# Duke seniors sell AI-powered construction scheduling startup to industry leader



Three Duke University seniors have transformed a first-year engineering project into a startup that has successfully been sold to an industry leader. The software, named QuikCal, employs artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in scheduling deliveries at construction sites and enhance communication for commercial projects. The innovation originated in Engineering 101, Engineering Design and Communications, and was developed by seniors Delali Cudjoe, Alec Liu, and Ken Kalin.

The project began when Cudjoe and Kalin were given a client assignment by Evan Reilly, a Pratt graduate from the class of 2016, to address a challenge faced by Skanska, a global construction company with an office in Durham. On many construction sites, logistics and delivery schedules are traditionally managed via large whiteboards, a method that frequently causes confusion and operational friction, according to Kalin. The students were tasked with creating a solution.

Initial prototypes of QuikCal focused on delivery scheduling, enabling construction workers in the field to send text message updates about incoming deliveries directly to office workers. Kalin notes that at this stage, prior to the release of generative AI models like ChatGPT, the software required specific commands to function effectively, making it challenging to use.

The advent of generative AI marked a turning point for QuikCal. Cudjoe and Kalin took a step back to reassess how AI could improve their software and better address the construction industry’s operational difficulties. The updated platform now streamlines the process of converting worker requests into actionable tasks such as scheduling deliveries and updating calendars. This evolution followed their participation in the National Science Foundation’s I-Corps program, which provided valuable customer and expert feedback.

The introduction of Alec Liu to the team was instrumental in refining QuikCal further. Liu enhanced the platform by enabling it to facilitate pull planning—a method in construction where teams collaboratively establish deadlines by working backwards from goals. This practice typically relies on physical walls covered in sticky notes. Liu developed a feature that uses AI to convert photographs of these sticky-note walls into digital versions, allowing construction teams to maintain familiar workflows while benefiting from digital technology. Kalin highlighted the uniqueness of this feature, noting that rather than replacing the sticky-note method, QuikCal integrates it into the digital realm.

Additional features of QuikCal include allocating a phone number to each construction site, through which workers can communicate with a chatbot by text message to schedule deliveries. Throughout their entrepreneurial journey, the founders received support from Duke's Christensen Family Center for Innovation and the Melissa & Doug Entrepreneurs program, the latter of which Kalin participated in. Amy Linnane, managing director of co-curricular programs for Duke Innovation & Entrepreneurship, commended the team’s dedication amidst their academic commitments and noted how the programs helped connect them to opportunities beyond the university, such as a venture conference in Atlanta.

Approaching their impending graduation in 2025, the founders faced decisions regarding QuikCal’s future. With all three seniors having job offers—Kalin planning to work for Amplified Industries, while Cudjoe and Liu will join Amazon and Microsoft respectively—they opted to sell the business. Multiple companies showed interest, but after negotiations, they sold QuikCal to MOCA Systems, Inc. (MSI). The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Brett Adamczyk, president of MSI’s software division, praised the acquisition in a statement, saying, “This is a big step in aiding the transition from analog to digital planning… The team has shown remarkable entrepreneurial traits in identifying a real-world pain point and developing an applicable technology solution for construction professionals.”

With the sale concluded, Cudjoe, Liu, and Kalin plan to focus on their upcoming professional roles but acknowledge the potential for future collaborations. Liu jokingly remarked, “The running joke is that Ken is supposed to call us on some random night and be like, ‘alright, we're doing it again.’”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2025/04/duke-university-quikcal-ai-start-up-engineering-101-project-sold-to-moca-systems-inc> - Confirms that the QuikCal project began as a first-year engineering assignment at Duke University, developed by seniors Delali Cudjoe, Alec Liu, and Ken Kalin; details how the initial prototype focused on delivery scheduling via text messages and notes the challenge of using the software before generative AI like ChatGPT emerged.
* <https://pratt.duke.edu/news/msi-acquires-quikcal/> - Confirms the sale of QuikCal, the AI construction site delivery scheduling software developed by Duke students, to MOCA Systems, Inc., and highlights that the acquisition was a significant milestone for the startup.
* <https://pratt.duke.edu/news/quikcal/> - Describes the transformative impact of generative AI on QuikCal, including the integration of features like natural language processing and image scanning, and how the team refined the software after a pilot with Skanska to improve delivery scheduling and operational efficiency.
* <https://quikcal.com/QuikCal.html> - Provides detailed features of the QuikCal platform including conversational AI-enabled scheduling via SMS, the ability to send photos of delivery whiteboards for automated calendar updates, and scheduling rule settings like work hours and priority contractors.
* <https://quikcal.com/Home.html> - Supports the description of QuikCal as an AI-powered delivery scheduling software for construction sites that enhances communication between office and field workers, confirming the core function of the software.