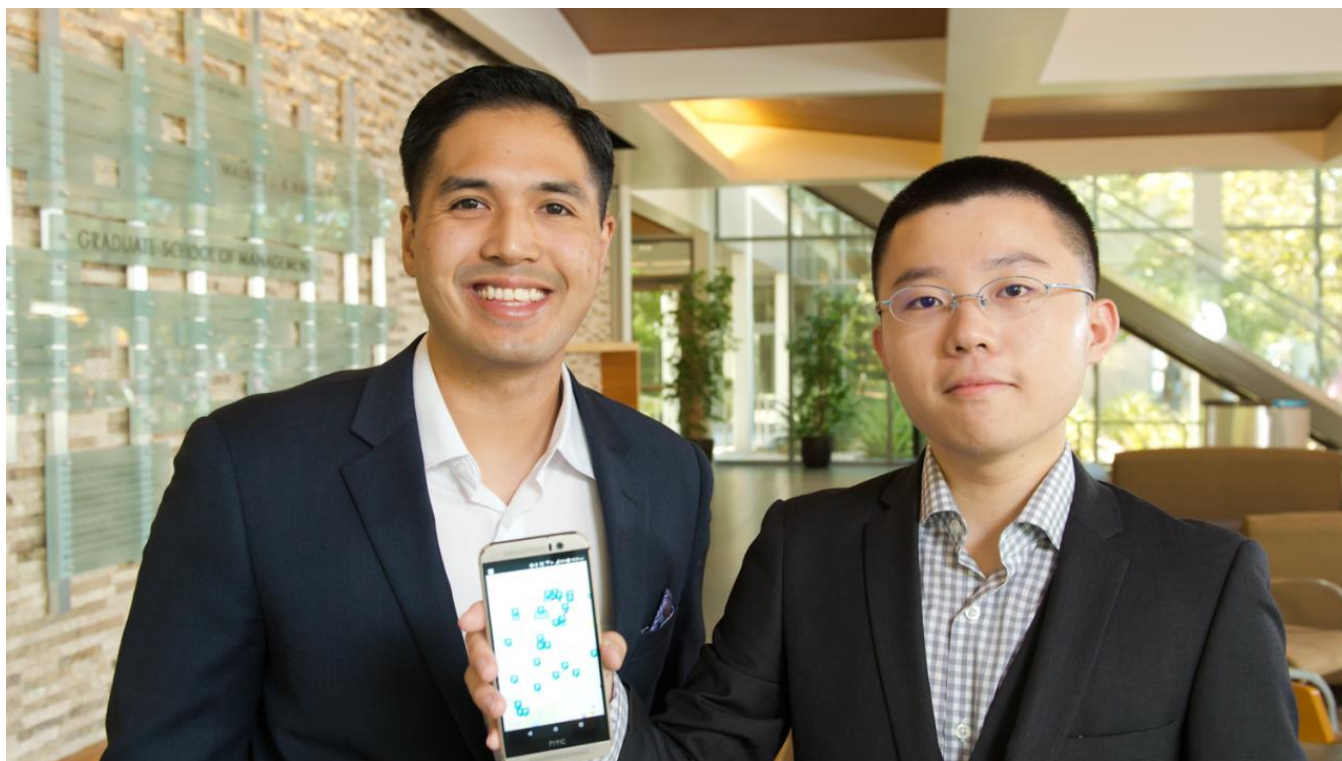


UC Davis College of Letters and Science

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Young Alums Create Startup App

Home > Young Alums Create Startup App



Mathew Magno and Charles Chen. Photo credit T.J. Ushing.

November 05, 2018

Posted by Becky Oskin

A student startup is on track to solve parking problems on campus and elsewhere. The venture, Japa, provides real-time parking information through an app and website.

Launched by College of Letters and Science alumnus Mathew Magno (B.S., computer science, '18) and classmate Charles Chen (B.S., computer engineering, '18) while they were attending UC

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Magno recalls. “I decided to fix the problem of parking.”

Smart Parking

With support from the [UC Davis Student Startup Center](#) and mentoring from faculty and alumni, the Japa team developed a smart parking system that employs sensors to track parking spaces in real time. Japa’s app shows parking availability in lots and structures near a driver. The team also offers a website aimed at lot owners and managers, with inventory tracking, transaction records, and a bird’s-eye view of operations.

Thanks to awards and investments, Magno and Chen now work full time on Japa. The team claimed the \$10,000 first prize in the 18th annual [UC Davis Big Bang! Business Competition](#) in May. Recently an investor put \$40,000 into Japa, and the startup has partnered with Transportation and Parking Services at UC Davis and the municipalities of Walnut Creek and Redwood City. “We plan to expand to airports, amusement parks, and sports arenas — which are all in desperate need of our service,” Magno said.

Although launching a business was not in Magno’s original college plan, he says he always had an entrepreneurial spirit. In middle school he sold snacks to fellow students, and in high school he fixed laptops. A first-generation student from Rancho Cucamonga, Magno also put himself through community college and through UC Davis. Now, Magno is helping others follow in his footsteps as co-founder and director of [PLASMA](#), a campus accelerator program where he mentors other startups.

“Being able to build a company as a student is something that people shouldn’t be afraid of,” Magno said. “It sounds like a lot of hard work, but if I could do it, other people can do it, too.”

— [Becky Oskin](#), content strategist in the College of Letters and Science

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