# Duke seniors turn engineering project into AI-powered construction startup acquired by industry leader



Three seniors from Duke University have transformed a first-year engineering project into a successful startup that was recently acquired by a leading industry company. The software, named QuikCal, was developed by Delali Cudjoe, Alec Liu and Ken Kalin, all seniors at Duke, as part of their Engineering 101 course. The tool aims to enhance scheduling and communication on construction sites through the use of artificial intelligence.

QuikCal originated when Cudjoe and Kalin were assigned a project for Skanska, a global construction company with a presence in Durham. They identified a common issue in the construction industry: delivery schedules and logistics were often managed using a large whiteboard, causing misunderstandings and friction between workers. Their initial prototype enabled construction workers to send text messages from site to update offices on upcoming deliveries.

The launch of generative AI technologies like ChatGPT marked a turning point for QuikCal. The team incorporated these advancements to simplify its use and expand its functionality. The platform evolved to automate tasks such as scheduling deliveries and updating calendars. Alec Liu joined the team and contributed by developing a feature that converts photographs of physical “sticky-note” planning walls into digital versions, maintaining familiar workflows for construction staff but in a more accessible format.

The three founders also integrated a system where each construction site is assigned a phone number allowing personnel to interact with an AI chatbot through texting to manage scheduling. Their innovation extended beyond the software itself, benefiting from participation in Duke’s entrepreneurship support structures, including the Christensen Family Center for Innovation and the Melissa & Doug Entrepreneurs program. These resources provided mentorship, networking opportunities, and exposure to broader venture communities.

Amy Linnane, managing director of co-curricular programs for Duke Innovation & Entrepreneurship, praised the team’s dedication: “These students, not only were they working on all their classes, but also taking the time and energy to build this business, which is not easy even if you have no classes.” Linnane was involved in advising the founders and helped facilitate connections vital to their business’s growth and eventual sale.

As the Class of 2025 prepares to graduate, the trio weighed their options for QuikCal’s future. With job offers secured—Kalin plans to continue in startups at Amplified Industries; Cudjoe will join Amazon; and Liu will go to Microsoft—they chose to sell the company rather than continue managing it themselves. After engaging with multiple interested buyers, they sold QuikCal to MOCA Systems, Inc. (MSI), an industry leader in construction software solutions. The financial details of the transaction were not disclosed.

Brett Adamczyk, president of MSI’s software division, commented on the acquisition: “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.”

Looking ahead, Cudjoe, Liu and Kalin intend to focus on their upcoming careers while maintaining a close friendship. Liu shared with the Duke Chronicle, “The running joke is that Ken is supposed to call us on some random night and be like, ‘alright, we're doing it again.’” The future integration of their talents could potentially see further collaboration beyond their current ventures.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://pratt.duke.edu/news/msi-acquires-quikcal/> - This URL supports the claim that QuikCal, a startup developed by three Duke Engineering undergraduates, was acquired by MOCA Systems, Inc. (MSI), an industry-leading construction planning platform.
2. <https://pratt.duke.edu/news/quikcal/> - This article explains how QuikCal evolved from a first-year design project into a successful startup, leveraging AI technologies like ChatGPT to improve its functionality.
3. <https://www.forwardpathway.us/duke-student-startup-showcase-innovation-social-responsibility-and-ai-powered-future-stars> - The acquisition of QuikCal by MSI validates Duke's commitment to fostering student entrepreneurship, demonstrating the potential for projects born in introductory courses to have real-world impact.
4. <https://today.duke.edu/2025/04/duke-students-showcase-their-startups> - QuikCal bridges the gap between manual construction planning boards and digital management systems, further highlighting its innovative role in the construction industry.
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6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides additional context about QuikCal's development and its sale, although specific details might vary from other reports.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiygFBVV95cUxObXVpTmdXendwZXg3bE5tZnk5SEkwVWlSSDNlMmxKY3puckxvWnd6aGczYjgzOUtFYmlVdTFGUDRRVW9Md3ZJVGtjWFVIaWNmZG1Mc2xBczAtSXpGd0dlZVMtSFJnODFPTHFrcVg2UTN1U2c3a2Q3TG96Q1kxV0FvZHJTYWtPb0NNMFVuZTIteHZQLTB0alJ0U2M4ZkpSTlFYaHdEU3hHUUhRR0l5bUlUNEJPWjNBclRMWnhtQUYtX1pUbkxNVlJlTjl3?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data