers about our experience, and hopefully encourage more brothers to consider taking the leap. Whether it's an annual talk on entrepreneurship at the Lodge, or being open to meeting with brothers the way that alumni spent time with us, Kenny and I are excited to give back going forward.

sp0t summary

sp0t is a mobile app that helps you find unique places and bring their personalities to life.

How? sp0t shows you a curated selection of public spots (the highest rated and most off-the-grid restaurants, dive bars, hidden gems in nature), along with private spots shared by your friends. At each place, you can add to a virtual guestbook to bring tell the spot's story.

Check out our website at www.sp0t.app

Me pitching at the Carolina Challenge



Kenny and I got to speak to high school students from Iraq on our experiences building an app



