

May Microsoft Tech Student of the Month – Kevin Ballinas

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MSDN Blogs

As the month of May comes to a close, it is time to profile our sixth Microsoft Tech Student of the Month. We have chosen Kevin Ballinas, a computer science student in his junior year at **Neumont University**. Kevin has had the unique opportunity of attending a school that is one hundred percent focused on computer science education. As a result, Kevin has worked on a number of innovative and original technology projects over the course of his student career. These include Windows apps, Web apps, and even software that work in the cloud and on mobile devices!



Kevin's interest in computer science began at a very young age. As a fourth grader, he took it upon himself to fix the broken computers in his classroom. He played around with each of the components, learned their functions, and applied that knowledge back to the repair process. This process of trial and error allowed Kevin to learn very quickly while getting hands on experience. He was able to [download](#) games onto the computers and soon enough they were up and running and accessible to the other students. After elementary school, Kevin moved to the suburbs and was exposed to rich technology programs where he got started in basic web programming. His interest in computer science flourished when he heard [about software](#) engineering from a teacher. In his sophomore year, he took a class that introduced him to the **Java programming language**. He familiarized himself with java further by taking two more Java-related courses as well as a web development course for more general training. Although Kevin had other interests such as architecture and cooking, his passion for technology stuck and ultimately drove his decision for where he wanted to go to college.

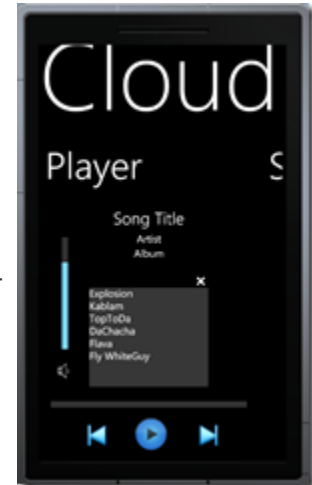
Kevin is now attending **Neumont University**, a project-based Bachelor's program fully focused in computer science. It's here that Kevin has really been able to explore his passion for programming at a much higher level. One of the first major projects he worked on was to create a Battleship game with a team of 4-5 people. The project tested the team's knowledge in data transfer using **TCP** in Java, **XML** parsing, and building **graphical user interfaces** (GUIs). Some other projects involved creating a Monopoly-based game and an E-commerce site, both using Java.

After some of these early Java projects, Kevin and his teammates decided to leverage Microsoft technologies to create a **Windows Presentation Foundation (WPF)** music player. This is no ordinary music player in that it

automatically rates each song according to how quickly the user skips through it and uses that information to play songs the user will want to hear in the future based on the highest ratings. The music player is named “THInK” which was inspired by the letters in each teammate’s name: Tyler Garland, Jesus Rodriguez, Israel Campos and Kevin Ballinas. The team created the GUI for THInK using [Expression Blend](#) which students can download for free through the [Dreamspark Program](#).

The most recent project that Kevin completed at Neumont is a website called GradeMy<T> which is a take on Rate My Teacher. Kevin and his teammates Tyler Garland, Jorge Sanchez and Ruddy Arroliga built the web [application](#) using [ASP.NET MVC](#). It is a completely user-driven website that users can use to rate anything they want. People create categories and specify any additional information that may be needed to identify each item in that category. For example, in the movie category there was a year and director tag associated with each film. The team took advantage of [LINQ](#) to select relevant items from such a large and complex database.

Currently, Kevin and some members of the original THInK team are getting back together to take their music player to the cloud. They have recruited some new teammates including Eban Korey Simon, Ruddy Arroliga, Jorge Sanchez, Nick Erickson and Cludio Salcido to help with the major revisions. The new music player will be called RETHINCK and will live in the cloud using [Windows Azure](#) so users can access their music anywhere while on the go. The plan is to create a [Windows Phone 7 app](#) and in-browser music player so users can access the software wherever they are. The team is going to create a [WCF service](#) that will be the connection between the applications and data. They are also implanting an achievement system through the [IActionable](#) API. The API makes it easy for developers to add a [gamification](#) component to their apps. It was founded by two Neumont alumni and they offered Kevin’s team the opportunity to use the technology for free. We’re hoping to see this really cool cloud music player released in the next year!



Kevin is expecting to graduate and receive his Computer Science Bachelor’s degree in June 2012. He is still sorting out his career plans but his dream is to work for Microsoft as a software developer working on ground breaking technologies. From every one of the Microsoft Tech Student team, we wish Kevin and his colleagues best of luck in building the RETHINCK music player and having a successful final year at Neumont University. We appreciate all his hard work and encourage him to follow the successful path he has taken thus far. Keep up the awesome work!

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