American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Developing the next generation of tech talent at TAMUhack

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When John Kahn signed up for the TAMUhack at Texas A&M University two years ago, he never imagined it would lead him to American Airlines.

“My original goal that year was to hack a project for a big-name tech company because I thought they would have better prizes and career opportunities. I never thought of American as a tech company,” Kahn said.

But after attending a TAMUhack workshop where he met American software developers who talked about the interesting technical challenges airlines face, Kahn pursued the American project and won second place. That led Kahn, a University of Texas at Dallas graduate, to apply for and get an associate developer position at American.

Last month, Kahn returned to the TAMUhack — this time as one of a dozen American developers teaching college students about coding and software development.

For the third year in a row, American was the title sponsor of the workshop, which attracts more than 750 college students from across Texas. The hack gives students the opportunity to learn new technologies that use the latest coding languages and interact with dozens of companies who are looking to hire new graduates.

“It’s a way for American to help develop the next generation of tech talent, not just for the airline but for all industries, and also a way to raise awareness about all the cool technology in use at American,” said Steven Leist, American’s Vice President of Customer Technology and a Texas A&M alumnus.

At this year’s TAMUhack, American developers announced Hangar, a project they created to help make the most of

hackathons. Hangar provides students with an opportunity to pitch their ideas and get feedback on what they plan to build, improving their chances of making it to final rounds. After the event ends, Hangar helps the American team judge and evaluate student hacks.

“When kids come up and say ‘I need help technically’ or ‘I need help pitching my idea,’ our team members are there to guide them,” said Talana Hamilton, Senior Project Manager in Crew Technology at American who also hires summer interns from TAMUhack.

American also participates in hackathons at University of Arizona at Tucson, University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas at Dallas and the Black Enterprise BE Smart Hack for students at historically black colleges and universities across the country.

American software developers had the opportunity to talk with students about the unique technical challenges in commercial aviation.