



**Phil Cowcill, Professor,  
Canadore College**

Mr. Cowcill started working as a videographer, graphic designer, and programmer on Canada's first Interactive Videodisc in 1984. In 2004 Phil's first academic publication was released (Application Development with Dreamweaver MX using ASP.NET). In 2012 he was hired to design, teach, and coordinate Canada's first Mobile Application Development Program at Canadore College, in North Bay, Canada.

Mr. Cowcill travels and speaks at a variety of educational and multimedia conferences all over North America on topics ranging from eLearning, mLearning, production, project management, media development (photo, video, audio), learning strategies, and coding techniques.

## Academic Spotlight

### Phil Cowcill

#### Post-graduate program turns tech novices into app developers

The BlackBerry® Academic Program is a Research In Motion® (RIM®) initiative that provides curriculum resources that help academics around the world bring mobile innovation to education. Phil Cowcill, Coordinator of Mobile Application Development and Advertising programs at Canadore College in North Bay, Canada, is using the BlackBerry Academic Program to teach students how to create compelling applications – even if they have little previous programming experience.

#### Anyone can learn

According to Mr. Cowcill, mobile app development “is absolutely becoming more popular, and there is a lot of buzz” – even among students coming from non-tech disciplines.

That's why Canadore's program accepts students with minimal computer science or computer engineering experience. The program provides novice students with the opportunity to experiment with simple code, and then further advance their development skills through Mr. Cowcill's lectures, various projects, and assignments.

#### Growing popularity

In the pilot year of the program, there were eight students registered; this year there are twenty three. Mr. Cowcill believes the growing popularity reflects the tremendous business and job opportunities associated with mobile app development; “Companies are now looking to hire students with mobile application talent – and this is something that will continue to drive interest in students: they now see the business value in developing.”

#### Differentiate and Develop With a Purpose

To prepare students for this opportunity, Mr. Cowcill believes that students need to learn to differentiate themselves and their apps. “Developers need to focus on creating a positive user experience.” For Mr. Cowcill, good apps start with a well-organized plan.

## Quick Facts

Post graduate program teaching students from any academic discipline how to develop applications across several platforms.

Increase in course registration of 8 to 23 students from pilot year to second year.

Students must make the app publically available as part of course requirements.

Examples of BlackBerry PlayBook applications are available [here](#).

Three examples of apps from Cedric Deschenes (former student of Mr. Cowcill's) have been published to BlackBerry App World and are available [here](#).

"Pay attention to detail, pay attention when something is not meant for mobile application . . . finalizing the app is the most difficult, but that if you pay attention to details throughout the whole process, it is less daunting."

Reflecting this view, the program puts an emphasis on detail and planning when teaching students how to develop. Students are required to use Gantt charts, set up external client meetings to capture app requirements, and build storyboards to capture all details required to make a successful app.

## The BAP Advantage

One of the things Mr. Cowcill likes about the BlackBerry Academic Program is that it's easy to use the free resources to build an effective curriculum. "I pick and choose what information I want to use. . . I didn't know much about [for example] packaging applications and the program has helped me teach myself and guide my course content," he explains.

His students particularly enjoy working with the donated BlackBerry® PlayBook™ tablets. "The PlayBook is one of the best [tablets] on the marketplace and the interface design with the multitasking is a leader."

Last year, students were required to develop an app for use on a PlayBook in under two months. Mr. Cowcill explains, "All students submitted their PlayBook app and we were pleased with the progress considering not a single student had any formal computer programming experience."

## A Student Perspective

One of Mr. Cowcill's students, Cedric Deschenes, was amazed by how much he could learn about mobile development in under eight months. Mr. Deschenes explains that before the program his web development and programming skills were "slim," but his confidence and skills have since grown substantially because of the program and Mr. Cowcill's passionate teaching.

Mr. Deschenes elaborates, "I learned about user experience, designing apps, creating 3D graphics/animations for mobile use. . . how to code. . . how to make cross platform apps in AIR, how to package AIR apps, how to create databases/PHP/mysql, how to create mobile friendly websites in HTML/HTML5, and how to market my own apps."

Mr. Deschenes currently has **three apps** available on BlackBerry App World™.

How has the BlackBerry Academic Program helped in developing Cedric's mobile computing skills? Mr. Deschenes explains, "The BlackBerry Academic Program has solidified my knowledge [and has made me more comfortable] in developing for a company such as RIM. . . I am committing myself to continuing to develop apps for the App World Store. . . I look forward to developing for BlackBerry® 10 now that AIR will be compatible with the new OS and smartphones coming out next year."

With the size of Mr. Cowcill's classes more than doubling in one year, and BlackBerry PlayBook tablet development starting this fall, watch for more apps published in BlackBerry App World coming from Canadore College.

Results specific to Canadore College and may not be typical. This material, including all material incorporated by reference herein or made available by hyperlink, is provided or made accessible "AS IS" and "AS AVAILABLE" and without condition, endorsement, guarantee, representation or warranty of any kind by Research In Motion Limited and its affiliated companies ("RIM") and RIM assumes no responsibility for any typographical, technical or other inaccuracies, errors or omissions in this material and shall not be liable for any type of damages related to this material or its use, or performance, or non-performance of any software, hardware, service or any references to third-party sources of information, hardware or software, products or services including components and content such as content protected by copyright and/or third-party web sites (collectively the "Third Party Products and Services"). When you subscribe to Third Party Products and Services you accept that: 1. It is your sole responsibility to: (a) ensure that your airtime service provider will support all features; (b) identify and acquire all required intellectual property licenses prior to installation or use and to comply with the terms of such licenses; and, 2. RIM makes no representation, warranty or guarantee and assumes no liability whatsoever in relation to Third Party Products and Services. The limitations and exclusions herein shall apply irrespective of the nature of the cause of action and in no event shall any director, employee, agent, distributor, supplier or independent contractor of RIM have any liability related to the material. © 2012 Research In Motion Limited. All rights reserved. BlackBerry®, RIM®, Research In Motion® and related trademarks, names and logos are the property of Research In Motion Limited and are registered and/or used in the U.S. and countries around the world. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. RIM06944