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Lauren Maloney, right, retail and consumer science senior, signs up for the Facebook group, BarTab, with the help of BarTab group manager, Sam Claussen, at The Auld Dubliner along University Boulevard on Saturday evening.

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## Eller grads turn technology into free drinks

**By: Nathan Mitchell**

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Alumni of the UA Eller College of Management have created a business that provides cheap alcohol to Facebook users and a good marketing tactic for local bars.

Ed De La Motte, co-creator of the BarTab Facebook application, said it allows users to buy drinks at local bars for \$1 and gift them to friends via the social networking Web site Facebook without ever leaving their home.

Users add the application, put money on a tab, choose a friend, choose a bar, choose a drink and then send the virtual drink to a friend. They can then send the drink to a cell phone via text message and redeem it at the chosen bar, De La Motte said. There is also a "begging" feature that allows users to ask for a drink.

He said there are 30 participating bars in Arizona and plans of branching out to California are already in the works.

Last Saturday night co-founders Nick Stewart, Matt Smith and De La Motte put on a promotional event at The Auld Dubliner, 800 E. University Blvd. # 104.

"It is the hot new version of the credit card," De La Motte said. "Tonight's goal is to show people how to use it."

The bar contained all the same things you would expect to find on a Saturday night: music, laughter, minimal breathing room and alcohol.

De La Motte said when it came time to pay the tab the difference was the lower bills.

"I think it's a great idea. It takes a conceptual idea that Facebook has lost and makes it practical," said Jeff Shaw, an entrepreneurial senior and BarTab intern. "It increases the social aspects of living on campus."

Kelley Bovit, a retail and consumer sciences senior said that the new program would make a major

difference in how people view going out to the bar.

"People are going to envy those who know about it," Bovit said.

As with all things there is the potential of abuse, De La Motte said.

BarTab has shown some responsibility with its attempts to verify age. Facebook users listed as being under 21 years old are unable to add the application, and it asks for date of birth before the application can be added. Also, all drinks can only be redeemed at bars.

Melanie Bried, a psychology senior, said that the program also works to correct one major concern users had - the application may let people know where you are going or that you could feel obligated into meeting someone you don't know.

"You have to be friends with someone to buy them a drink so you won't get any creepers," Bried said.

In addition to its usefulness for local drinkers, De La Motte said that BarTab also functions as a cheap marketing tool for bars.

He said that bars will allocate BarTab a certain amount of drinks per month and in turn they receive guaranteed customers and advertisement through online alerts telling users the name of the sponsoring bar.

The drinks cost users a fraction of their original price because the bar makes up the rest of the money as part of the trade for the free online advertising, De La Motte said.

The average cost of online advertisement in the form of banners is somewhere between \$500 and \$1000 per day, Stewart said.

He said that by using BarTab, bars will substantially decrease their advertising costs while increasing their overall business.

"To get a new customer it (usually) costs \$36.48 and we do it for 35 cents, so we do it a thousand times better," Stewart said.

Shaw said the first cheap drink will act as a way to bring people into the bar and that they are unlikely to leave after just one drink.

"The free drink got us in here and we've bought 10 drinks since," Shaw said.

De La Motte said the team is planning to market the application to several states with eventual plans of reaching the entire country. Their key states are California, Texas, Massachusetts and New York.

"If we could get all those by 2010, we would be a huge entity," De La Motte said. "It really becomes a viral spread."

As part of that future expansion, Stewart said that they could add appetizers and movie tickets to the gift selection.

"Literally, the sky is the limit," Stewart said.

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