Nutty Tutoring
Executive Summary
February 10, 2010

Duke Startup Challenge Executive Summary Competition
Social Enterprises; Undergraduate Entrepreneurs; Women Entrepreneurs
Team Lead: Dovina Qu (dovina.qu@duke.edu)

Nutty Tutoring is a non-profit online-software provider that enables tutoring organizations to expand their reach. Current public school education and expensive private tutoring options often leave gaps that remain unfilled, specifically in disadvantaged homes. We aim to bridge these gaps by providing the tools that will allow volunteer tutoring organizations to increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and interaction with these students.

Middle and high school are fundamental times in an adolescent's development. It is during this time that one begins building essential knowledge and skill foundations and determining life and career goals. However, we often find that the rigid curriculum set in place to encourage academic excellence also inevitably leaves many behind. Furthermore, public school enrollment is expected to drastically increase in the South[1], which could lead to further imbalance in the student-teacher ratio. Thus, students may not be able to receive the attention they require, and consequently suffer.

While there are numerous different tutoring services already available, we find that most of these services are geared towards only a subset of students. Traditional private tutoring companies such as Sylvan Learning or StudyPoint offer extremely personalized services, but cost between $20-80 per hour. These outrageous rates often keep economically-disadvantaged students out of their doors. Furthermore, some private tutoring companies, such as TutorVista and TutorJam, have taken their services to the Internet. While this allows them to expand the range of students they can help, their price ranges still prevent disadvantaged students from being able to use their resources. On the other hand, there are various useful online communities such as forums or Q&A websites, such as Yahoo!Answers and Wikipedia, that can provide answers to students' questions about schoolwork. Though effective for simply getting the odd question answered, these resources are unreliable and do not facilitate long-term, one-on-one interaction and guidance that students often need.

However, there exist charitable organizations that aim to help students left behind by public school education and excluded by the private tutoring industry. At Duke University, organizations such as the Emily Krzyzewski Center, America Reads, and Neighborhood Partnership, provide free tutoring through trained volunteers to underprivileged K-12 students in the surrounding area. Yet, because these groups can only access their students during the limited hours of the school day, their ability to reach out to a large number of students is restricted. Nutty Tutoring has found an innovative way to bridge the divide by partnering with such organizations. We will provide a web platform that incorporates text, audio, and an interactive whiteboard program that allows trained volunteer tutors to interact with their students on a one-on-one basis outside of the classroom. Existing private web-tutoring services have already proven these online tools to be useful for tutoring. By bringing these tools to existing volunteer organizations, we hope to help these groups extend their reach to disadvantaged students. This

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[1] "Elementary and Secondary Enrollment: State and Regional (Public School Data)". Projection of Education Statistics to 2018.National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov

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online community of trained volunteer tutors will also give any student the opportunity to find a trustworthy tutor.

Nutty Tutoring is a cost-minimizing non-profit. Our initial start-up costs consist almost entirely of web development expenses and legal fees. After a series of negotiations, we have settled on licensing software from Scriblink.com for a reduced, one-time fee of $600. Additionally, our team of five Duke undergraduate students is experienced in web development and design, negating the need to hire additional help. Currently the website is in the design stage and is expected to be operational by mid-April.

In the long-term, Nutty Tutoring will have minimal operation costs restricted to web-hosting, maintenance, and marketing. The marketing budget will mainly be allocated to developing correspondences with the various tutoring organizations, and developing contacts with various Durham-area schools. We estimate a monthly cost of approximately $600; the allocated amounts are as follows: $250 Marketing, $350 Web Site Development and/or Maintenance. To maintain these basic costs, Nutty Tutoring will generate funds through sale of adspace, affiliation programs, generous donations from Angel Investors, and grants. By the end of our first year we intend to have two tutoring organizations using our services. Given these tutoring programs' reach within the Durham area we estimate that we will have 1,000 regular users, giving us the user base necessary to generate revenue through adspace. Nutty Tutoring's partnership with existing non-profit organizations will also resolve the problem of human resource management. We will be able to "share" the tutors enrolled in these programs and ultimately bring them together into a community with a common purpose - to offer an alternative and free resource for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Nutty Tutoring has remarkable potential for growth and expansion. We offer a viable and reliable virtual platform to extend the scope of existing volunteer tutoring organizations' services and goals. Meanwhile, our partnership with them will provide us with enough tutors to fully satisfy students' demands. Successful implementation of pilot partnership with Duke-Durham organizations will serve as a launchpad for Nutty Tutoring's expansion to other university-centered regions of the country. We have gained the support of the Duke Center for Civic Engagement and are in negotiations to launch a pilot program through either Student U, an organization that tutors middle school children, or through the Emily Krzyzewski Center, which is involved in after-school tutoring to students from a variety of backgrounds.

Nutty Tutoring is a pioneer in bridging the long-standing gap between quality tutoring and accessibility. We have created a unique setup that greatly benefits both the students and the tutoring organizations that we serve and connect. There is currently both a want and a need for our services and we hope that you will support us as we dissolve the barriers that have long defined the tutoring industry.