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PRESS RELEASE
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Carnegie Mellon Qatar bridges gap between industry and student researchers

Twitter Sentiment Analysis wins first place at university's annual research symposium

DOHA, QATAR – The ‘Twitter Sentiment Analysis’ project was awarded the best undergraduate research project at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar’s 8th annual research symposium ‘Meeting of the Minds.’ The event, which took place on campus, gave undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to present their research using posters, videos and visual aids to faculty, fellow students, family members and local industry experts.

Carnegie Mellon Qatar computer science students Rukhsar Neyaz and Sabih Bin Wasi took home both Best Poster and First Place for their research on ‘Twitter Sentiment Analysis,’ a first in Meeting of the Minds history. They were mentored by Behrang Mohit, assistant professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon Qatar.

Second place also went to Sabin Bin Wasi, who completed the project ‘Using Technology to Help People Save Food Effortlessly’ with faculty advisor Thierry Sans, assistant teaching professor of computer science. Third place went to ‘SNV-check: A Quality Control Took for Familiar Exome Sequencing Data Based on the Sharing of Rare Genetic Mutations’ by Noora Al-Muftah, computational biology student with faculty advisor Khalid A. Fakhro from Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar.

Meeting of the Minds exemplifies Carnegie Mellon’s vibrant and collaborative research philosophy. The initiative provides students with a platform to explore topics of interest in depth outside the classroom, paving the way for them to become the experts of tomorrow.

Mark Stehlik, associate dean at Carnegie Mellon Qatar said: “Research at Carnegie Mellon is collaborative and involves teams composed of faculty, post-doctoral fellows and students. Meeting of the Minds is an opportunity to extend this collaboration and offer students the chance to engage and network with experts from local institutions.”

The projects demonstrate Carnegie Mellon’s emphasis on identifying and solving practical real-world problems through innovative research.

Bin Wasi said: “Our system, ‘Twitter Sentiment Analysis’ helps decipher the sentiment of a tweet using an algorithm. For any brand in the world, there is value to knowing how a brand is performing and how people feel about a particular brand.”

According to the 5th Arab Social Media Report, the total number of active Twitter users in the Arab world reached 3.7 million as of March 2013 producing approximately 5.5 million tweets per day.

He added, “There is a definite need for systems such as ours here in Qatar. For example, with the recent opening of the Hamad International Airport, this is a critical time to measure how people feel about it. It is simple for the organization to use, all you would have to do is insert the hashtag and the system would tell you how people feel about the airport

The initiative recognizes students conducting research and supports students to take their research further by assisting them in presenting their findings at academic conferences.

Neyaz said: “We presented our idea at SemEval 2014, an international competition on computational semantic evaluation that draws entries from researchers across the globe and our project came in third. We are now looking forward to showcasing our research at the SemEval workshop in late August.”

A judging panel consisting of industry experts and faculty members from other universities reviewed the presentations and chose the best projects and posters.

Stephan Vogel, principal scientist at Qatar Computing Research Institute said: “Meeting of the Minds is an excellent opportunity for students to show their work. It highlights the educational effort involved in creating a poster and presenting it as part of a team, which is what the students will have to do in the future when they attend conferences. The quality of the work is exceptional for undergraduates; it shows that faculty at Carnegie Mellon Qatar are doing a good job in mentoring these young minds.”

To aid the scoring process, computer science students Aliaa Essameldin and Mounira Tlili developed an application enabling judges to easily rate the research posters according to the provided framework including poster appearance, organizational flow, and creativity of approach, project presentation, project significance and overall project.

Institutions represented by the judges included Qatar Biobank, Qatar Ministry of Environment, Qatar Shell, Vodafone, Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, PC DealNet, Aspire Zone Foundation, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Qatar University, ictQatar, Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), iHorizons and the Qatar Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics.

On behalf of His Excellency Saleh bin Mohammad Al Nabit, the Minister of Development Planning, Barak Yehya, expert, institutional development at the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, distributed recognitions to projects that were closely aligned to the Qatar National Development Strategy.

Winners were: Fatima Al-Saygh, advisor Jonathan Finkel; Aniish Sridhar, advisor John Gasper; Kenrick Fernandes, advisor Divakaran Liginlal; Aliya Hashim, advisor Divakaran Liginlal; and Dania Abed Rabbou (post-graduate), advisor Mohammad Hammoud.

Research at Carnegie Mellon Qatar is funded by several research programs including the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), Carnegie Mellon has been the recipient of 16 UREP (undergraduate research experience program) awards.

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About Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar

As a global leader in education, Carnegie Mellon University is known for its creativity, collaboration across disciplines, and top programs in business, technology and the arts. The university has been home to some of the world's most important thinkers, among them 19 Nobel Laureates and 11 Turing Award winners.

In 2004, Qatar Foundation invited Carnegie Mellon to join Education City, a groundbreaking center for scholarship and research. As Carnegie Mellon Qatar celebrates its 10th anniversary, the campus continues to grow, providing a prestigious education to 400 students from 42 countries. The university offers five undergraduate degree programs in Biological Sciences, Business Administration, Computational Biology, Computer Science and Information Systems.

Students in Qatar join more than 12,000 Carnegie Mellon students across the globe, who will become the next generation of leaders tackling tomorrow's challenges. The university's 95,000 alumni are recruited by some of the world's most innovative organizations.

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