



VCAIR hosts Datix Machine Learning Hackathon

VCAIR (Vidya Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Research) is hosting a Hackathon on Machine Learning (ML) exclusively for the students of Vidya, in collaboration with Datix Analytics, a US based company. The Hackathon challenge has been well taken by the Vidya students and they have found it to be a rich learning experience.

The background



Mr Travis Nixon



Mr Nidhin
Kadavil

Mr Travis Nixon, Data Scientist and AI consultant and Mr Nidhin Kadavil, Business Intelligence and Data Warehousing Lead, Datix Analytics, are the main sources of this collaboration. The sole purpose of this collaboration is to enhance skill sets of members of Vidya academic community in the field of ML and provide opportunities for students to “earn while they learn”. The idea of conducting the Machine Learning Hackathon has been evolved during the interaction of Datix with VCAIR as Datix Analytics wanted to examine the understanding level and the working capacity of the students in ML and Data Science.

The Hackathon was announced during the introductory webinar conducted by Mr. Travis Nixon on 20 March 2019 on the topic “ AI Today and Tomorrow” which had a participation of 700+ students and faculty members.

Activities conducted so far

The following activities have been completed as part of the Datix Hackathon:

1. *Students Registration at VCAIR (25 March 2019)*: Students were allowed to register as group of 5 (max) for the Hackathon competition. A preliminary filtration process had to be applied to filter the best 12 teams for Hackathon, out of the 28 team registrations.

2. *Premier and Secondary Hackathons*: Mr Tavis Nixon wanted to encourage and provide opportunity to all the registered teams. Hence Datix has generously extended secondary Hackathon for the rest of 16 teams. Six faculty sponsors were identified from the college as faculty sponsors for the Premier and Secondary teams to assist them in this challenge.
3. *Webinar on Datix Hackathon Technology Review (29 March 2019)*: Mr Nidhin Kadavil introduced Mr Travis Nixon to all the participants and briefed the Datix Hackathon. Mr Travis hosted a webinar on Datix Hackathon Technology Review in which he explored the ML toolkits and Azure platform for carrying out the Hackathon Challenge. The participants were encouraged to ask questions and Mr Travis clarified their doubts regarding this challenge.
4. *Problem Statement & Dataset released, Official beginning of the challenge (1 April 2019)*: A Premier Machine Learning Hackathon was started for selected 12 teams with a challenge of a world class ML question which is the same as that given in the recruitment process done by Microsoft for recruiting their Data Scientists. A time duration of 2 weeks from April 1 to April 14 was provided for the teams to complete the challenge. In the similar fashion, a secondary hackathon was conducted for the rest of 16 teams who had registered for the challenge with a slightly less hard question during the same duration.
5. *Slack Channels & Interactions*: An exclusive slack channel for every individual team inside the forums for Primary and Secondary Hackathons was created by the faculty coordinator Mr Nakulraj K R (AP, CSE Dept) and Mr Travis Nixon, Mr Nidhin Kadavil, Dr Ramani Bai V (Prof and Head, CSE Dept) and Mr Ravishankar S (AP, CSE Dept) were added in each channel to interact with the team during their progress throughout the challenge. Mr Travis Nixon was carefully observing the communications at every channel, providing possible directions and

answering the queries posted by the teams. Mr Ravishankar S was helping the students and assisting them in handling the Azure Accounts and Cloud.

6. *Webinar for Interaction with Datix (8 April 2019)*: Mr Travis Nixon hosted webinar to answer any questions that participants have. He clarified the doubts and answered questions raised by the participants. During the one hour interaction, students were encouraged to ask any trivial questions which would help them to meet the Hackathon challenge.
7. *Hands-on Session on Building Machine Learning Models using scikit learn (11 April 2019)*: During the internal meetings and interactions with the teams participating in Hackathon (especially in the secondary), VCAIR team understood that the need of some teams to get the basic exposure to Machine Learning Techniques and Tools. Mr Ravishankar S has voluntarily offered a three hours hands-on session from 3.30pm to 6.30pm on Building Machine Learning Models using scikit learn through which the students gained the basic concepts and confidence in dealing with the Hackathon challenge.
8. *Submission on April 14, 11:59 PM EST*: All teams who have completed their tasks were asked to submit their code in .py file along with the presentation (.ppt file). Datix accepted 10 premier and 3 secondary submissions upto the deadline.
9. *Presentations & Evaluations (April 16 – April 23, 2019)*: Mr Travis has created an exclusive Zoom meeting id for every individual team and total of 13 presentations were conducted in the Zoom for premier and secondary Hackathon competitions during 16 – 23, April 2019. Mr Travis Nixon, Mr Nidhin Kadavil, Dr Ramani Bai V and Mr Nakulraj K R were present during all the presentation. Mr Travis has shown exceptionally high attention in evaluating each and every presentation. He was also enlightening the students with the concepts and practical perspective of the challenge. Also he was

encouraging the students and boosting up their morale during the presentation. Mr Nidhin focused on the business solution offered by the teams over the challenge. The students gained the rich learning experience throughout the exercise which no university can taught.

10. *Datix Webinar and Winners Awarding Ceremony (2 May 2019)*: The Datix finishing webinar for the Hackathon competitions and Winners awarding ceremony is planned on 2 May 2019.

Students showed their hard work and team spirit throughout the challenge and at the same time offered helping hands to the lower ones. Ten teams of premier Hackathon and 3 teams of secondary Hackathon were able to complete the challenge within the deadline. Regardless of their busy academic schedules and exams many teams showed high technical and business skills during the challenge and presentations. Datix team was impressed and gave high appreciations to some teams. Mr Travis stayed positive throughout all the presentations and provided encouraging feedbacks to all teams presented.

Students addressed the Hackathon as a great challenging experience and expressed their gratitude towards Datix team and VCAIR for providing such a world class opportunity.

Prizes for winners

The following prizes will be distributed for Primary Hackathon:

- 1 st Prize: 14,000 INR
- Runner Up: 5,000 INR
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- Most creative Approach: 5,000 INR
- And 3 prizes total of 5,000 INR