The Table to Table app is a great research opportunity with social justice implications. Table to Table is a food rescue organization located in Iowa City that collects food that would go to waste from stores like HyVee and redistributes it to homeless shelters, women’s shelters, food insecure kids, etc. Iowa’s percentage of food insecure households, though better than the national average, has grown by 50% over the past decade to the point where now 1/9 Iowan households are food insecure. Table to Table specifically targets and helps these people who do not have adequate access to food completely free of charge. Rather, they have to rely on donations and funding agencies to keep their organization going.

In order to continue receiving funds they need to report the amount of food they receive and redistribute to the people and agencies that support their mission. Currently, they have an error-prone and inefficient paper-based system. At any given time, they can be up to 9 months behind on translating the pounds of food kept on paper into an old database that was made back in 2000. The executive director of Table to Table, Bob Andrlik, by coincidence met professor Chopra here at Iowa State University, who shortly thereafter got into contact with me, and we have been making an app ever since. Unfortunately, I just got a job in industry, and I can no longer work directly on the app.

The app runs on android and records pounds of food through clicking on buttons and numbers. It totals up the pounds and keeps an accurate record of what kinds of food have been received from where and what kinds of foods have been distributed to where. It then sends this information to a postgres database that we have not yet deployed to Table to Table. The server side software needs a GUI and functionality for printing reports. While the app is close to being done, it really needs someone to take up the torch and get the software fully working.

Currently we only have one undergrad working on the app. We’re hoping to collaborate with the University of Iowa to put the final touches on the app. This is a great project for senior Computer Science students who are looking for something to bump their resumes. It’s also a great master’s project for the area of Human Computer Interaction, specifically in technology adoption, impact of technology on Food Security, and social justice in Computer Science. There are many opportunities for collaboration on papers with professor Shweta here at ISU. If you have any questions, please let me know. I can supply more specific details later.

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