Dare To Do More: A Brighter Future Led by the Youth of Today

We are living in a fast paced world that encourages creativity and celebrates it. Many corporations are now aware of the passion that drives youth and are willing to help them realize their ideas, knowing that the future needs a fresh outlook and a brave initiative. It is to be noted that several successful people are where they are today because they believed in their thoughts that seemed too ambitious at the time but ultimately led to a revolution that changed the way we typically view things. The American University in Cairo (AUC) is an educational institution that recognizes the potential of its students and in the spirit of endorsing young creative minds, gave students the opportunity to participate in multiple corporate competitions throughout the academic year that aim to shine light on the innovative capabilities of the new generation of entrepreneurs.

The PepsiCo Dare to Do More (DTDM) challenge is a recent example of a business competition that was open to Business and Engineering students from different universities. It was open to seniors, graduating seniors and alumni up to 26 years old and the aim of the challenge was to have participants think of ways to improve the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. They were encouraged to think outside the box and tackle real business issues by coming up with a detailed business strategy that can be implemented. The proposed business plans were required to focus on improving sustainability in the areas of water, agriculture, or waste management while being cost efficient and considerate of the carbon footprint involved in the design.

An information session was held at AUC on September 25, thoroughly explaining the challenge and giving participants the chance to interact with important figures from PepsiCo. The challenge was rigorous and competitive, starting out with 1000 applicants only to be filtered down to 10 teams that got to present their final plans to a panel of esteemed members from PepsiCo including Mohamed Shelbaya, CEO and Chairman of PepsiCo Egypt. AUC was fortunate to have two teams land a position in the finalist list, with one team winning the competition in its name.

Finalist Omar Ahmed, an Electronics and Communications Engineering graduate, wanted to get into the competition so that he could get a professional insight into the FMCG industry when he found out on the Career Center’s CareerWEB and teamed up with Kholoud Bahaa, also an Electronics and Communications Engineering graduate who was also excited to be part of a prominent competition. The two alumni presented their plan that focused on optimizing water usage in both agricultural and industrial processes. They hoped to win the competition but they were happy with all the progress that they went through and the knowledge that they got out of the experience.

Winner Shereen Salah, an Accounting and Finance Senior, said “the competition allowed me to better understand the concept of sustainability which I think is a very important topic today and I am thankful for the invaluable lessons that I got to learn beyond the boundaries of a classroom.” Her teammate Nada Walaa, a Business Administration graduating senior, enjoyed every bit of the competition especially having to balance academics with the competition and getting into contact with several influential market leaders. Together, they got the chance to travel to Dubai and present their business plan to Mike Spanos, CEO of PepsiCo AMENA, which they both agreed was the highlight of their trip.

The PepsiCo challenge was a great opportunity for students to go beyond the limits of academia and get a glimpse of what the professional world looks like. They got to address real world problems in their own innovative ways, heralding the age of creativity.